

Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS)

An Empirical Assessment of Domestic Radicalization

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Advance the empirical basis for understanding domestic radicalization by using data-driven social science research methods.
- Develop a quantitative cross-sectional dataset with in-depth information on the backgrounds and activities of violent and non-violent extremists who espoused Far Right, Far Left, or Islamist ideological views and who radicalized in the United States (non-violent extremism refers to individuals who engage in illegal extremist activity short of violence or who belong to a violent extremist group but do not participate in violent activities).
- Produce qualitative case studies on specific individuals' trajectories of radicalization to provide insight into different pathways towards radicalization in the United States.
- Assist policymakers and scholars in gaining a deeper understanding of radicalization in the United States.

CURRENT PROGRESS AND FUTURE PLANS

- Using public sources, the project has collected data on approximately 1,500 individuals in the United States who committed violent and non-violent acts of extremism, or who were previously members of violent extremist groups.
- After extensive review, the full dataset was cleared for initial analysis in Fall 2014. Quantitative analysis of the dataset is ongoing and will be completed in the Summer of 2015. The project's final report will be released in December 2015.
- The research has also produced qualitative case studies of approximately 110 violent and non-violent radicals from across the ideological spectrum. Researchers are currently engaged in coding the case studies, which will allow for rigorous analysis using fuzzy-set/qualitative comparative analysis techniques.
- The research team has shared preliminary results of the data to several communities of interest. This includes presentations at the 2014 International Studies Association Annual Conference and the 2014 START Annual Meeting, and briefings with practitioners and policy makers from around the world.

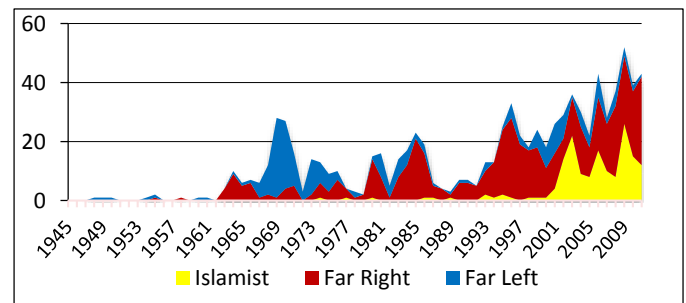


Figure 1: Exposures per year in the PIRUS data. Exposure is defined as the date at which an individual's radical activity or plot first came to public attention.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- Radicalization over time has occurred in several waves, corresponding to the rise of Far Left extremism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Far Right extremism in the 1990s and Islamist extremism after 2001 (see Figure 1, above).
- Some factors affecting the likelihood of violence vary by ideological milieu, while others apply to all three ideological categories. Far Left and Islamist extremists with a history of abuse were more likely to be violent. Interestingly, Far Right and Far Left individuals whose radicalization was characterized by the consumption of radical media were less likely to be violent, as were those who were active in their religious communities. Risk factors that reliably predicted violence for all radical individuals include having a criminal background and certain demographic risk factors, such as being young and single.¹
- Radicalization appears to be a social phenomenon. About half of the individuals in the dataset were in a tight-knit, insular group and only 10 percent of individuals were loners. However, loners tended to be more violent than sociable radicals.

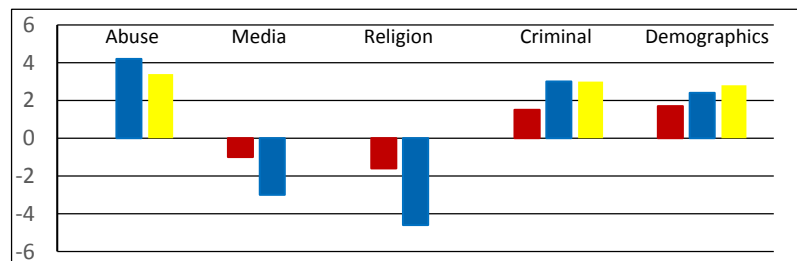


Figure 2: Percentage change in the likelihood of violence by risk factor among Islamist (yellow), Far Right (red), and Far Left (blue) individuals radicalized in the United States.

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¹ Based on the results of logit regressions. Highlighted risk factors were significant at the 0.01 level.