Ideological and Behavioural Radicalisation into Terrorism – an Alternative Sequencing

Timothy Williams[a1]

[a]Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Centre for Conflict Studies, Marburg University, Germany

Abstract

In some schools of thought of radicalisation research there is a tacit assumption that individuals become gradually radicalised in their ideas, attitudes, political preferences and worldview, and then motivated by this subsequently radicalise their actions to commit an act of terrorism. This article supports those who question this linear model and I argue that these two processes, which are here labelled as ideological and behavioural radicalisation, must be differentiated. Drawing on ideas from radicalisation in genocide studies, this article contributes to the social movement theory approaches to terrorism. As such, the article differentiates between ideological and behavioural radicalisation processes and argues that these two types of radicalisation can be sequenced with either first. This article posits that it is possible for individuals to engage in radical actions without having extreme preferences, just as it is equally possible for other individuals to have radical ideologies without acting on them, supporting more social movement theory approaches to radicalisation. The article provides a plausibility probe for this sequencing, demonstrating its empirical utility for participation in genocidal violence.

Keywords: Radicalisation, Terrorism, Genocide, Ideology, Social Movement Theory

Introduction

The role of ideology in the processes of radicalisation is one of the key contested factors in the literature on radicalisation, with a fundamental assumption in parts of radicalisation research positing that individuals become gradually radicalised in their ideas, attitudes,

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political preferences and worldview, and then motivated by this subsequently radicalise their actions to commit an act of terrorism.[1] Other parts of the literature, which I aim to support with this article, argue that these two processes, which are here labelled as ideological and behavioural radicalisation, must be differentiated. Although this has been discussed in previous academic work on the topic,[2] most notably Peter Neumann's cognitive and behavioural radicalisation,[3] this article aims to strengthen and conceptually underpin this part of the literature, particularly reflecting on how these two forms of radicalisation can be sequenced. Max Abrahms' reminder that "terrorism is an extremism of means, not ends"[4] is instructive here and emphasises the importance of differentiating the behavioural from the ideological processes of radicalisation. As such, contributions from social movement theory and social psychology can better account for these alternative ideas than standard phase models that expect a very clear ideological *then* behavioural radicalisation.[5]

While a wide body of the literature that deals explicitly with radicalisation focuses on participation in terrorist activity, predominantly Islamist terrorism, the underlying research interests are also pertinent to the study of participation in a variety of other types of violence, such as genocide, riots, pogroms, lynching etc. The overwhelming majority of previous work on participation in genocide and the insights from studying this type of radical behaviour have inspired this article, leading me to question the assumption about the sequencing of radicalisation present in many phase models of terrorism. Empirically, for genocide participation this ideological-behavioural sequencing is only the case for a minority of individuals. Instead, most individuals will become ideologically radical only as a consequence of their behavioural radicalisation. Thus, it is possible for people to be behaviourally radical, but not ideologically, just as it is widely accepted in the radicalisation literature that people can radicalise ideologically without then actually enacting the radical behaviour in the end.

This article explores how these two forms of ideological and behavioural radicalisation co-exist and influence each other, particularly by studying tacit expectations about their sequencing and highlighting insights from the study of participation in genocide. Although mostly only referring to this differentiation indirectly, several previous

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radicalisation models in terrorism studies assume that ideological radicalisation precedes behavioural radicalisation. While different theoretical approaches to radicalisation differ significantly in their explanations of how people become radicalised in their ideas and why they will join a terrorist group, many assume that people will alter their political preferences and thus ideologically radicalise *before* they actually commit an act of terrorism. The main argument laid out in this article is that this sequencing need not be necessary, supporting schools of thought that appeal to a more nuanced appreciation of the role of ideology in radicalisation, for example with social movement theory emphasising how ideologies work as 'collective action frames'[6] or play a de-emphasised role.[7] Conceptually, it is plausible that someone acts radically for entirely other reasons before his or her ideas have become radicalised and empirically there are cases which can be better explained this way. Empirically, it is unclear whether behavioural radicalisation more often precedes ideological radicalisation,[8] or whether the processes expected by phase models with a prior ideological radicalisation are more prevalent, although further rigorous empirical research will conclusively allow an evaluation of the empirical relevance of this alternate proposal. I concur here with Neumann's assessment that the processes of ideological (or cognitive as he terms it) and behavioural radicalisation are intertwined to a certain degree and that it would not be fruitful to study behavioural radicalisation independently;[9] however, this paper provides an abstract conceptualisation of how these are brought together in genocide and radicalisation studies. The main argument reads that most radicalisation studies – across schools – assume some form of ideological radicalisation (be it through buying into collective frames or becoming a believer) precedes behavioural radicalisation, but that the sequencing could also be reversed.

Drawing on previous work on participation in genocide,[10] this paper demonstrates how this alternative sequencing can play out empirically and what other factors may impact this process of behavioural radicalisation which do not necessitate a previous ideological radicalisation; people can act in radicalised ways without having the extreme political preferences that one would expect. As such, this article does not deny that for many

radicalised individuals ideological radicalisation does indeed occur prior to behavioural radicalisation, but the argument is that it is conceptually and empirically important to recognise that an alternative sequencing is possible and does occur. With this systematisation, studies of radicalisation can differentiate with a more nuanced approach between the two substantively different processes of ideological and behavioural radicalisation and see how their sequencing may differ to previous expectations.

Thus, this article contributes to the social movement theory stream of the radicalisation literature, embracing their arguments about the importance of non-ideological motivations in recruitment to the terrorist group and non-ideologically motivated behavioural radicalisation.[11] As such, the innovative contribution of this piece is not the argument that ideological radicalisation does not always precede behavioural radicalisation, as this has also been shown elsewhere, but instead, first, the application of empirical insights from genocide studies to these questions within the study of radicalisation and, second, the systematic conceptualisation of how this sequencing can occur. It should be emphasised that the focus here lies on the participating individuals, the radicalising individuals who become terrorists or genocide perpetrators, not on the motivations and dynamics of the *group* itself. As such, this article is not a contribution to the literature on the rationality or strategic value of terrorism, but instead stands in the tradition of Charles Tilly who argues for a differentiation between the motivations of individuals and the social dynamics that produce collective violence and a more relational approach to understanding these processes.[12] This paper is in line with social movement theory approaches, and in drawing on previous ideas from genocide studies provides a systematic way of enriching existing thought in parts of radicalisation studies about actions and preferences, behavioural and ideological radicalisation. It is this systematic approach that provides a heuristic that could be helpful for thinking about individual pathways into terrorism.

This article is what Alexander George and Andrew Bennett term a plausibility probe, that is a "preliminary stud[y] on relatively untested theories and hypotheses to determine whether more intensive and laborious testing is warranted."[13] This kind of plausibility probe

helps to "focus directly on the goal of theory development, by aiming at clearer specification of a theory and its variables."[14] As such, the article does not provide a detailed empirical case study of a terrorist that fits the bill here to demonstrate the utility of the argument but discusses it conceptually and make the case for its plausibility drawing on the extensive literature that has discussed this for the study of genocide. My contribution is to interrogate conceptually in as much detail as possible how we can re-think radicalisation processes from a genocide studies perspective. By providing more clarity in specifying radicalisation processes as behavioural and ideological, and thinking about their alternative sequencing, it becomes possible for radicalisation researchers to re-visit their data and to see whether the conceptually plausible sequencing has empirical bearing that can parallel the findings from genocide studies. I will not be presenting a full empirical test of these ideas in this paper because there is no adequate data that would allow for rigorous and in-depth analysis. This is because, first, most data until now has been presented in a way that adheres to the traditional assumptions regarding sequencing, which means it is difficult to use this data to demonstrate my points as the way the individuals' stories are told already neglect some of the details which may allow for my alternative interpretation. Second, in most cases data on individuals is not presented in enough depth in the literature that I could build my own case from a specific individual. As such, this article will provide a conceptual discussion as a plausibility probe drawing on the insights gained from the study of participation in genocide, and future research endeavours will need to conduct in-depth re-evaluations of previous case studies or generate new data that can be analysed along these lines.

To substantiate this argument, I will first briefly review some of the main approaches to radicalisation to demonstrate the presence of a latent assumption that ideological radicalisation precedes behavioural radicalisation in parts of the literature. Next, I present the alternative sequencing of radicalisation that exist in other parts of the radicalisation literature and empirically illustrate this for radicalisation in the context of participating in genocide. Subsequently, I discuss what kind of factors can be relevant for leading to behavioural radicalisation if not ideological radicalisation and ask what consequences this could have for

counterterrorism policy, before concluding with an outlook of what this alternative perspective could mean for research on radicalisation.

Previous Approaches to Conceptualising Radicalisation into Terrorism

When one reviews the burgeoning field research on radicalisation into – predominantly Islamist – terrorism, one is struck by the diversity of explanations and approaches, ranging from phase models to broad factor models, from psychological or pathological approaches to social movement theory approaches, among many others. While different researchers often operate with diverging definitions[15] and some are more narrowly focussed on terrorism while others are broader, most of these approaches see radicalisation as a one-dimensional progression. Some focus on radicalisation as an ideological phenomenon of supporting violent means against an outgroup and seeing these as legitimate, that is taking on political preferences that support these acts; in this perspective radicalisation is a process which then *can* lead to violence if one is radicalised enough. While arguing against this type of understanding, Abrahms attests a widespread conflation of ideology and behaviour positing that we "are apt to infer the extremeness of a challenger's preferences directly from the extremeness of his tactics notwithstanding the nature of his actual demands" and he suggests that there is a "human tendency to confound the extreme means of the challenger with his presumed ends."[16] In this sense, John Horgan's approach to focussing on the psychology of behavioural radicalisation emphasises its disjuncture with radical thoughts and ideologies and that there are few, if any, consistent psychological patterns[17] and the importance of disaggregating different types of radicalised behaviour;[18] however, this does mask the important role that ideological radicalisation can play for some individuals either prior to or after behavioural radicalisation.[19]

However, some authors do indeed de-couple the ideas and differentiate between radicalising attitudes and ideas and engaging in action which is violent and extremist. Most explicitly and prominently Donatella Della Porta and Gary LaFree make this differentiation

and acknowledge that they are causally independent of each other.[20] Randy Borum also differentiates between radicalisation as "the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs" and "action pathways (or action scripts)" as "the process of engaging in terrorism or violent extremist actions" and also argue that these can each occur without the other.[21] Similarly, Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko differentiate these two radicalisation processes[22] and state that their order can vary.[23] These differentiations are a welcome development in radicalisation research and in this article I build on this differentiation between what I will call ideological radicalisation and behavioural radicalisation. Ideological radicalisation I understand to be an increasing adherence to and purporting of ideological beliefs and political preferences that support, justify and demand the discrimination, attack or even annihilation of an outgroup. Behavioural radicalisation, on the other hand, is the participation in actions which increasingly serve this purpose of discrimination, attack or even annihilation of the outgroup.

Nonetheless, much research is still based on a fundamental assumption that ideological radicalisation comes before behavioural radicalisation. This assumption is made by not only by some of those who differentiate between the two types of radicalisation, but also implicitly by others who do not. While most phase model radicalisation theories do not claim that extremist ideas *must* lead to violence, that is ideological radicalisation to behavioural radicalisation, they also do not assume that behavioural radicalisation can occur independently of ideological radicalisation. A stark example of this would be the assertion that "although every terrorist is a radical, not every radical is a terrorist,"[24] effectively arguing that violent action is only possible if one has the corresponding, ideologically aligned political preferences.

The common nature of this sequencing is exemplified in the influential social scientific model by Quintan Wictorowicz which prescribes four stages of radicalisation, focussing on Islamist terrorism. This model begins with 'cognitive opening' in which an individual becomes receptive to radical ideas, is followed by 'religious seeking' in which the person directs this towards the worldview of radical religious groups, subsequently the

individual defers to the authority of this interpretation in a 'frame alignment' stage, before finally in a stage of 'socialising and joining' the individual joins the group. Any behavioural radicalisation is theorised to occur subsequently to this.[25] Another prominent example is Fathali Moghaddam's 'staircase to terrorism' in which stages go from group-based feelings of relative deprivation, to seeking to improve this situation and feel blocked and become angry at an identified enemy, subsequently engaging with the morality of terrorist organisations and accepting their strategies as justified, then joining the group and ultimately carrying out terrorist acts.[26] Also, Marc Sageman, while not working from analysing stages, speaks of four key factors, three cognitive (moral outrage, a specific frame interpreting the world, resonance of this with personal experience of discrimination) and a situational one which sees like-minded individuals interacting and mobilisation occurring through networks; whereas these four factors work in parallel, again only subsequent to this mobilisation into a terrorist organisation does terrorist action occur.[27] The prominent radicalisation process used by the NYPD sees sequenced stages of 'pre-radicalisation,' 'self-identification,' 'indoctrination,' and finally 'jihadisation,' a clear progression from ideological to behavioural radicalisation.[28]

The modelling of ideological radicalisation preceding behavioural radicalisation was made quite explicit in a recent psychological contribution by Bertjan Doosje et al. who also emphasise the possibility of de-radicalisation or non-progression along the continuum, but who do not conceptualise as possible radical action coming before radical ideas (what they term 'sensitivity').[29] Similarly, Jytte Klausen et al.'s sequence of pre-radicalisation, detachment, peer immersion and steps to action differentiates between ideologies and behaviour but sequences them rigidly in this order.[30] The sequencing of ideological followed by possibly behavioural radicalisation is the same also in cognitive theories, such as the Root Cause approach to radicalisation.[31] The focus of this theory lies on the complexity of individual-level factors which cause radicalisation but an emphasis is placed on how 'embedded individuals' are radicalised through the development of radicalised social identities, although it differs strongly from phase models in its openness to social dynamics being the foundation of this.[32] Sequencing is again the same in the 'Quest for Significance

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Model' which sees people's radical behaviour rooted in a terrorist-justifying ideologies.[33] In similar terms, Joshua Sinai's model,[34] the policy-relevant model by Tomas Precht for the Danish Ministry of Justice[35] and the FBI[36] models assume this fundamental sequencing of some form of ideological radicalisation (for various reasons), subsequent joining of a radical group and then radical action from within this group. In an important and useful synthesis of many previous phase models, Stéphanie De Coensel does identify the phase for ideological radicalisation as relatively late, however, the sequencing is again similar with it preceding behavioural radicalisation.[37]

Despite its broader conception of pathways into radicalisation, social movement theory also does not embrace the full potential of differentiating between ideological and behavioural radicalisation. Although social movement theory approaches acknowledge that individuals may join radical organisations for non-ideological reasons, such as friendship or kin ties which pull them in,[38] some still assume that for behavioural radicalisation to occur, the individual will become radicalised ideologically first, albeit emphasising the important role the social group has in framing the situation and fostering this radicalisation process.[39] Thus, many stipulate that there are other reasons for joining the radical organisation, but do not go further to argue that there could also be other reasons for the individuals to radicalise behaviourally. This paper's core argument is that this indeed is plausible and is well established for radicalisation in the context of genocidal violence.

As such, while they differ considerably in their interpretation of why and how people are radicalised, many approaches implicitly or explicitly assume a sequencing of ideological and behavioural radicalisation, with the former preceding the latter and implicitly stipulating that it should be seen as a prerequisite.

Insights from Studying Radicalisation in Genocide

Having established how parts of the literature on terrorism conceptualise radicalisation, this section turns to the topic of genocide perpetration, radicalisation in the context of a different

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type of political violence. More specifically, this section demonstrates empirically an alternative form of sequencing by which people become radicalised behaviourally without previously having been ideologically radicalised. I draw particularly on the conceptual *Complexity of Evil* model that explains why people participate in genocide.[40]

In this context of genocide, behavioural radicalisation means that the individual participates in the killing of victims, while ideological radicalisation is constituted by increasingly hostile attitudes towards these victims which runs along ideological lines. Some men and women within a genocidal context are indeed radicalised behaviourally for ideological reasons, that is due to an ideological radicalisation. However, most people are not.[41] Instead, they radicalise behaviourally due to a plethora of reasons, particularly relating to social dynamics within the perpetrator group and opportunistic motivations. In terms of social dynamics in the perpetrator group, for example, people can behaviourally radicalise into participating in genocide due to being obedient to the orders of an authority.[42] This has most impressively been demonstrated by the psychologist Stanley Milgram who showed in his experiments that most people were prepared to engage in action they believed harmed others significantly, simply because someone perceived as a legitimate authority had ordered it.[43] This is salient for many cases of genocide when often "killing became akin to policy"[44] and was seen by perpetrators as "the law."[45] Furthermore, peer pressure and wanting to be conform with one's comrades or friends can serve as a strong motivation for behavioural radicalisation, and as such individuals may not accept ideologically the reasons for participating but nonetheless conform to group norms in action.[46] This is evocatively evidenced in Lee Ann Fujii's portrayal of participation in the Rwandan genocide in which group ties were key in recruiting 'volunteer' perpetrators and these ties also forged an identity within this group.[47] Further, coercion through threatened or actual violence is a further motivation, whether threats are credible or not.[48] People who refused to participate could be killed during the genocide in Rwanda[49] and the Armenian genocide,[50] but nowhere was coercion more broadly used than in Cambodia, where fear was "endemic"[51] and people were constantly in fear for their life if any hint of disobedience was detected.[52] Also in this context

some individuals seek to improve their status within the group through radicalising their behaviour, for example with Khmer Rouge who participated in the killing having a higher status.[53]

Beyond these group-based dynamics, a further swathe of opportunistic motivations can also make people radicalise behaviourally without an ideological radicalisation. For example, people may radicalise their behaviour in order to forward their career through promotion rewards or to enrich themselves through participation,[54] such as by receiving the opportunity to loot and steal from the victim group.[55] Another opportunistic motivation to radicalise is in order to be able to eliminate political rivals and get ahead[56] or to resolve personal conflicts pre-dating the genocide, for example, a woman in Rwanda killed a man who had previously refused to lend her money.[57] Others hope to be able to receive perks for their participation, for instance Khmer Rouge who participated in the killing were given minimally more and better food, as well as less gruelling work conditions than their compatriots.[58] As with many types of crime, the thrill and excitement of doing something forbidden motivates some, often younger people to participate,[59] as can the sadistic pleasure found in hurting others.[60]

While some people radicalise behaviourally in genocide due to ideological convictions, this section has demonstrated that there are also various other motivations that can allow people to radicalise behaviourally without such an ideological radicalisation. I am not arguing that these will necessarily be the same factors that motivate behavioural radicalisation in other forms of violence such as terrorism. Instead, the point is that other plausible motivations for this behavioural radicalisation can exist and that we need to consider how behavioural radicalisation can thus be seen in an independent light to ideological radicalisation.

Sequencing Radicalisation

First, I presented some phase models of radicalisation into terrorism and in the previous section as a contrast I discussed various factors that can contribute to behavioural radicalisation independent of ideological radicalisation. In this section now I will demonstrate how these differ analytically, clarifying the argument regarding the difference between behavioural and ideological radicalisation. What is proposed here is neither a full phase model, such as the 'staircase to terrorism,'[61] nor any other type of full explanatory model; rather in the spirit of this plausibility probe research design, what I provide is a heuristic for differentiating between ideological and behavioural radicalisation and for contemplating how these forms of radicalisation can be sequenced. As such, ideological radicalisation can follow on from behavioural radicalisation, and does not have to be its precedent. Thus, this heuristic should help in our thinking about how we can study radicalisation better and how we can look at radicalisation from a more nuanced perspective, inspired by the study of participation in genocide.

Figure 1 presents a graphic representation of this sequencing argument, several examples of which were discussed above. While the first line summarizes previous academic debates, the second one introduces my alternative approach.

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Figure 1: Sequencing behavioural and ideological radicalisation
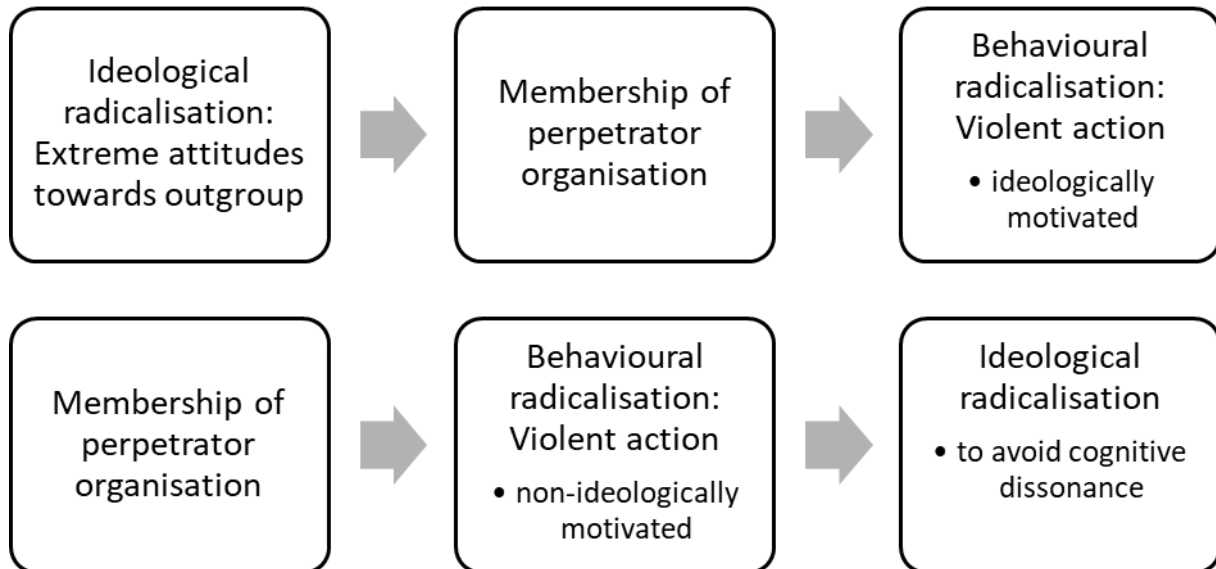
The standard phase model of radicalisation

The first line of Figure 1 is concurrent with many terrorist radicalisation studies, particularly those purporting some form of phase model, but is also applicable to ideological perpetrators of genocide. Prototypically, this means that, first, an individual gradually adopts hostile ideologies towards another group (be it a targeted minority, such as the Tutsi or the Jews, or a societal majority, such as Northern Irish protestants or liberal Westerners); how gradual or expedite this process is will depend strongly on the individual and their context. In this way the individual's political preferences will become more and more extreme and he or she will become *ideologically radicalised*.

Second, motivated by these radicalising political preferences, the individual *joins an organisation* which is known to forward these ideologies, either by proactively seeking the organisation out or by being 'cognitively open'[62] to the cause and being pulled into the organisation. While the static representation suggested here cannot adequately portray this,

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the ideological radicalisation will continue, possibly even accelerate once membership into this organisation has occurred.

In a third step, the individual then *engages in violent action* against the hated outgroup from within their new role in the organisation, radicalising behaviourally, again either gradually engaging in ever more discriminatory and violent behaviour or immediately going the whole way, e.g. participating in a massacre of civilians in genocide or participating in a terrorist attack. This sequencing of events can vary and social movement theory proponents within the radicalisation literature would be right in pointing out that membership in the group can precede ideological radicalisation when people are brought in through personal ties. The emphasis of this first part is on the ideological preceding the behavioural, though, so it remains compatible with *both* phase models and social movement theory approaches.

An alternative approach to sequencing radicalisation

The second line of figure 1 shows an alternative approach to sequencing radicalisation and will be discussed in more detail to underscore the argument I am making of its validity. The first step is *joining the perpetrator organisation*, that is the terrorist cell or a military, paramilitary, police, neighbourhood watch or other unit which participates in violence against civilians. The important point here is that the individual is not yet ideologically radicalised and joins for non-ideological reasons, for example, in genocidal contexts people are often conscripted into these organisations, or they are already members before the organisation itself has its area of responsibility re-defined to include the genocidal action; there are many different reasons people may join these organisations beyond ideological radicalisation, as social movement theory advocates have convincingly demonstrated. This non-ideological joining of a terrorist organisation is widely recognised in terrorism studies as people join due to previous friendship or kinship ties, a desire for social meaning and an escape from social isolation or a drive to experience thrills and the excitement of participating.[63]

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The second step, however, diverges from most social movement theory and other radicalisation approaches as now the individual radicalises behaviourally and *participates in violent action*. Abrahms sums up this possibility that behavioural radicalisation does not need to be preceded by ideological radicalisation:

> "There is comparatively strong theoretical and empirical evidence that people become terrorists not to achieve their organization's declared political agenda, but to develop strong affective ties with other terrorist members. In other words, the preponderance of evidence is that people participate in terrorist organizations for the social solidarity, not for their political return."[64]

This process of behavioural radicalisation without the extreme preferences associated with ideological radicalisation is evidenced by people who participate in jihadi terrorism but without holding deep convictions regarding their Islamic faith, for example, Sadi Abdallah who was part of the so-called Al-Zarqawi cell in Germany that had plotted to attack Jewish targets in large German cities,[65] Mourad Benchellali who was a member of the so-called 'Chechen network' in France that underwent training in Chechnya and returned to plot attacks against Russian and French institutions in Paris,[66] or José Emilio Suarez Trashorras who was involved in the Madrid bombings of March 2004 that killed over 200 people in commuter trains.[67] All of these men participated in the behavioural radicalisation, planning or executing attacks and in the case of Benchellali training actively for them abroad, even though they claim not to be at all religious.[68] A further pertinent example is provided by Saudi recruits to al-Qaida in the late 1990s and early 2000s who travelled to Afghanistan, radicalising their behaviour in training camps and fighting, not in pursuit of the global jihad and other radical ideas, but because of social networks they were embedded in. These people's motivations were based on compassion for their perceived in-group and not related to the broader radicalised ideologies and radical notions of jihad or international terror.[69]

Similarly, sometimes terrorists who radicalise behaviourally do not even have a rudimentary knowledge of the organisation's political goals, as demonstrated by the case of

the IRA where many recruits only acquired the political orientations after joining the group and having participated in radical behaviour such as street riots.[70] This is succinctly highlighted by Rogelio Alonso whose detailed study of the IRA in Northern Ireland shows that

> "many of the young people who joined the IRA did not have a developed political motivation based on strong ideological foundations. [...] In most cases, they joined the IRA at an impressionable and emotionally immature age [...]. After recruitment, the procedures put into practice were aimed at reinforcing opinions that had hardly been thought through, so that recruits had drilled into them the comforting guarantee that the violence perpetrated was a response to a political need rather than a criminal impulse."[71]

More recently, European youths have been travelling to Syria and Iraq to join the Islamic State who cannot be said to have prior religious convictions but a desire for delinquency and behavioural radicalisation which only receives a post-hoc religious justification of jihad,[72] while some youths radicalising in Germany have been shown to have only very superficial religious knowledge.[73]

Thirdly, then, once someone has behaviourally radicalised, they can then *ideologically radicalise*. in the standard sequencing of radicalisation above (and as explicitly stated in most phase models), most individuals who ideologically radicalise do not go the next step to joining an organisation despite their extreme preferences and only some of these then actually behaviourally radicalise. In this alternative sequencing, however, this third step of ideological radicalisation is present for most individuals who have behaviourally radicalised due to cognitive dissonance. Under normal circumstances people avoid behaviour which violates their moral standards; if people do behave at odds to their moral standards, cognitive dissonance occurs. This cognitive dissonance is inherently problematic as it undermines "the integrity of the self"[74] and people cannot live with the cognitive dissonance over a long period of time.[75] Thus, individuals attempt to resolve this tension and reduce the discrepancy

between behaviour and ideologies.[76] There are two possible solutions to this cognitive dissonance: on the one hand, one can de-radicalise behaviour, acknowledging that it was wrong. However, this can be extremely difficult within coercive structures or in a group setting in which most such action occurs. On the other hand, it can become psychologically attractive to alter one's preferences and moral framework rather than adapt one's behaviour and thus the person can radicalise ideologically. This process is often supported by propaganda which is purported by the organisation and morally justifies and legitimises the behavioural radicalisation or provides hostile constructions of the enemy which provide an easy solution to the arisen cognitive dissonance.

Combining (Non-)Radical Behaviour and Ideologies

Figure 2: Typology differentiating degree of ideological and behavioural radicalisation

	Non-radical ideologies	Radical ideologies
Radical behaviour	Unideological perpetrators, otherwise motivated	Ideological perpetrators + unideological perpetrators avoiding cognitive dissonance
Non-radical behaviour	'ordinary' members of society (the majority of most societies)	Hostile and discriminating, but inactive

Figure 2 visualises this differentiation between behavioural and ideological radicalisation, showing four prototypical types. The vast majority of most societies will be located in the bottom left-hand quadrant as people who are neither radical in their ideologies nor in their behaviour. Some of these can radicalise ideologically placing them in the bottom right-hand quadrant, which is constituted by those who are not (yet) behaviourally radicalised, but who

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are ideologically radical, showing hostile and discriminating preferences towards the target group. In a genocidal society, for example, this can be quite a large amount of people, particularly if the government engages in large-scale propaganda campaigns. In many terrorist radicalisation phase models, this quadrant is discussed as the first step and it is often emphasised that the majority of people who ideologically radicalise will not subsequently also radicalise behaviourally. Those who do radicalise behaviourally then end up in the top right-hand quadrant which consists of those people who act radically and have deep-seated beliefs regarding why they are acting like this, believing in the cause they are acting for. Thus, phase models assume a transition from the bottom left, to the bottom right and then up to the top right as subsequent radicalisation processes. It remains open at which point the individual precisely joins the terrorist group, with social movement theory advocates stipulating that this can occur prior to ideological radicalisation, while proponents of phase models would assume that joining such an organisation would occur more in the bottom right-hand corner.

The alternative I am suggesting in this article adds the logical possibility of the top left-hand quadrant which sees people acting radically but without the radical ideologies accompanying individuals in the quadrant to its right. They can become radicalised for a number of reasons discussed briefly above, but can still be moderate in their beliefs. However, the arrow between the two top quadrants signifies that this transition from non-radical to radical ideologies will often occur once someone has radicalised behaviourally in order to avoid cognitive dissonance. The transition is not necessary, as the individual could remain in the top left-hand quadrant and suffer the cognitive dissonance or he or she could transition back to the bottom left-hand quadrant, but this is relatively unlikely in the type of group setting in which behavioural radicalisation has already occurred, and also it does not help to resolve cognitive dissonance for past actions. While most individuals will follow the arrow and radicalise ideologically, it is open to which degree this ideological radicalisation will occur. It is plausible that this will be less pronounced for these people as it is not about an ideological conviction which demands such action but radical preferences which allow and justify the actions one has participated in that suffice to waylay the cognitive dissonance.

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A final issue regards the role of time in this alternative sequencing. While it does occur that an individual may radicalise behaviourally very fast, for example, when reserve order police battalions were ordered to eradicate the Jewish populations of Polish villages which could not be deported from during the Holocaust.[77] Here, the men had almost no experience with genocidal violence beforehand, but most participated on the spur of the moment. In other cases, such as the genocide in Cambodia, most perpetrators became more gradually radicalised behaviourally, as they were most often recruited into relatively innocuous positions to begin with and then were re-assigned to new positions progressively getting closer to the locus of violence;[78] a prototypical example in this case is Hang who was recruited into a child unit first, before then being given military training; subsequently he was made a guard outside the walls of a security centre, making sure no-one was able to get in or out, before then moving to be an inside guard, actually guarding the prisoners and preparing them for interrogation, torture and execution.[79] In such cases, in which the behavioural radicalisation does not occur at once, the ideological radicalisation can also occur step-by-step in reaction to the increasing severity of actions, so that intermediate stages of cognitive dissonance can be avoided. It is important to emphasise that here it is not the incremental radicalisation in terms of ideas which necessarily have to radicalise the behaviour, but that the incremental behavioural radicalisation can lead to incremental ideological radicalisation as step-by-step cognitive dissonance is sought to be avoided.

Implications for counterterrorism practice

This alternative sequencing of radicalisation processes has consequences for how we should think about preventing radicalisation and counterterrorism policies. Counterterrorism strategies are needed that differentiate between the traditional sequencing and my proposed alternative, as my argument is not that the former does not exist empirically, but that the alternative explanation is *also* empirically relevant. However, even within the new alternative the step of behavioural radicalisation can be motivated by a number of factors, including not

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only social dynamics within the terrorist group, but also opportunistic motivations, the desire for an exciting adventure, or even sadistic pleasure (for a small number of people). Thus, a good counterterrorism strategy will be adaptive, reactive and multi-faceted, tailoring a variety of programmes to different types of potential terrorists and the complex nature of their potential motivations for radicalisation.

I concur with Abrahm's analysis that the three most common counterterrorism strategies, namely "withholding political concessions, granting political concessions, or providing nonviolent political alternatives,"[80] fail in combating terrorism as they are premised on the assumption that terrorists primarily pursue rational, political goals. His proposals to invest in social network analyses to identify members of terrorist organisations and to attempt to break up social networks through sowing distrust do appear promising, but the broader suggestion of fostering inclusion of at-risk populations will certainly be key to counterterrorism efforts. Besides the obviously beneficial societal value of such projects, the effect of broadening social networks is that people are less likely to be in just one sub-group that is perceived as very different to the rest of society, perhaps even threatened by it.

However, the most important implication that the proposed alternative sequencing has for counterterrorism policy is the futility of *only* flagging ideological radicalisation and focussing on people who appear to be ideologically radicalising as a warning for behavioural radicalisation. As such, public diplomacy approaches that emphasise changing population's hostile ideologies may be ineffective because at least some people are turning to terrorism and only later taking on hostile views, so that changing their views does not prevent the act of terrorism itself. Instead, incremental steps of behavioural radicalisation could be much more important to monitor as a baseline, focussing more on broader programmes that provide a more supportive environment so that people do not decide to radicalise behaviourally. At the same time, this is not supposed to read as an argument for the 'Anglo-Saxon' approach to counter-radicalisation that neglects ideological radicalisation entirely and focusses explicitly on extremist action,[81] but instead to reflect on measures in a way that allows for these alternative sequencings.

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Conclusion

This article has presented a plausibility probe for the argument that it is necessary to differentiate between behavioural and ideological radicalisation as two separate and distinct processes and has demonstrated that much research on radicalisation, particularly the phase models that enjoy prominent attention among policymakers, shares the same fundamental assumptions about how these two are sequenced. This research assumes that behavioural radicalisation can only occur after ideological radicalisation. However, this paper draws on insights from participation in genocide to advocate for social movement and socialpsychological conceptions that allow for the possibility of an alternative sequencing that see people behaviourally radicalise for a number of other non-ideological reasons; subsequently, this behavioural radicalisation is often followed by ideological radicalisation in order to avoid the development of cognitive dissonance due to a moral disconnect between these radical actions and the non-radicalised moral framework the individual adhered to. This argument strengthens the position of social movement theorists in the study of radicalisation who have long argued that social relations are fundamental to understanding recruitment into terrorist groups; this article takes this argument further to advocate for a complex view of radicalisation which allows for both kinds of sequencing to occur in different cases.

In this article I have sketched a conceptual specification of how this sequencing works, and have discussed how it resonates with the empirical literature on participation in genocide. While it has also drawn on some empirical studies in the field of radicalisation for illustrative purposes, it has not provided a full empirical test of the argument. This article is designed as a plausibility probe, but the next step after rendering these ideas conceptually plausible, would be to test them more thoroughly empirically. First tests will need to fundamentally re-evaluate empirical data in the form of primary data, as most studies already approach the cases from the vantage point of the classical sequencing, meaning that any information about alternative

sequencing is rendered invisible. Given the burgeoning literature on radicalisation, however, there should be plenty of cases which lend themselves to such an empirical test. Possible empirical testing could include a case study of an individual who actually follows this alternative sequencing; alternatively, a cross-case comparison of various individuals who proceed differently through the sequencing could productively be employed to understand when and where this alternative sequencing occurs; also, a broader statistical analysis of many individuals' possible or actual trajectories could be fruitful, drawing on datasets such as the Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) dataset[82] or on experimental survey data along the lines of Abrahms' work.[83]

For the moment, I have drawn on insights from research on radicalisation within genocide to empirically illustrate how this alternative sequencing works for another form of political violence, while providing a conceptually founded plausibility probe as to how behavioural radicalisation can occur without previous ideological radicalisation. While research on radicalisation in terrorism and genocide is interested in the same fundamental questions, there are obviously differences between the phenomena which can have an impact on my argument. First, radicalisation in terrorism occurs against the majority and against the state, with radicalisation being synonymous with an increasing "rejection of the status quo;"[84] it is a rejection of majority values and hostility towards the state, for example, of liberal democracy when talking of terrorism in the West. On the other hand, in genocide this radicalisation normally occurs in the context of a radicalising or radicalised state which purports radical policies; as such, radicalisation is not a rejection of the state, the majority and its values, but instead embracing the increasingly radical state ideology. The radicalising state itself is rejecting previous values and is promoting increasingly hostile preferences towards a specific outgroup, and these can be taken on in ideological radicalisation or hostile behaviours in behavioural radicalisation. Second, in the case of genocide, while ideological radicalisation can occur across society, oftentimes behavioural radicalisation is limited to certain groups (often just the security service, in other cases such as Rwanda also civilian groups) and institutional membership in the group often precedes the genocide and any possible

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ideological radicalisation. But within these groups, *not* participating in behavioural radicalisation is deviant from the majority, rather than radicalisation being deviant as it is in terrorism.

This article should be understood as support for social movement theory approaches to understanding terrorism and as a systematic portrayal of an alternative sequencing that can be used to critically evaluate our current understandings of radicalisation in terrorism. I am not arguing that the alternative sequencing is always applicable, not even that it will normally be the most useful explanation for individuals' radicalisation, but that it is empirically prevalent for other types of violence, and should thus be considered a plausible explanation as part of models in the study of terrorist radicalisation and that it *can* occur empirically. As such, it may assist us in garnering more nuanced insight and is particularly important when we reflect on how the various radicalisation models discussed above also have concrete manifestations in how policy is made to counter radicalisation processes. If ideological radicalisation does not necessarily precede behavioural radicalisation, this will have important repercussions on early warning systems of who may potentially become behaviourally radicalised and on how this can be prevented.

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Notes

[1] See, for example, Jamie Bartlett, Carl Miller, "The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference Between Violent and Non-Violent Radicalization," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 1 (2012): 1 – 21; Fathali M. Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration," *American Psychologist* 60, no. 2 (2005): 161 – 169; Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad. Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Alex P. Schmid, *Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review* (The Hague: The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2013), 8; Mitchell D. Silber, Arvin Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat* (New York: NYPD Intelligence Division, 2007); Tinka Veldhuis, Jørgen Staun, *Islamist Radicalisation: A Root Cause Model* (Den Haag: Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, 2009), 6; Quintan Wictorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. 2 (2005): 75 – 97.

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[3] Peter Neumann, "The trouble with radicalization," *International Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2013): 873 – 893.

[4] Max Abrahms, "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy," *International Security* 32, no. 4 (2008): 78-105.

[5] For an introduction, see Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Studying violent radicalization in Europe I: The potential contribution of social movement theory," *DIIS Working Paper* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2008); Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Studying violent radicalization in Europe II: The potential contribution of socio-psychological and psychological approaches," *DIIS Working Paper* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2008).

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