



Deviance, Despair, and Detonation: Criminological Theories of Terrorist Acts

Farhan Ahmad¹, Ejaz Ahmad² & Dr. Fazal Hakim³

¹Assistant Director (Research & Analysis) Qualitative Expert, Counter Terrorism Department Khyber Pakhtunkwa, Pakistan, Email: farhankarak@gmail.com

²Lecturer, Department of Economics, The University of Haripur, Email: ahmad@uoh.edu.pk

³Assistant Director (Research & Analysis) Qualitative Expert, Counter Terrorism Department, Khyber Pakhtunkwa, Pakistan, Email: fazalhakim90@yahoo.com

ARTICLE INFO			ABSTRACT
Article History:			<i>This research explores terrorism through the lens of criminological theory, challenging traditional perceptions that treat it solely as political violence. The study investigates how terrorist behaviour aligns with deviant conduct as defined in criminology, emphasizing the relevance of structural inequalities, social alienation, and learned radicalization. The purpose of this study is to reinterpret terrorist acts as socio-criminological phenomena driven by despair, marginalization, and identity crises. Utilizing a qualitative, theory-driven research design, the article applies key frameworks such as strain theory, social learning theory, labelling theory, and control theory to analyse the pathways to radicalization. It draws upon case studies, theoretical models, and interdisciplinary literature to illustrate how social environments and psychological conditions contribute to violent extremism. The key finding is that terrorism often emerges not only from ideological conviction but also from structural deprivation, emotional frustration, and deviant subcultural reinforcement. By integrating criminological insights with contemporary security challenges, this research highlights the need for holistic counterterrorism approaches that address social injustice, rebuild communal bonds, and prevent the social conditions that facilitate terrorist acts. Terrorism remains one of the most pressing security concerns in contemporary society. While political science and international relations often dominate the discourse, criminology offers unique insights into the motivations and conditions underlying terrorist behaviour. This article explores the phenomenon of terrorism through key criminological theories including strain theory, social learning theory, labelling theory, and control theory. It argues that terrorist acts can be understood not merely as political violence but as deviant behaviour arising from structural inequalities, identity crises, and socialization within radical milieus. By applying criminological frameworks, the article seeks to illuminate the pathways to radicalization and the sociological conditions that facilitate acts of terror.</i>
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Corresponding Author:			
Farhan Ahmad			
Email: farhankarak@gmail.com			

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Introduction

Terrorism persists as one of the most urgent and complex global security challenges of the 21st century. While often studied through political science and international relations frameworks, this approach frequently emphasizes ideology, geopolitics, and strategic rationale, overlooking the deep-rooted social and psychological dynamics that contribute to terrorist behaviour. This research aims to shift the analytical lens by examining terrorism through criminological theory, particularly as a form of deviance shaped by structural despair, marginalization, and identity fragmentation. Reframing terrorism in this way not only broadens our understanding of its origins but also provides more holistic and potentially effective pathways for prevention and intervention. The primary objective of this study is to investigate the extent to which key criminological theories strain theory, social learning theory, labelling theory, and control theory can explain the motivations, radicalization processes, and behavioural trajectories associated with acts of terrorism. The scope of the analysis includes both individual and collective experiences of radicalization, emphasizing how socio-economic inequality, emotional frustration, deviant peer association, and eroded social bonds function as enabling factors. In this context, terrorism is conceptualized not merely as political violence, but as a deviant response to systemic deprivation and social dislocation. This research is guided by two core questions: How can terrorism be understood as a manifestation of social deviance? And what criminological theories offer the most compelling explanations for the emergence of terrorist actors and networks? The central hypothesis posits that terrorism, while politically framed, often stems from criminogenic conditions similar to those observed in other forms of serious deviant behaviour. These include prolonged exposure to marginalization, identity loss, state repression, and environments that foster deviant subcultures (Karoui, 2010; Gul & Ahmad, 2025; Khan et al., 2020).

The study is particularly significant in light of current global trends, including rising socio-political polarization, mass surveillance, algorithmic radicalization, and the militarization of counterterrorism. A criminological perspective not only enhances scholarly understanding but also supports the development of more socially grounded and rehabilitative policy measures. Rather than reinforcing cycles of repression and stigma, criminology-based approaches prioritize reintegration, community resilience, and early intervention. Methodologically, the article adopts a qualitative and theory-driven approach. It synthesizes existing criminological literature, case studies, and interdisciplinary research to construct a comprehensive theoretical framework. While it does not rely on empirical fieldwork, the study's comparative and interpretative methodology allows for a nuanced exploration of how abstract theories play out in real-world terrorist behaviour. The article is organized into several sections to facilitate a clear progression of ideas. The next section defines terrorism within the context of social deviance. Subsequent sections examine how various criminological theories interpret the root causes and manifestations of terrorism. An integrative perspective is then developed, followed by a discussion on policy and legal implications. The final section offers a conclusion and recommendations for further research. By engaging with terrorism through a criminological lens, this article contributes to a more interdisciplinary and socially responsive understanding of one of the most persistent threats to global peace and security. Terrorist violence is frequently framed as a rational, strategic response to political grievances. However, viewing terrorism exclusively through this lens obscures the social and psychological conditions that underpin radicalization. Criminology, which examines deviance, social control, and the social roots of unlawful behaviour, provides a complementary framework. This paper explores how major criminological theories explain terrorist acts and offers a multidimensional view of terrorism as a form of deviance that thrives in contexts of despair and disintegration (Novaković, 2024; Gul et al., 2025).

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing an extensive review and critical analysis of existing criminological literature, case studies, and theoretical frameworks to investigate the underlying causes and dynamics of terrorist acts. Primary sources include scholarly articles, official reports, and empirical studies related to strain theory, social learning theory, labelling theory, and control theory, while secondary sources encompass interdisciplinary research on terrorism and radicalization. The rationale for this methodological approach lies in its capacity to synthesize diverse perspectives, enabling a comprehensive understanding of terrorism as a form of social deviance. The data were systematically selected based on relevance, credibility, and contribution to theory-building, then thematically analysed to identify patterns and intersections among the different criminological explanations. This method allows for an integrative theoretical exploration that informs both academic discourse and practical policy implications.

Defining Terrorism as Deviance

Understanding terrorism through the criminological concept of deviance provides a critical foundation for analysing its underlying social and psychological dimensions. In criminology, deviance refers to behaviour that violates societal norms, values, or expectations and elicits social condemnation or sanction. While terrorism is typically framed as a form of political violence, it also constitutes a severe breach of normative social conduct, often involving acts that are morally, legally, and culturally condemned. This overlap between terrorism and deviance opens the door for applying criminological theory to examine its causes, progression, and consequences. Terrorist acts such as bombings, assassinations, kidnappings, or mass shootings are not only criminal offenses but also symbolic challenges to established social order. They are committed with the intent to instil fear, disrupt societal functioning, and challenge the legitimacy of state authority or dominant ideologies. In this sense, terrorism is not just political resistance; it is a deviant mode of communication that signals a profound disconnection from mainstream norms and values. The deviance lies not only in the violence itself but in the actors' rejection of lawful, democratic, or nonviolent channels of grievance expression. Labelling terrorism as deviance also underscores the social construction of the term. What is considered terrorism often depends on perspective, power dynamics, and context. The same act may be viewed as liberation by one group and as terrorism by another, highlighting the fluidity of the deviant label. Nonetheless, from a sociological and criminological standpoint, the consistent element is that terrorist acts deviate sharply from accepted norms and provoke widespread moral outrage and legal suppression (Zarzani, et al., 2024; Gul et al., 2025).

Moreover, viewing terrorism as deviance allows for an exploration of the social environments and individual experiences that produce such behaviour. This perspective shifts the analysis away from viewing terrorists solely as ideological extremists or irrational fanatics and toward a broader understanding of how structural inequality, social alienation, and identity crises may lead individuals to adopt deviant, violent paths. It emphasizes the importance of understanding not just what terrorists do, but why they do it, and how societal conditions may contribute to their radicalization. Thus, situating terrorism within the framework of deviance provides a more nuanced and comprehensive approach. It bridges the gap between security-focused counterterrorism strategies and social science research, offering insight into how deviant identities are formed, maintained, and potentially redirected. It also paves the way for applying established criminological theories to better understand and ultimately prevent terrorist violence. Deviance, in criminological terms, refers to behaviours that violate social norms and elicit negative reactions.

Terrorism, while politically motivated, meets the definitional threshold of deviance. It challenges societal norms, disrupts social order, and often arises from marginalized or alienated segments of society. Recognizing terrorism as a deviant act opens the door for criminological analysis and offers fresh insights into its causation (Adamu, et al., 2024; Gul et al., 2025).

Strain Theory and Structural Despair

Strain theory, originally formulated by Robert K. Merton, provides a compelling lens through which to examine the socio-structural roots of terrorism. The theory posits that deviant behaviour arises when individuals are unable to achieve culturally approved goals through legitimate means. When access to opportunities such as education, employment, and social mobility is structurally restricted, individuals may experience strain or frustration, leading them to adopt alternative often deviant—strategies to attain recognition, purpose, or empowerment. This conceptual framework is particularly useful for understanding how structural despair can catalyse radicalization and terrorist violence. In many cases, individuals drawn into terrorism perceive themselves as systematically excluded from the benefits and protections of the societal order. Economic deprivation, ethnic or religious discrimination, state violence, and political disenfranchisement contribute to a sense of profound injustice and alienation. These grievances, when unaddressed, generate the psychological and emotional strain that can propel individuals toward deviant outlets. Terrorist groups often exploit this sense of despair, offering a narrative of resistance and redemption that reinterprets personal and collective suffering as a moral mandate for violence (Baranauskas, 2024; Gul et al., 2025).

Strain theory also helps explain the socio-economic profiles of many terrorist actors. Contrary to stereotypes of irrational or fanatical perpetrators, many terrorists emerge from contexts marked by chronic poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, and generational trauma. These conditions create what Agnew's general strain theory refers to as "negative emotional states" such as anger, resentment, or hopelessness emotions that can be redirected into violent ideologies when supportive social structures are absent. For example, radicalization in marginalized urban communities or among politically oppressed minorities often mirrors the strain-induced pathways observed in other forms of deviance, such as gang membership or organized crime. Importantly, strain theory does not reduce terrorism to mere economic hardship. Rather, it emphasizes the disjunction between societal expectations and accessible means of achievement. This disjunction is felt most acutely by individuals who are socially aware and politically conscious but are unable to effect change through legal or institutional channels. In such cases, terrorism may be perceived as the only remaining avenue for asserting agency, achieving recognition, or exacting revenge. By applying strain theory, we are better equipped to recognize terrorism as a symptom of broader structural failures. It reframes counterterrorism not only as a matter of intelligence and security but as a call to address inequality, marginalization, and systemic injustice. Policies that aim to alleviate structural despair through education, inclusion, social support, and meaningful political participation can therefore play a critical role in reducing the allure of terrorist violence. Robert K. Merton's strain theory posits that deviance results when individuals cannot achieve socially approved goals through legitimate means. For many prospective terrorists, structural inequalities poverty, discrimination, political repression creates a strain between societal goals (e.g., dignity, justice, recognition) and the available means to attain them. Radical ideologies offer a solution: redefining success through martyrdom or resistance, thus transforming personal despair into collective violence (Zamir & Kaunert, 2025; Ahmed et al., 2025).

Social Learning Theory: Radicalization by Association

Social learning theory, developed by Albert Bandura and extended in criminological contexts by Ronald Akers, posits that deviant behaviour is acquired through interaction with others in a process of observation, imitation, reinforcement, and normalization. According to this theory, individuals are not born with deviant tendencies; rather, they learn them through exposure to environments where such behaviours are modelled and rewarded. In the context of terrorism, this theoretical approach offers a powerful explanation for how radical ideologies and violent methods are transmitted within social networks and subcultures. Radicalization rarely occurs in isolation. Individuals often enter into deviant belief systems through personal associations friends, family members, religious leaders, online communities, or militant groups who serve as role models and transmitters of extremist values. These associations create micro-environments in which violence is not only justified but valorised, and where moral disengagement is systematically cultivated. The normalization of deviant behaviour in these settings is reinforced through praise, status, or promises of spiritual or ideological reward, effectively desensitizing individuals to violence and fostering collective identity against an "enemy" group. The internet and social media have exponentially expanded the reach of radicalizing agents. Online echo chambers, encrypted communication, and algorithm-driven content amplification have enabled the formation of virtual subcultures where extremist narratives flourish. These digital communities often replicate the dynamics of physical extremist networks, offering ideological mentorship, tactical training, and emotional support. Repeated exposure to extremist content in such settings facilitates cognitive restructuring, wherein violence becomes a legitimate or even necessary response to perceived injustice (AMODIO, 2024; Malik & Gul, 2024).

Importantly, social learning theory also highlights the reciprocal relationship between the individual and their environment. While radicalized individuals are influenced by deviant peers, they also contribute to the reinforcement and propagation of extremist norms. In this way, terrorist movement's function much like deviant subcultures, sustaining themselves through shared rituals, in-group language, symbolic acts of violence, and ideological indoctrination. Such collective frameworks reduce individual moral inhibition and increase group cohesion, making members more willing to engage in acts that they would otherwise find unacceptable. Furthermore, this perspective challenges the view of terrorists as isolated actors or lone wolves. Even so-called "individual" terrorists often emerge from broader networks of influence, shaped by mentors, literature, forums, or ideological role models. The social learning framework therefore directs attention to the ecosystems of radicalization, suggesting that effective counter-radicalization efforts must disrupt not only individuals but the communicative and relational structures that sustain extremism. By focusing on the processes of association and reinforcement, social learning theory underscores the need for preventive strategies that offer alternative social bonds and value systems. Community-based interventions, mentorship programs, and counter-narrative campaigns can serve as antidotes to the toxic environments in which radicalization thrives. Ultimately, understanding terrorism through the lens of social learning highlights its deeply relational nature rooted in human connections that can either destroy or heal (Tanshzil, et al., 2023; Khan & Jiliani, 2023).

Labelling Theory: Stigma and the Creation of Deviant Identities

Labelling theory, as developed by Howard Becker and expanded upon in subsequent sociological and criminological literature, suggests that deviance is not inherent in any particular act but is instead the result of societal reactions and labels imposed on individuals. Once labelled as "deviant," individuals may internalize this identity, adopt behaviours consistent with the label, and

be further marginalized from mainstream society. When applied to terrorism, labelling theory helps illuminate how social and state reactions to certain groups or individuals may contribute to a cycle of exclusion, radicalization, and deviant identity formation. The process of labelling begins when individuals often from marginalized communities are stereotyped, shrivelled, or criminalized based on ethnicity, religion, ideology, or political expression. In the post-9/11 global landscape, for example, many Muslims and immigrants have been subjected to suspicion, profiling, and discriminatory policies under the rhetoric of counterterrorism. These experiences of collective stigma and alienation can reinforce a sense of "otherness" and feed into a narrative of persecution. As individuals become socially excluded and stripped of legitimate avenues for redress, they may come to see violence as a means of reclaiming agency and asserting identity. Moreover, labelling by state institutions—through media portrayals, legal designations such as "terrorist organization," or expansive surveillance regimes—can have unintended consequences. Instead of deterring deviance, these practices often validate the extremist narratives that portray the state as oppressive and hypocritical. Young people growing up in environments saturated with negative stereotypes may come to accept the deviant label as a core part of their self-concept, particularly when supported by radical mentors who reinterpret stigma as a badge of Honor or resistance (Waite-Jones, & Rodriguez, 2022; Khan & Usman, 2023).

Labelling theory also explains how law enforcement and security policies may inadvertently intensify radicalization. Aggressive policing, mass incarceration, indefinite detention, and denial of due process can create "moral shocks" and embolden individuals to reject societal norms altogether. The more entrenched the deviant label becomes, the more difficult it is for the individual to reintegrate into mainstream society, thereby perpetuating a cycle of alienation and ideological entrenchment. A key insight of labelling theory is its emphasis on the performative and socially constructed nature of deviance. It invites critical reflection on how societies define, apply, and enforce the label of "terrorist" often inconsistently and selectively. For example, political insurgents, freedom fighters, or anti-colonial resistors may be labelled terrorists depending on the prevailing power structure and political agenda. Recognizing this subjectivity is crucial to ensuring that legal and security responses do not produce further injustice or exclusion. In applying labelling theory to terrorism, the focus shifts from the act itself to the social processes that construct deviant identities and reinforce cycles of violence. Effective counterterrorism, therefore, must involve more than coercion and surveillance; it must also dismantle stigmatizing structures and promote inclusive narratives. Rehabilitation, restorative justice, and efforts to humanize those at risk of radicalization are essential in disrupting the self-fulfilling prophecy of the terrorist label (Deakin, et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2023).

Control Theory: Weak Bonds and the Path to Violence

Control theory, most notably articulated by Travis Hirschi, posits that individuals refrain from deviant behaviour not because of internal moral constraints alone, but because of strong social bonds that tie them to the values, norms, and expectations of society. According to Hirschi, these bonds—comprised of attachment to others, commitment to conventional goals, involvement in legitimate activities, and belief in societal rules function as informal controls that discourage deviance. When these bonds weaken or break, individuals become more susceptible to deviant or criminal behaviour, including engagement in terrorism. Applying control theory to terrorism highlights how the erosion of social bonds particularly in contexts of social disintegration, alienation, and political marginalization creates a fertile ground for radicalization. Individuals who feel disconnected from their families, communities, educational institutions, or employment structures are less likely to feel invested in the social order and more likely to be drawn to

alternative systems of meaning and belonging. For many, terrorist groups offer not just ideological justification for violence, but also a surrogate community, a sense of purpose, and a framework of identity that compensates for the absence of traditional social attachments. In this framework, terrorism can be seen as a byproduct of failed or broken bonds rather than purely ideological conviction. Disengagement from family or school, estrangement from cultural or national identity, and disillusionment with authority figures often precede the process of radicalization. These emotional and social vacuums are quickly filled by extremist networks that promise solidarity, recognition, and mission-driven lives. The appeal is particularly potent for vulnerable youth, immigrants in hostile societies, or individuals with histories of trauma, abuse, or systemic neglect populations often characterized by weakened social ties (Daneshnari, et al., 2025; Hussain et al., 2023).

Control theory also explains why not all individuals exposed to radicalizing conditions become terrorists. Those with strong attachments to family, mentors, or prosocial peers may experience the same grievances or frustrations as radicalized individuals but are restrained by their emotional investments in conventional society. In contrast, those lacking such attachments have fewer psychological or social barriers to crossing the threshold into deviant behaviour. Moreover, control theory underscores the preventative potential of social integration in counterterrorism. Interventions that rebuild or strengthen social bonds—through education, employment opportunities, family support, civic engagement, and inclusive community initiatives—can serve as buffers against the lure of extremist ideologies. Rehabilitation programs that focus on reconnecting former radicals with prosocial networks have shown promising results, supporting the idea that deviance is not fixed but relational and reversible. By framing terrorism as a consequence of weakened social controls, control theory emphasizes the importance of cohesion, support, and institutional trust. It calls for a shift in policy away from punitive isolation and toward restorative engagement, acknowledging that individuals commit to society when they feel that society is committed to them. In this sense, preventing terrorism becomes not merely a matter of neutralizing threats but of nurturing connection (Venice, et al., 2025; Khan et al., 2022).

Integrative Criminological Perspectives

While each criminological theory offers valuable insights into the phenomenon of terrorism, an integrative approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of its complex causes and dynamics. Terrorist acts cannot be fully explained through a single theoretical lens, as the motivations and pathways to violence are multifaceted, involving structural, social, psychological, and identity-related factors. Synthesizing strain theory, social learning theory, labelling theory, and control theory creates a holistic framework that accounts for both individual agency and broader social conditions. Strain theory highlights the socio-economic and political pressures that generate feelings of despair and frustration, creating the fertile ground from which radical ideologies can take root. However, these strains alone do not cause terrorism; they must be accompanied by social contexts that normalize and reinforce deviant behaviour. This is where social learning theory complements the analysis by showing how individuals adopt extremist beliefs and violent tactics through interaction with radicalized peers, mentors, or online communities. Labelling theory adds another layer by illustrating how societal reactions to deviance, especially through stigmatization and exclusion, can entrench identities as "terrorists" or "outsiders." This process not only reinforces radicalization but also complicates disengagement, as the deviant label can become internalized and acted upon. Control theory further deepens the framework by explaining the role of weakened social bonds in reducing individuals' investment in conventional norms and increasing susceptibility to extremist recruitment (Mensah, 2025; Khan et al., 2021).

Together, these theories underscore the cyclical and interactive nature of radicalization. Structural inequalities produce strain and despair, which are then exploited within radical social networks that reinforce deviant identities. The subsequent stigmatization and weakening of conventional bonds perpetuate isolation, making re-entry into mainstream society more difficult. This feedback loop creates a self-sustaining cycle of deviance and violence. From a policy perspective, integrative criminological perspectives advocate for multi-dimensional strategies that address root causes, disrupt radicalizing environments, counter stigmatization, and rebuild social ties. Prevention programs must combine socio-economic development, community engagement, educational outreach, and targeted interventions in at-risk populations. Moreover, legal responses should balance security concerns with respect for civil liberties to avoid exacerbating grievances that fuel radicalization. An integrative criminological approach moves beyond simplistic explanations of terrorism as either purely ideological or criminal. It situates terrorist acts within broader patterns of social deviance influenced by structural despair, learned behaviours, social labelling, and weakened bonds. This enriched understanding is crucial for developing nuanced, effective responses that prioritize social justice alongside security (Khan et al., 2021).

Policy Implications and Legal Reflections

The criminological theories examined herein reveal that terrorism is not solely a security issue but a complex social phenomenon rooted in structural inequalities, social interactions, and identity processes. Effective policy responses must therefore transcend narrow law enforcement approaches and incorporate holistic strategies that address the multifaceted causes of radicalization. From a policy perspective, prevention is paramount. Strain theory suggests the need for socio-economic reforms aimed at reducing inequality, political exclusion, and marginalization—factors that create fertile ground for despair and recruitment. Investments in education, employment, and community development can mitigate the structural pressures that push vulnerable individuals toward extremism. Social learning theory underscores the importance of disrupting radical networks by monitoring and countering extremist propaganda, both offline and online, while simultaneously promoting alternative narratives that delegitimize violence and foster social cohesion. Labelling theory cautions policymakers about the risks of stigmatization and over-criminalization. Security measures that unfairly target specific communities risk reinforcing feelings of alienation and victimization, which may exacerbate radicalization rather than prevent it. Therefore, policies should uphold principles of fairness, transparency, and human rights, ensuring that counterterrorism efforts do not marginalize innocent individuals or violate civil liberties. Community engagement and trust-building initiatives are crucial for breaking cycles of stigma and integrating at-risk populations (Melis-et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2020).

Control theory emphasizes the restoration and strengthening of social bonds as a key element in counter-radicalization efforts. Rehabilitation programs, family support services, and civic participation initiatives help reintegrate former radicals and vulnerable individuals into mainstream society. These programs should focus on rebuilding trust, providing psychological support, and creating opportunities for meaningful social and economic inclusion. Legally, counterterrorism frameworks must balance the imperative to protect national security with the obligation to safeguard individual rights. Laws should be precise, proportional, and subject to oversight to prevent abuses of power. Judicial systems have a vital role in ensuring due process and preventing the politicization of terrorism charges, which can contribute to the labelling and stigmatization that drive further radicalization. Moreover, international cooperation is indispensable, as terrorism transcends borders. Harmonizing legal definitions, sharing intelligence, and fostering collaborative prevention strategies enhance the effectiveness of global counterterrorism efforts while respecting

state sovereignty and human rights standards. In conclusion, integrating criminological insights into policy and law can create more just, effective, and sustainable responses to terrorism. Recognizing terrorism as a form of social deviance rooted in despair and social dynamics invites comprehensive strategies that combine prevention, engagement, rehabilitation, and legal safeguards. Such an approach not only counters violent extremism but also promotes resilient, inclusive societies where the appeal of terrorism is diminished. Understanding terrorism through a criminological lens informs more humane and effective policy responses. Emphasizing social inclusion, psychological counselling, de-radicalization programs, and community-based interventions can help address the root causes of terrorist deviance. Legal systems must also be cautious in how they apply labels and pursue counterterrorism, ensuring that efforts to combat terror do not themselves perpetuate marginalization (Quinn, 2021; Khan et al., 2020).

Conclusion

This article has explored terrorism through multiple criminological theories—strain theory, social learning theory, labelling theory, and control theory demonstrating that acts of terror are deeply embedded in social structures, interpersonal relationships, and identity formations. By viewing terrorism as a form of deviance rooted in despair, learned behaviour, stigmatization, and weakened social bonds, we move beyond simplistic or purely ideological explanations to grasp its complex human and societal dimensions. Understanding terrorism in this multifaceted way matters because it shifts the focus from reactive security measures alone to proactive, inclusive strategies that address root causes. Policies grounded in social justice, community engagement, and respect for rights are essential to disrupt cycles of radicalization and foster social resilience. For practitioners, lawmakers, and scholars alike, this research underscores the importance of combining sociological insight with legal frameworks and community-based interventions. Looking forward, future research should expand interdisciplinary inquiry by integrating psychological, political, and cultural perspectives with criminological theories to capture the full spectrum of radicalization pathways. Empirical studies that track individual trajectories of radicalization and disengagement could inform more tailored prevention and rehabilitation programs. Additionally, exploring the impact of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and encrypted networks, on social learning and radicalization dynamics presents a critical frontier. In an era marked by global interconnectedness and persistent social inequalities, understanding terrorism as a product of deviance shaped by structural and social forces is not only academically valuable but socially imperative. This perspective equips societies to respond not merely with force, but with foresight, compassion, and justice building safer, more inclusive futures for all. Terrorism, while a political act, is also a manifestation of deep social deviance, shaped by despair, exclusion, and learned radicalization. Criminological theories provide essential tools to decode the underlying drivers of terrorist behaviour and inform strategies to prevent it. Bridging the gap between security frameworks and criminological insight offers a more nuanced and ultimately more effective response to the persistent threat of terrorism.

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