Post-9/11 Radicalization Theory and Its Impact on Violent Extremism

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Abstract

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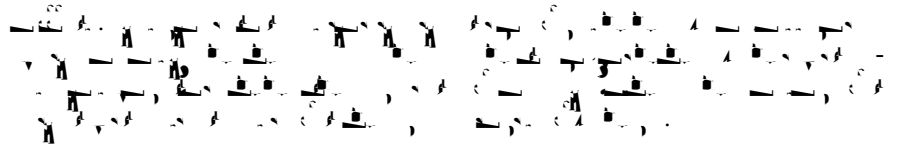
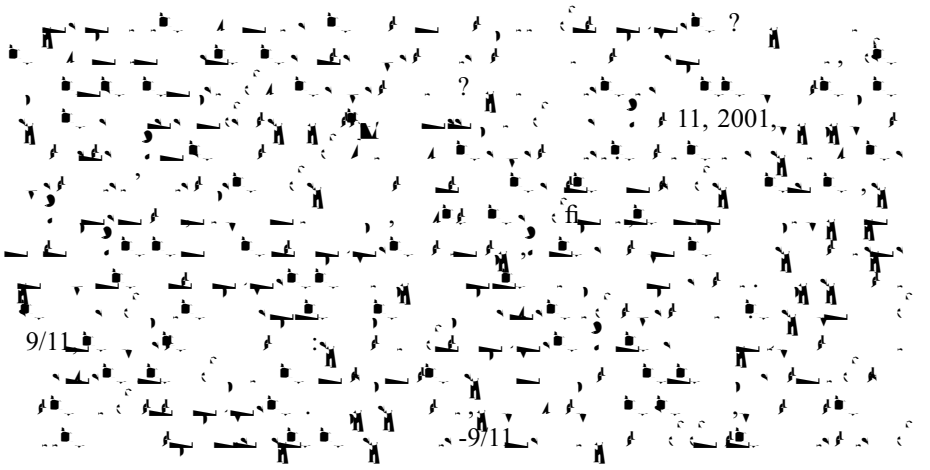


Introduction



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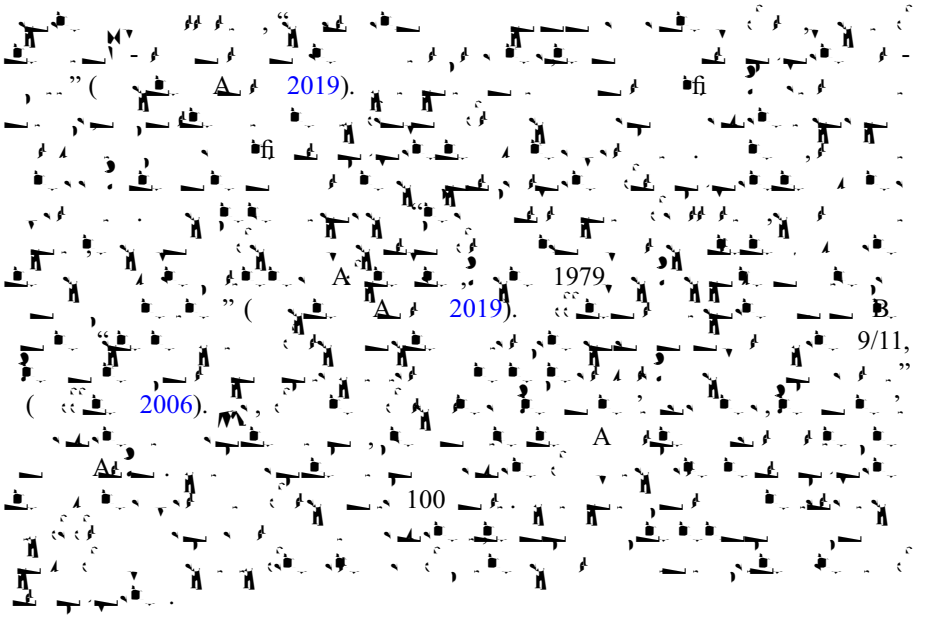

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group of political activists toward radical measures, it showed that social engagement is necessary to successfully motivate individuals to sign a letter of participation for an extremist demonstration.

The foundation that social movement theory provided for understanding radicalization was likely the most significant and beneficial influence on radicalization research. From its early stages, theorists began to understand radicalization as a gradual process wherein social networks within violent extremist organizations provided compelling reframings of individuals' experiences and environments. For example, Dalgaard-Nielsen recognized that movements diagnose problems and attribute responsibility, offer solutions, strategies, and tactis, and provide a motivational frame to convince potential participants to become active (Borum 2012). The development that has come from understanding the socialization of radicalization has contributed much to the theories that would emerge in the post-9/11 era.

Another factor that became an important way to understand individuals' responsiveness to violent extremism and attraction to the radicalization process was the concept of grievances, as shared grievances are a foundational factor of social movements. Issues such as lack of social integration, economic deprivation, and other perceived injustices are among the many that have often been cited as reasons for a movement's genesis. One need only look at various violent extremist groups, such as the Taliban, to observe that they rose in reaction to a particular grievance. In the case of the Taliban, they rose in reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and its resulting refugee crisis, which allowed for socialization of new ideologies. Given that social movements are a collective response to a common belief of relative deprivation, theories of needs and grievances also provide insight into the radicalization process by which an individual comes to engage in a movement. Perhaps one of the most influential insights into grievances is A. H. Maslow's 1943 work, *A Theory of Human Motivation*, which asserts that one of the basic physiological needs of an individual is food. Should an individual go without food for a prolonged period of time, Maslow theorized that their need to satisfy their hunger, or their grievance, would suppress other higher needs, such as personal safety and intimacy. As Maslow wrote,

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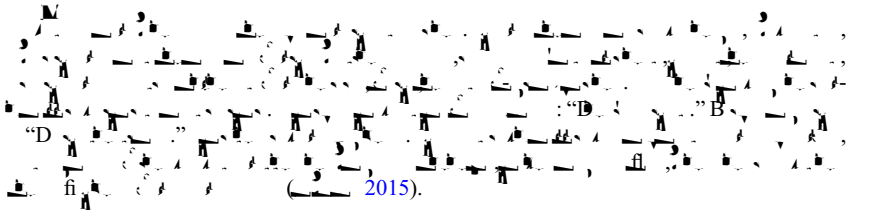
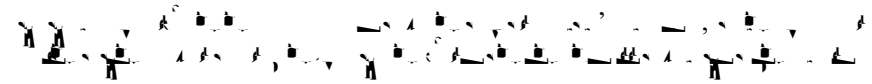
which the members inform others regarding the latest technological trends being used (Hayes 2018). One such platform is al Qaeda's e-magazine, *Inspire*, which was specically tailored to English speakers to radicalize and mobilize them to commit acts of violence (Holt et al. 2018). The sophistication of these messages exploits numerous experiences and sentiments felt by potential recruits, such as bullying, racism, and even assaults committed against them because of their Islamic identity. These messages also include sentiments of a sense of belonging and purpose by participating in the defense of Islam, which functions to motivate individuals to take part in the extremist organization (Holt et al. 2018).

Islamic violent extremists have long made effective use of technology in recruit-





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