

Understanding Radicalisation: Implications for Criminal Justice Practitioners

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Summary: Over the past 16 years, academics and practitioners have made significant attempts to develop our understanding of the process by which individuals come to engage with violent extremism. In the case of terrorist violence, the process leading to engagement with extremist organisations came to be referred to as radicalisation, a loose and vague term that accounts for the means by which an individual comes to support, engage with or carry out a terrorist act in support of or as a member of a terrorist movement. A failure to account for the diversity of pathways into terrorism is a weakness in how we think about radicalisation and terrorism because, as with any other complex human behaviour (e.g. crime), we cannot causally link one isolated factor to the behaviour itself. This article advocates that there may not be a single identifiable *cause* for an individual's choice to engage in terrorism and instead we should consider that focusing on a range of psychosocial risk factors may be more appropriate. In addition, it highlights the limitations of psychometric assessment approaches to radicalisation. Existing best-practice approaches to dealing with prisoners and probationers, created within established criminal justice protocols, are most appropriate.

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