



BULLETIN

BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE | LAW ENFORCEMENT & COUNTERINTELLIGENCE | CYBERSECURITY | EMPLOYEE MANAGEMENT RELATIONS | THREAT ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT

IDEOLOGICAL MOTIVATION FOR INSIDER THREATS

Personal predispositions influence ideologies for individuals in any workforce, and changes to leadership, culture, and/or organizational direction can result in misalignment of values. Outsiders may also seek opportunities to become insiders, motivated to act upon ideological differences within government or corporate entities. Others motivated by outside factors may abandon core beliefs and embrace new ideologies. Whether beliefs are long-held or novel/shifting, ideological motivations can lead to loss of classified or proprietary information, workplace violence, espionage or terrorism. Identifying concerning behaviors and proactively putting the risk puzzle together can help to deter, detect, and mitigate potential insider threats.

"Ideological Fluidity" Recent incidents have revealed some of the unique ways that individuals mix and shift ideologies, a phenomenon referred to as ideological fluidity. Individuals may not adhere to just one traditional set of views, or may transition through several, aligning with different groups and ideas in an instrumental way to justify their malicious or violent behavior ([More info](#)).



RECOGNIZE COMMON THEMES FROM THE LITERATURE¹

- > Anger at life situations
- > Hopelessness / Resignation
- > Isolation / Alienation
- > Mindset - "They are evil."
- > Perceived injustice / Grievance
- > Seeking purpose, connection, & structure
- > Too much free time
- > Perceived humiliation
- > Trauma / Childhood adversity
- > Resentment / Disenfranchisement
- > Sense of belonging
- > Religious justification for violence



DETECT CONCERNING BEHAVIORS

Changes in Values, Beliefs, and Vocabulary:

Provocative new viewpoints, adopting new terminology associated with a specific ideology, or increasingly engaging in conversations that are emotionally charged and dismissive of opposing views. This can progress and evolve to a system of "extreme overvalued beliefs²" that is all consuming, with which an individual fully identifies.

Shifting Priorities/Allegiances: Look for changes in focus which can manifest as decreased engagement, reluctance to cooperate, increased absenteeism, or a general disinterest in the organization's mission and goals. Also, persistent speaking out against the organization, while protected under the 1st Amendment can exceed what is acceptable within the workplace and can escalate risk.



When identifying and addressing specific ideological motives, it is important to continue to consider all risk/protective factors regardless of the ideological concerns. ([CDSE Case Studies](#))



Ethan Melzer: Motivated by white supremacist beliefs associated with the Order of Nine Angles (O9A), released classified information related to his unit.



Daniel Hale: Motivated by anti-war ideology and his opposition to the drone program, leaked documents to the press.



Eduardo Moreno: Motivated by beliefs that the USNS Mercy ship had ulterior motives associated with COVID, committed sabotage.



MITIGATE RISK PROACTIVELY

Promote belonging:

One component of radicalization is an unmet need for connection, belonging, or significance³. You can help to mitigate risk by building unit cohesion. Identify individuals who are struggling and reach out to them proactively for social/team engagement.

Early action and documentation:

Document the progression of behaviors over time. Behaviors that don't meet a reporting threshold may still reflect a slow escalation and subtle changes as a person's ideological misalignment manifests toward action.

Leverage resources and programs:

Adapt lessons learned from programs in the DoD to assist those dealing with a crisis of conscience, address underlying grievances, and encourage critical thinking as a standard business practice.

1. FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit 1 (2025) [Beyond Belief: Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in America](#).

2. Zmigrod, L. (2022). A Psychology of Ideology: Unpacking the Psychological Structure of Ideological Thinking. *Perspectives on Psychological Science: A Journal of the Association for Psychological Science*, 17(4), 1072-1092.

3. Kruglanski, A., Jasko, K., Webber, D., Chernikova, M., & Molinaro, E. (2018). The making of violent extremists. *Review of General Psychology*, 22(1), 107-120.



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