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OSIS Study

Study 2006-7/07

FROM RADICALIZATION TO JIHADIZATION



Introduction

1. The 2005 CSIS Study *PATHS TO RADICALIZATION OF HOME-GROWN ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS IN CANADA*¹

This study follows up on the 2005 paper,

What is Islamist Radicalization? What is Jihadization?

3. The phenomena of "radicalization" and "jihadization" are very complex and due in part to the diverse nature of Muslim communities in the West. Each country has its own population with its own characteristics, histories and experiences. The factors and catalysts for radicalization in one nation may not exist in another. Radicalization occurs when Muslims reject mainstream beliefs and practices, adopting a narrow, literal, intolerant interpretation of Islam. Jihadization occurs when radicalized Muslims believe that pre-emptive violence in the perceived defence of Islam is justified. Not everyone who becomes radicalized will move on to jihadization. When someone radicalizes, there is often a physical and psychological change such as growing a beard, adopting Muslim dress, criticizing anyone who does not share their views, and withdrawing from the larger community. The transformation from radical to jihadist can be a very rapid process.

What Causes Radicalization?

4. Radicalization is a very individual process – there are no easy profiles. The factors and influences responsible for one person's transformation may differ significantly from those of another. The factors of radicalization identified by CSIS include a belief in the need to defend Islam from perceived aggression by the West, influence from a spiritual leader, influence from a radicalized family member, and attending training overseas. Younger members are increasingly self-radicalizing. Anyone in the community is potentially at risk of becoming radicalized: those born in Canada, immigrants, or converts. The failure or inability of some Muslims to integrate into Western societies can also be a factor. However, this is seen more in European countries where the Muslim

¹ See CSIS Study 2005/6-11 *PATHS TO RADICALIZATION OF HOMEGROWN ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS IN CANADA* issued 2005 07 29. (S)

communities are more homogeneous and there has been less integration than in North America.

5. The most important factor for radicalization is the perception that Islam is under attack from the West. Jihadists feel they must preemptively and violently defend Islam from these perceived enemies. They also watch what is happening in the Islamic world and the many conflicts that involve "Western" or other aggression: Palestine, Kashmir, Iraq, Chechnya, Afghanistan, and others. A few will act on these events and support or carry out terrorism as an attempt to change Western foreign or military policy. These individuals take the violent defence of Islam as a personal goal and religious obligation. The need to defend that religion from its aggressors has a long tradition and jihadists have access to a great deal of literature to justify their actions.

6. Another factor is the influence of a charismatic spiritual leader who calls upon a few brave Islamists to rise to the defence of Islam.

will act as leaders and motivators to attract young impressionable Muslims to their ideology. Younger jihadists are using the Internet to locate "virtual" leaders who provide inspiration. This "virtualization" of radicalization results in a spiritual leader who is available 24/7.

7. Parents who share their radical ideologies with their children can also be a factor in radicalization,

Overseas experiences can also help expose young radicals to older, more experienced jihadists and possibly training opportunities.

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Conclusion

The phenomenon of radicalization continues in all Western nations with significant Muslim minority populations. Western Muslims are concerned at what they see unfolding throughout the Islamic world: the invasion of Iraq, military operations in Afghanistan, the conflicts in Kashmir and Chechnya, et al. They tend to see these events as a series of acts aimed at Islam itself. While the vast majority will remain politically engaged over these issues, a small number will incorporate their anger into their faith and see themselves obliged to defend their Muslim brothers and sisters.

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