

## The Structure of Violent Extremist Ideologies

Violent extremist ideologies typically are made up of six core assertions that violent extremists use to rhetorically justify violence and spur people to action. Generally, all six elements are necessary to persuade, radicalize, and mobilize people to become violent extremists: the loss or removal of one or more elements collapses the argument and undercuts the appeal of the ideology.

- *The core structural elements of an extremist ideology specify that the world has gone wrong because of the actions of an enemy who hates or threatens what is good. Now is the time when violence is necessary to prevent catastrophe. If we stay true to our righteous course, we will achieve victory.*

The chart below outlines each of these elements, what they provide to a violent extremist ideology, and what the ideology lacks once each element is removed.

ELEMENT	MESSAGE	WHAT THE ELEMENT DOES	ELEMENT IS NECESSARY BECAUSE
<b>Decline</b>	<i>The world has gone wrong.</i>	Interprets someone's world as decimated or in jeopardy.	Without <i>Decline</i> , the violent extremist sees no need to rescue their world.
<b>Two Camps</b>	<i>Our enemy hates us and all that is good.</i>	Identifies and demonizes an enemy who is to blame for the decline, and depicts those who resist that enemy as heroic.	Without <i>Two Camps</i> , there is no enemy to combat.
<b>Crisis Point</b>	<i>We must act now.</i>	Creates a sense of panic that action must be taken now to save that world, and says all one holds dear now hangs in the balance.	Without <i>Crisis Point</i> , there is no sense that immediate action is required.
<b>Method</b>	<i>Violence is necessary.</i>	Provides the appropriate—even heroic—way to resist.	Without <i>Method</i> , there is no clearly defined way to resist the enemy.
<b>Danger of Contamination</b>	<i>We must stay true to our course.</i>	Prevents compromise or moderation of extremist views by depicting them as treason or complicity with the enemy, or dangerous to the movement's success, the salvation of the world, or one's own soul.	Without <i>Danger of Contamination</i> , dialogue and compromise with perceived enemies is allowable to reach goals.
<b>Reward</b>	<i>We will defeat our enemy and achieve what we want as a movement and as individuals.</i>	Provides a motivating image of victory or paradise for the movement or individual.	Without <i>Reward</i> , there is no goal to work toward.