

## overview

Violent extremism is part of a process through which radical militancy gradually “initiates” individuals into accepting the abandonment of established norms and values in favor of violence in particular cases, then as a legitimate means to address perceived grievances of a more lasting character, before acquiring these individuals into its world view of perpetual conflict.

Violent extremism is accordingly a symptom of radical militancy. It represents the crossing of the “red line” with which militancy no longer falls within the rights of individuals for free thought and free speech, triggering instead the corrective actions of legal and law-enforcement authorities.

Extremism is on the rise, especially in the Middle East, as manifested by ISIS and other terrorist movements. Europe is also affected by these trends, and therefore this difficult problem may spread further. Chaos, failed states and the rise of violent non-state actors result in migration pressures on other countries as well as the endless threat of terrorism. The major response currently available to these threats is increased security and intelligence activity, and in some cases, military intervention.

Although this may be necessary in certain circumstances, it needs to be complemented by a greater understanding of the root causes of extremism. Why is it that some people, including those with apparently normal lives in the West, join these groups? If we understand better the basic causes, what can be done to address them?

It is incumbent on society to address the reasons of the success of radical militancy in its recruitment efforts, in order to devise means and methods of resistance to its appeal. An understanding of generic factors, from economic, social, and generational alienation, to the emerging factors of globalization, new social media, information saturation, and privacy challenges, will be sought in the context of this meeting, as well as an exploration of the specific elements of ideology, religion, and the appropriation of modernity in the Middle East.

This meeting brings together some Western and Arab experts, including psychologists and academics with innovative ideas and experience on these matters along with Lebanese and Arab counterparts to begin a process of gaining the upper hand on one of the most important of files challenging policymakers today.