The Psychology of Radicalization: Depluralization Theory

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konex
Gemeinsam gegen Extremismus

- Multi-determined

- Multifinality

- Multiple drivers

- No single cause

- Multiple pathways into violent extremism and terrorism

- similar people with similar starting points can produce different harmful and unharmful outcomes

- The last decade of research, therefore, has demonstrated the complexity of violent extremism's emergence, escalation and persistence

- Different pathways can lead to radicalization (sometimes called the principle of equifinality)

- conversely, different persons on a shared pathway or trajectory may have different outcomes (sometimes called the principle of multifinality)

- extremism is a response to a complex and multidimensional interaction between a host of push-and pull factors

- diverse, multivariate and context-specific nature of trajectories in and out of violent extremism

6 central themes from radicalization research

- Relative Deprivation
- Belonging and identity
- Purpose, adventure, honor
- Active recruitment
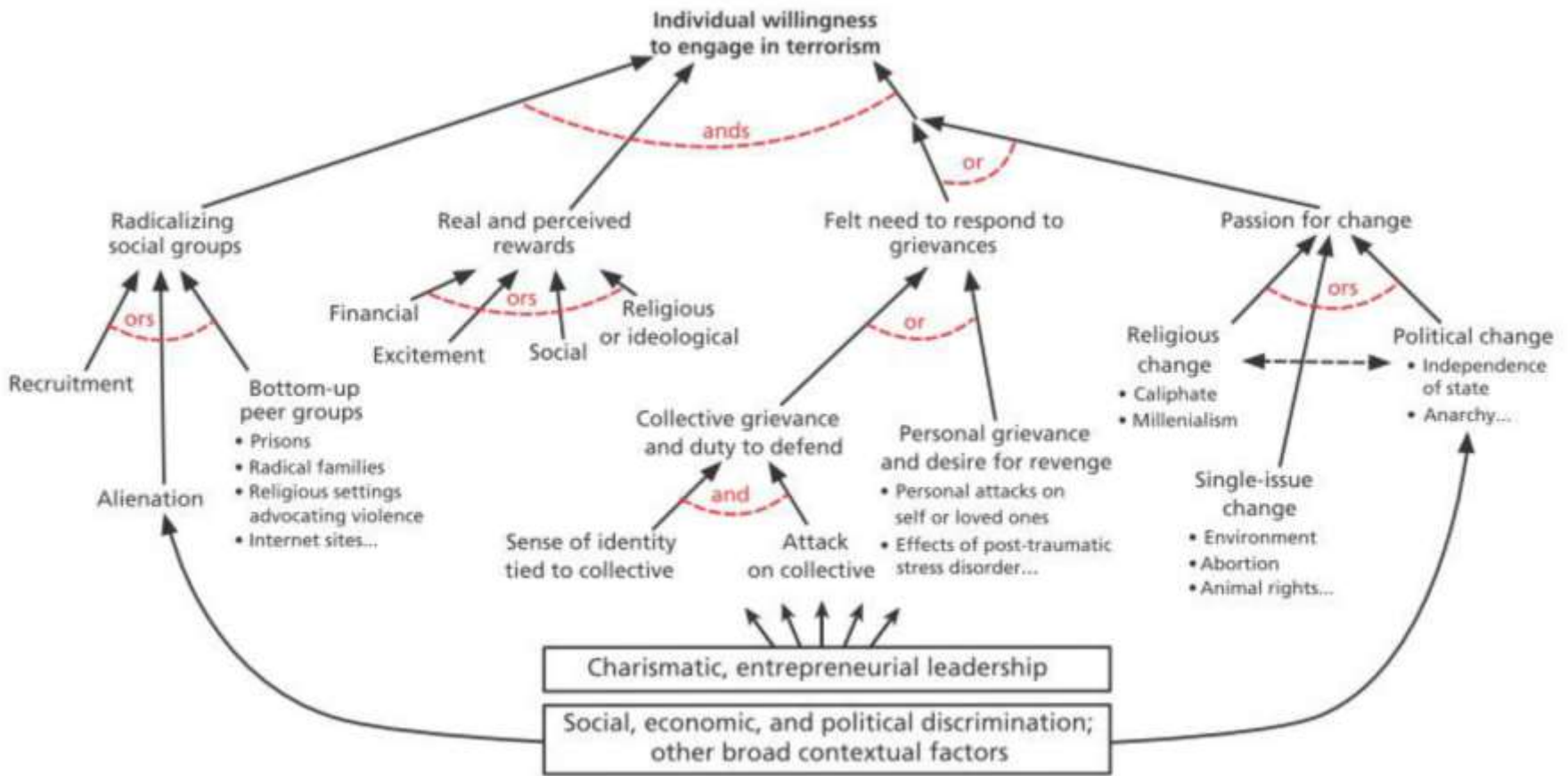- indoctrination
- Small group/peer dynamics

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Borum (2004)

The Process of Ideological Development

It's Not Right	It's Not Fair	It's Your Fault	You're Evil
Social and Economic Deprivation	Inequality and Resentment	Blame/Attribution	Generalizing/ Stereotyping
			Dehumanizing/ Demonizing the Enemy (Cause)
Context	Comparison	Attribution	Reaction

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Helmus (2009)

RAND MG849-3.1

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ICSR (2017)

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- Problem
- Solution
- Vision
- Not automatically intellectual or theoretical
- Can be emotional/social

P

V

S

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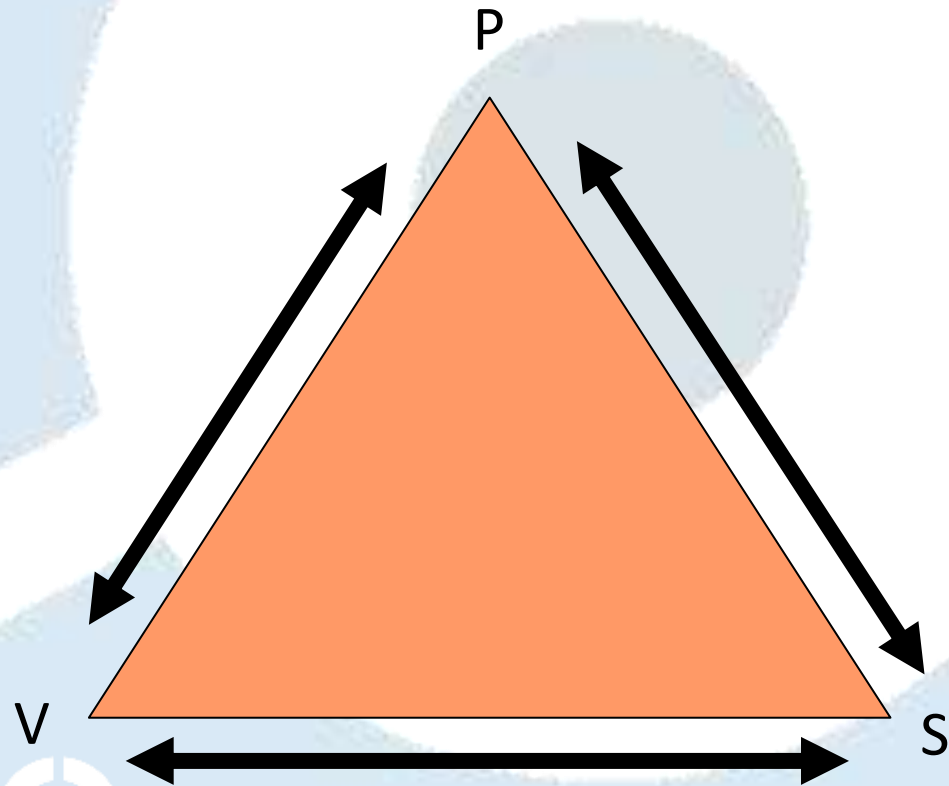
Examples:

„There is a global war against Islam by the infidels (P), which is why violent Jihad is an individual duty for every Muslim (S) to reestablish the Caliphate (V)."

„Immigrants are taking away our jobs (P), which is why we need to remove foreigners living here (L) to create a white nationalist state (V)."

Relationship Motives (Sachse)

- Recognition (also: love, attention, positive definition, respect)
- Importance (having meaning, value for others)
- Reliability, dependable relationship
- Solidarity, solidary relationships
- (Appropriate) autonomy
- Inviolability of boundaries, territoriality
- Every person also has motivational deficits

Problem Identification

- Set the motive
- Problem definition
- Diagnostic Framing

Threatening the Motive

- Fear induction, focus on deficits + values of the target person - positive and negative!

- Amygdala activation: reduction of logical and increase of emotional reactions, rejection of falsification.

- Ingroup/outgroup effect: reduction of empathy, no processing as interpersonal interaction

- Legitimization of violence possible

- Social movements try to create moral outrage --> individual frustration is transformed into collective claims and opportunity for action

- Emotions play central role

Provocation of Conflicts with Parallel Activation

- Dysfunctional solutions

Creation of Additional Frustration

- with parallel activism

- prognostic framing

Interpretation Aligned with the Threat

- complete formation of collective identity/opposition culture/contrast society

- "hyperallergic reactions" to the threats

- Confirmation bias

- Person is caught between individual and collective interpretation of threats/frustrations, and goals and values

Overfulfillment of deficit motives through ideology and group

Increase of Group Attachment and Commitment

- Binding to extr. group with simultaneous isolation from the old social environment

- Establishment of alternative social norms and alternative moral concepts (interpretations)

- Dopamine release during motive fulfillment, addiction symptoms

Habituation

Reinforcement management

- Habituation to violence
- Lowering of residual inhibition thresholds
- "Practicing" violence with initiation character
- Violence becomes drug (intoxication of power with less and less bad conscience, addiction dynamics)
- dissonance reduction --> consequence is stronger identification with group/group norms

Binding reinforcement

- by hard commitment (acts of violence, illegal activities, conflicts with old soc. environment)

- Extremist ideology gets additional functionality besides motive fulfillment:

- Guilt defense (a return to the old environment would mean having to deal with one's own crimes, which is hardly bearable)

„Disorganized Attachment": source of security is also source of threat/trauma

Emotionally negative activation

Emotionally positive activation
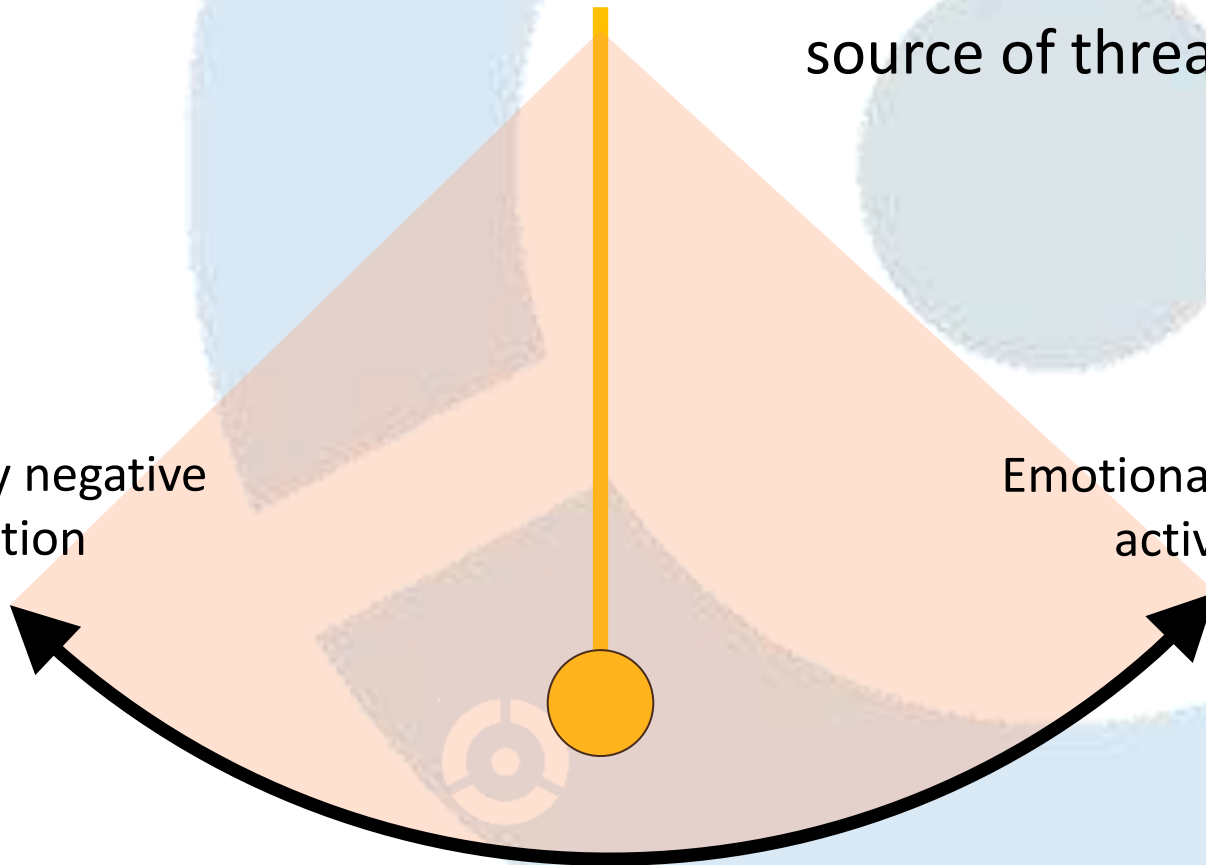
Negative Pole

- toxic stress and traumatic experiences

- constant re-focusing on ideologically framed problem (diagnostic framing)

- propaganda and subcultural products focused on problem-solution-vision

Positive (Quasi-Therapeutical) Pole

- Loyalty and understanding

- group context

- collective/ social identity

- norms and values legitimizing actions

- social network rewards, status, respect

- in some groups: social care policies (vacation, retirement)

Positive (Quasi-Therapeutical) Pole

Corner & Gill, 2021:

"The evidence suggests that, in certain cases, individual and group resilience may be a protective factor when an individual faces negative experiences. The presence of protective factors may not be sufficient to explain why group-actor terrorists present with a lower than expected prevalence of mental disorder."
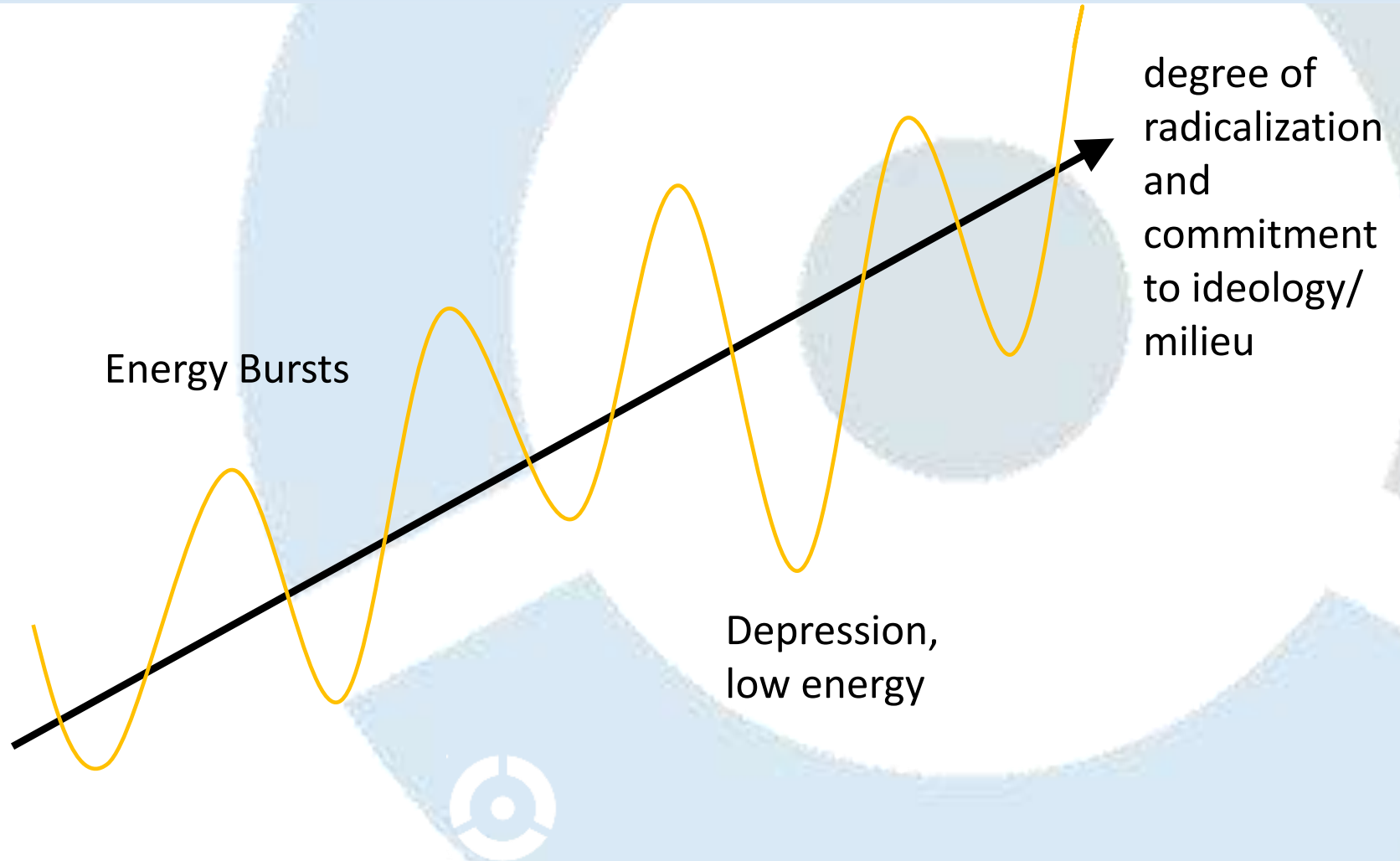
Disorganized Attachment (Alexandra Stein, 2017)

- a "relationship that is rooted in the creation of, and experience of, trauma"

- caregiver is at once the safe haven and also the source of threat or alarm

- "Giving in – dissociating and ceasing to think – is experienced as relief"

- DA is a form of chronic trauma

- individual seeks support from the source of the threat

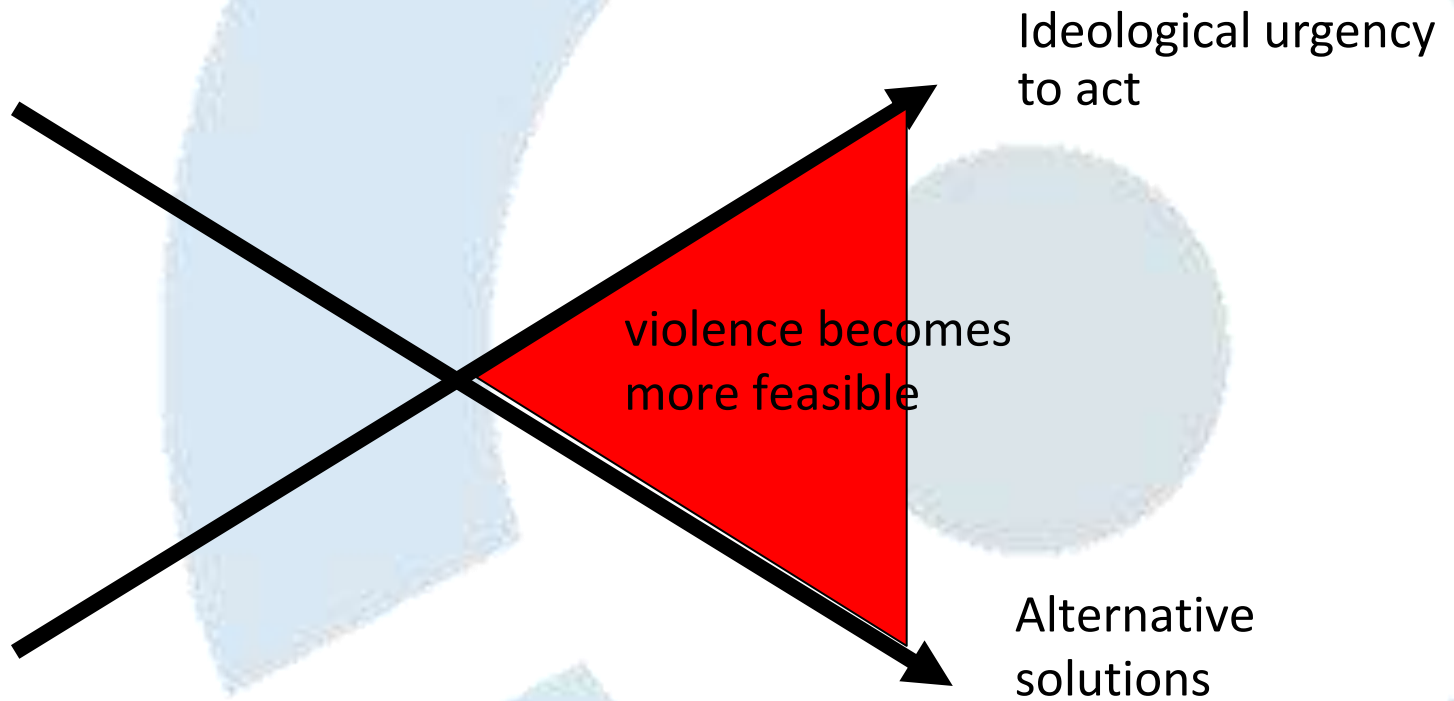- prolonged negative effects even after traumatic relationship

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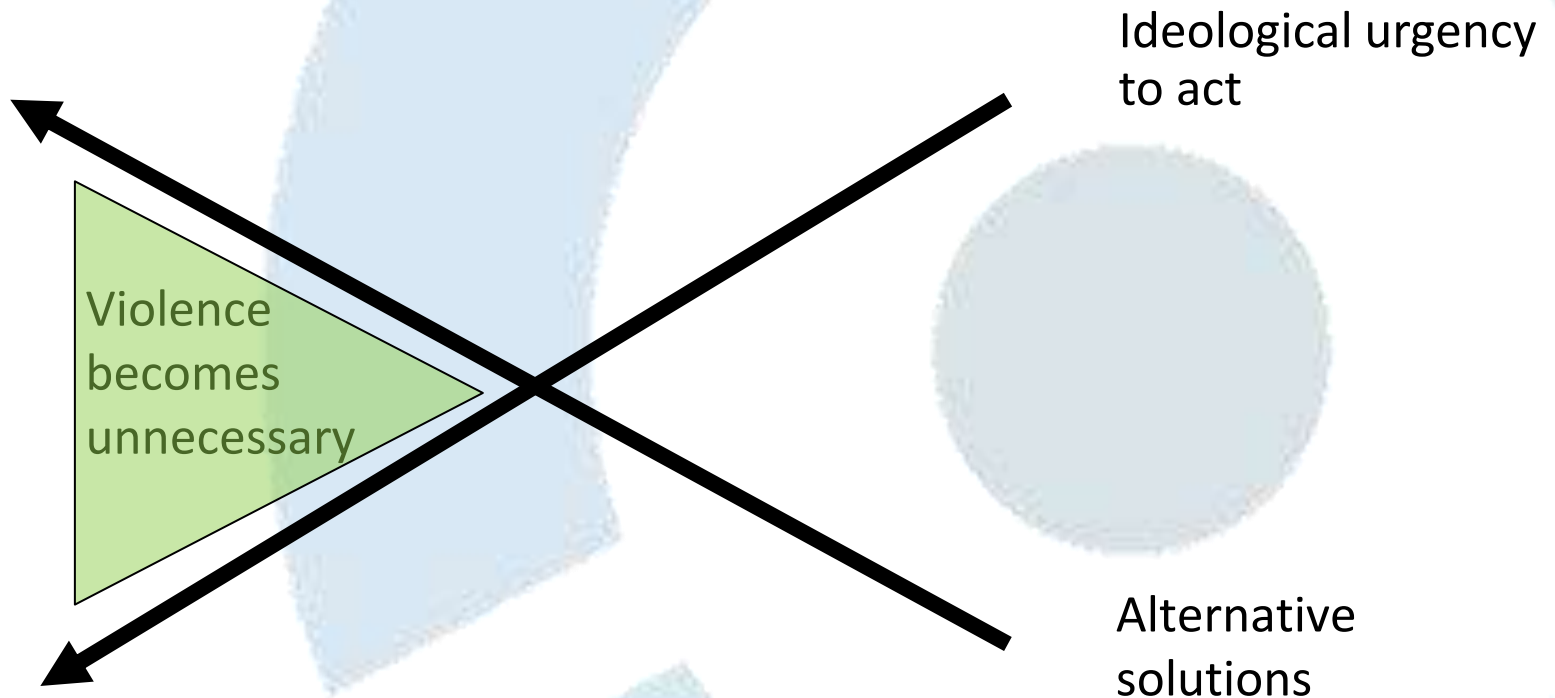LANDESKRIMINALAMT

Ideological urgency
to act

violence becomes
more feasible

Alternative
solutions

Ideological urgency to act

Violence becomes unnecessary

Alternative solutions

Empirical Support

- Extremists have strong commitment toward some values at the expense of other values (Rigoli, 2023)

- Compared to ideologically moderate individuals who acknowledge a multiplicity of values as equally important

- Obsessive passion with isolated values over all others significant factor in radicalization processes towards violence (Belanger et al. 2022)

- Concept of extremism as motivational imbalance (Kruglanski et al., 2021)

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