

**Who Does Not Become a Terrorist, and Why?
Towards an Empirically Grounded Understanding of Individual Motivation in
Violence and Non-Violence**

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This project aims to examine an important question: Why do individuals eschew violence? Since the 1990s scholars have periodically conducted fieldwork among terrorists in order to understand the motivation of individuals who decide to engage in violence. The body of literature that resulted from these endeavors has been too deterministic. In every context we find many individuals who share the demographic, family, cultural, and/or socioeconomic background of those who decided to engage in terrorism, and yet refrained themselves from taking up armed militancy, even though they were sympathetic to the end goals of armed groups. The field of terrorism studies has not, until recently, attempted to look at this control group. This project is not about terrorists, but about *supporters* of political violence. Our goal is twofold. First, we propose to study supporters of armed militancy, in order to describe the panoply of activities they are willing to undertake short of violence, and the determinants of those actions. At the same time, we aim to contribute to theory building in the field of individual radicalization by looking at a control group that has, so far, never been studied.

Our research design is straightforward. The principal investigators will prepare a questionnaire of closed- and open-ended questions to be used in fieldwork. We will then commission 14 case studies. Each case study will involve extensive interviews with ten or more activists and militants in parties and NGOs who, though sympathetic to radical causes, have chosen a path of non-violence. This research will yield over 140 life histories. Following the fieldwork, we will bring together all case study authors for a conference in which they will discuss the findings from their interviews. The co-PIs will then commission a content analysis of the interview transcripts, and work on a final manuscript that analyzes the main findings from systematic, cross-regional and cross-national comparisons, and suggests avenues for further research.

This project will provide substantial empirical evidence on which to base sound policy. The field of terrorism studies cannot as yet generalize with great confidence about the issues that drive individuals to armed militancy and the factors that prevent such radicalization. This study will broaden our knowledge base on the subject of support for violence, and thereby inform sound policymaking in the area of counter-radicalization and counter-terrorism.