

Mechanisms of Political Radicalization

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Abstract

Radicalization refers to changes in beliefs, feelings, and behaviors toward increased support for intergroup conflict and intergroup violence. Twelve mechanisms supporting participation in political violence are advanced. At the individual level, motivation to engage in political violence can be based on personal grievance, intergroup grievance, “slippery slope” participation in radical activism, and love for radicalized friends and relatives. At the group level, participation in political violence can emerge from extremity shift of likeminded group members, social reality value of encapsulated groups, intragroup competition (fission), intergroup competition to represent the same cause, and escalation in response to state repression. At the level of mass opinion, support for political violence is increased by perceived threat, dehumanization of the outgroup, and the construction of political martyrs.