

Basics indicators of radicalisation

The process of radicalisation is a multifactorial phenomenon, highlighted through the identification of indicators related to the personality, the environment, the position in the society, the history of life and the personal relations.

Indicators can be identified by an accumulation of attitudes and behaviours that need to be considered with prudence. Most of the times, one or only a few signals cannot lead to any assumption. These signals can be detected through:

- Rupture with the environment
- Personal environment
- Theories and speeches
- Techniques

1- Rupture with the environment

- Breaking-off with the environment

This is one of the key indicators of the radicalisation process. Strong signals are when the person completely changes daily habits and stops all relations with former friends, with the school and the school community, with family and friends to dedicate to an exclusive relationship with a group and a mission. This includes prolonged and unexplained absences from home, exacerbated gender divide, sudden interest in guns.

Weak signals include: rupture with school, sudden drop out of school, change in moods, exaltation, flight into the imaginary and virtual world, loss of affect, indifference, conventional care deprivation, lack of important hygiene, extreme neglect of living and health conditions, exorbitant financial investment in an exclusive field, financing of charitable activities for populations presented as victims of exactions, sleep deprivation.

- Changes in the physical appearance or dress code.

These changes are the most visible indicator. However, if they show a radicalisation in the behaviour, it doesn't mean that the subject will fall into violence. It needs to be complemented by other indicators. It should also be noted that the change in appearance may be not noticed because of a growing tendency for dissimulation and insincerity.

- A religious practice very much ritualized.

Signs showing a sudden and exclusive interest in radical religious practice and demonstrative together with a change with the family practice can alert. For example, the establishment of dietary prohibitions extended to the relatives, removal or destruction of all photos or human representations or obsession around rituals can characterize a process of radicalisation. It includes hostility and aggressive behaviours for religious motives

In any case, the analysis should be done with caution. It is necessary to differentiate Muslim fundamentalism from joining a radicalised group.

2- Personal environment

We can identify four individual contexts of fragility in relation to the environment:

- A father or parental figure degraded in a weak family environment

The absence or the rejection of the father, a difficult family situation including placement in protection centres for children or in host families or domestic violence can facilitate the enrolment in a radicalisation process.

- The social environment

The social environment in which the individual lives can facilitate radicalisation. A young facing school failure and social failure, often seen as an injustice, who is not recognised, still needs a role in the society. The multiplicity of failures can lead the young to choose the path of radicalisation.

- Personality traits

These are often the younger (15 to 25), the most fragile and impressionable and who are often looking for an ideal who are the first affected by the phenomenon of radicalisation, particularly in an

unstable situations, demanding identity and emotional recognition. They have difficulties to change from teenage to adulthood.

- Personal contacts

Family and friends who are already in the process of radicalising can have a strong influence, in particular if they are charismatic or seen as local role models.

3- Theories and speeches

Theories and speeches are very meaningful in the radicalisation process. The person tends to repeat on a stereotyped mode all radical rhetoric and propaganda taken mostly from the Internet. There are three different types of discourses:

- Conspiracy theories, victimhood

We can highlight references to the end of the world, Apocalypse, and to various conspiracy theories that reinforce a self-image of victimhood and legitimize violence as a response.

- Changing identity behaviour

Rejection or questioning of authority, rejection of democracy, anti-Semitic discourse, defending and supporting jihadist groups, about anti-social discourse.

Strong signals include: threat of the State, support for jihadists, hostility to the West, anti-Semitic rhetoric, vehement denunciation of those who do not share their faith (other Muslims, people of other faiths or without denominations), totalitarianism, lack of autonomous expression, self-recitation, instrumentalised rhetoric, distinction between good and bad Muslims.

Weaker signals are antisocial discourse, rejection or questioning of authority, contestation of the democratic system, criticism of the State, discriminatory attitude towards women, change of semantics and stereotyped speech.

- Proselytism

Speeches to convert their friends and relatives, to recruit new people, to encourage them to go to conflict areas or to move to violent action.

4- Techniques

Radicalised people rely on different techniques and strategies. We can distinguish two types:

- The use of virtual or human networks

Internet and social networks are powerful communication vectors, for propaganda and recruitment, for departures to the conflict zones. The use of radical websites is often done without the family and the environment knowing it, with a particular care not to leave any traces. There are also human networks, often connected with criminal groups or offenders that, through their speeches and with material support, encourage radicalisation or leaving for jihad.

Strong signals include regular changes of telephone chips, use of Internet sites and social networks of radical or extremist nature, use of sites known for radical trends expressed or underlying, or of persons unfavourably registered in a radical, criminal or terrorist path.

Weaker signals include multiple network accounts, frequent use of phone and internet, day and night.

- The strategies of dissimulation and duplicity

Radicalised individuals use a variety of tricks to avoid arousing suspicion. Some evidences can identify these: presence of maps and travel brochures to Turkey and Syria, tourist travel or humanitarian projects in Turkey.

(Adapted from a training kit elaborated by the French Interministerial Committee for the Prevention of Crime and radicalisation)