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PRISON-BASED DERADICALIZATION

What do we need to determine what works?

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Criminologists have long argued that, rather than serving as a place of rehabilitation, prisons are often a space where offenders become more deeply committed to a culture of crime. Just as prison time can lead prisoners to adopt criminal values, a process known as “prison-ization,” it can also prompt incarcerated offenders to accept terrorist values, including the belief that violence is a legitimate way to achieve ostensibly political goals (Naderi 2014).¹ A number of governments and private organizations have developed deradicalization and disengagement programs, but there is no agreed-upon definition of success, or a common method of evaluation.² This chapter provides an overview of several of these programs and analogous programs for ordinary criminals, and proposes an approach to measuring their impact.

There are fewer terrorists than ordinary prisoners in most prisons globally, but terrorist prisoners’ ability to influence others can be proportionally greater than that of ordinary prisoners (Silke 2014, p. 3). Prison can strengthen incarcerated terrorists’ commitment to their stated cause and their determination to use violence to achieve it. Terrorists who go to prison can recruit, and spread terrorist ideologies among ordinary offenders, as was the case of Ahmad Rahimi, the “Chelsea Bomber,” who even after arrest, reportedly disseminated Osama Bin Laden and Anwar al-Awlaki speeches and bomb-making instructions while awaiting trial (NBC 2017).³ They can form new groups, plot attacks, develop new strategies, or incite others.

The extent of terrorist recruitment or radicalization in prison is currently unknown,⁴ but there are some important examples. Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, was incarcerated at Camp Bucca in 2004, a US-run detention facility in Iraq. He had been relatively unknown, a minor jihadi at the time he was jailed. But it is now understood that Camp Bucca served as a kind of terrorist university for the group that would eventually be the Islamic State, even despite the existence of deradicalization efforts in these facilities (Stern and Berger 2015, pp. 33–34).⁵ According to General Stone, who ran the US detention facilities in Iraq, jihadists who get out of US detention develop a kind of aura when reintegrated into their home communities, making it easier for them to recruit
others, or to represent defiance against the West.6 Baghdadi left Camp Bucca and immediately joined the ranks of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), later announcing the formation of the Islamic State in 2014.7 Baghdadi is but one of many prominent terrorist recidivists.

Though this chapter is primarily concerned with those in prison on terrorism-related charges, there are also examples of ordinary offenders who radicalized in prison or shortly after they were released, and were subsequently convicted of terrorist crimes. British Richard Reid, the “shoe-bomber,” and American Jose Padilla both converted to Islam while in prison for non-terror-related offenses but may have radicalized shortly after their release. There are also cases of regular criminals becoming radicalized while in prison. The following two cases mirror one another: Harry Sarfo (German) and Amedy Coulibaly (French) were both radicalized by known al-Qaeda recruiters while each was serving time in prison for armed robbery.8 Sarfo claimed that it was in prison where he “learned the ideology of jihad,” whereas Coulibaly would meet his future accomplice, Cherif Kouachi (Chrisafis 2015; Dearden 2017).9 Figures for European ISIS fighters range from 50 to 80 percent having criminal records (Gaub and Lisiecka 2017, p. 1).10 Among ISIS attackers in the West, at least 57 percent had a criminal background (Vidino et al. 2017, p. 17). Importantly, the University of Maryland START program has found that individuals who engaged in non-violent or violent crime before radicalizing were 1.85 times more likely to engage in violent extremism after radicalizing than extremists without criminal histories (Jensen et al. 2018, p. 1). This suggests that individuals convicted of ordinary crime could be useful recruits for terrorist organizations.11

With the increase of terror-related arrests and convictions around the globe, prisons could become larger breeding grounds for the jihadist movement (Basra et al. 2016, p. 4). As such, deradicalization is an important development in an overall counterterrorism strategy, as there are notable examples of terrorists who recidivated upon release. The US government reports that nearly 30 percent of released Guantanamo detainees are suspected of or confirmed to have re-engaged in terrorism (DNI n.d., p. 1). Still, deradicalization is not a panacea: several of the January 2016 Jakarta attackers had undergone Indonesian deradicalization programming, and graduates of Saudi Arabian deradicalization programs have returned to the battlefield; some of them would become senior leaders of al-Qaeda. Deradicalization will never completely prevent terrorist recidivism, but with better evaluation of the programs that do exist, there may be a greater chance of improvement and success.

The first section of this chapter lays out the problem that deradicalization programs aim to address, and provides a brief survey of scholars’ critiques of existing methods of deradicalization and assessment. The second section provides an overview of several prison-based deradicalization and disengagement programs, and lists the components of these programs and the variables that are hypothesized to reduce recruitment and recidivism. The third section provides an overview of counter-recidivism programs successfully deployed for “ordinary” criminals. Unlike countering violent extremism (CVE) programs, these efforts incorporate a common method of evaluation. The final section concludes that, in order for prison-based deradicalization programs to benefit from the experience of others around the globe, an agreed-upon system of rigorous evaluation is needed.

We hypothesize that some aspects of existing programs to counter ordinary criminal recidivism and, most importantly, the standard method of evaluation that is now in use, may be applicable to decreasing terrorist recidivism. Our analysis thus far suggests that programs that are tailored to individual needs are more likely to be effective, as is the case for ordinary criminals. But in the absence of common evaluation tools, it is not yet possible to make a firm recommendation about which aspects of counter-recidivism (disengagement,
deradicalization, and post-release stabilization) are most likely to be effective, nor is it possible reliably to compare programs as they have different goals and employ a variety of methodologies and metrics.

How big is the terrorist recidivist problem?

There is no single database that reports the number of terrorists incarcerated around the globe. One study found that between September 11, 2001 and 2011, there were 119,044 anti-terror arrests and 35,117 convictions across 66 countries (Mendoza 2011). At the time of this writing, there were approximately 300 terrorist prisoners in US prisons, nearly 90 of whom are due to be released in the next five years (NCTC Current 2017, p. 1). Some of them “will probably reengage in terrorist activity,” the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) warned (p. 1). However, dynamics have changed since 2001. Of the 45,000 foreign fighters from around the world who left for Syria and Iraq, some have returned to their home countries of origin, and some have already died. But others have been or will be imprisoned, either in their home country or detained in Syria or Iraq (or elsewhere). In Europe, there were 718 arrests related to jihadist terrorism in 2016 alone, a number that has sharply increased for each of the previous three years (Europol 2017, p. 7). Thus, the number of incarcerated terrorists is likely to have grown significantly since the above-mentioned tally was published.

Daniel Koehler notes that there are approximately 40–50 deradicalization (or CVE) programs in operation globally (Koehler 2017, p. 1). Some of them have been evaluated, to some extent, often by the same organization that is providing the service, creating potential conflicts of interest. There is no overall measurement of how many terrorists have undergone deradicalization and what worked for those who did. There are many qualitative overviews, such as the “Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offender,” which presents over 20 useful best practices for prison deradicalization, but the report does not analyze the conditions under which certain practices work better than others (Global Counterterrorism Forum 2013). Other studies have analyzed the methodology of assessments that do exist. IMPACT Europe assessed 55 evaluations of deradicalization or prevention programs, and found that only 12 percent provided quantitative and qualitative data on effectiveness. A majority of the evaluations were not empirically based, but rather “theoretical” and/or “anecdotal” (Feddes and Gallucci 2015, p. 11). Koehler warns that ill-designed and ineffective deradicalization programs can increase the risk of terrorism by failing to detect high-risk cases (2017, p. 1).

Understanding why terrorists disengage is essential for formulating deradicalization programming. In John Horgan’s study of 29 former terrorists, he found no identifiable patterns among the reasons they offered for their decision to disengage. Many remained dedicated to the cause, even though they no longer espoused violence in support of it. Disillusionment with terrorist group members and leaders was a notable factor for why the terrorists began to question their involvement, as well as shifting personal priorities (Horgan 2009, p. 31). Horgan notes people can vacillate between violent action and inaction, while still holding radical beliefs (Bjørgo and Horgan 2009; Horgan 2008, 2010). Thus, a program that focuses solely on ideology may not be effective in bringing about behavioral changes.

Individuals get involved in terrorism for many reasons. Some individuals become terrorists because it is their best employment option. Others are attracted to the ideology the terrorist group claims to promote, while others are seeking a new identity, adventure, glamour, or fun.
Most importantly, extremist, violent-promoting ideologies do not necessarily lead to violent action, and terrorist violence is not necessarily motivated by terrorist ideology. It follows that programming must be flexible enough to respond to the constellation of reasons individuals are drawn to violent extremism, calling for multi-pronged approaches, but should not focus on ideology alone (Stern 2003, 2014).

Mary Beth Altier et al. find that, for those who voluntarily disengaged, push factors were more important than pull factors, such as disillusionment with the group’s strategy or actions, leaders, or members, or day-to-day tasks (Altier et al. 2017, p. 320). This finding is important because many European programs are voluntary. For the involuntary control group, pull factors, such as employment and educational opportunities, positive interactions with moderates (or formers), and financial incentives, were more prevalent. Saudi Arabia’s programming, for example, is largely mandatory (p. 320). Still, she argues, “pull factors may also play a role in terrorist rehabilitation and re-integration and in deterring re-engagement” (p. 332). This means that providing alternatives to the terrorist lifestyle may reduce the inclination to rejoin a terrorist group or recidivate.

Horgan, Stern, and Altier all contend that only rarely does one factor drive someone’s decision to engage in or disengage from terrorism. As such, options for addressing such processes should be adaptable enough to be individualized.

Overview of country-specific deradicalization and disengagement programs

The goal of these brief summaries is to provide a general overview of several prison-related deradicalization programs. These programs were selected either because of their purported success, or because they incorporated some evaluative measures. Except for a study of a Sri Lankan program that measured success in terms of a reduction in extremist beliefs, most programs profiled view success in terms of decreased terrorist recidivism, or behavior.

**Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia first implemented its well-funded and comprehensive counter-radicalization programs in 2004, and has continued to expand its programs into new areas, including addressing online recruitment. Though Saudi Arabia’s programs incorporate ideological “re-education,” they also include psychological and vocational assistance, and post-release stabilization. Individuals are constantly re-evaluated in and out of the program. Compensation is provided to family members upon the observation that many of the individuals in the program joined terrorist groups to make money. After the program ends, surveillance and control continue (Holmer and Shtuni 2017, p. 8). Though the Saudi program claimed a remarkable 1–2 percent recidivism rate in 2008, two years later Saudi Arabia admitted that as many as 10–20 percent of program graduates had returned to illicit activity (Boucek 2008, p. 21; Porges 2010). Without an external evaluation of these programs, their impact on reducing recidivism cannot be confirmed.

**Sri Lanka**

A Sri Lankan terrorist rehabilitation program entails seven components: educational, vocational, psychological, spiritual, recreational, cultural/family, and community. The program was modeled on the Saudi and Singaporean program. The program was available to
convicted Tamil Tiger (LTTE) terrorists, but those designated as high-risk (frontline leaders and members) were detained and went through the judiciary process. Only then, and upon another assessment, could individuals be offered rehabilitation (Hettiarachchi 2013, p. 109).

Rather than measuring recidivism rates, a study of the Sri Lankan program assessed changes in program participants’ ideological commitment to determine “success.” The study found that participants displayed decreased levels of extremist beliefs over one year after the program concluded, and that “feelings of significance” provided a buffer against extremism. The study argues that the program was successful because it addressed the individual, cultural, and social reasons individuals initially got involved with terrorism by providing non-violent, pro-social routes for personal significance. However, those individuals who, upon release, retained social connections to members of the LTTE and “family and friends in diaspora” expressed higher levels of extremism. Additionally, at the time of the program’s implementation, the Tamil Tigers were already defeated. As such, the appeal of Tamil ideology and/or the opportunities to recidivate may have both been decreased (Webber et al. 2017, pp. 6–7, 13–14).

United Kingdom: The Unity Initiative (TUI)

Founded by British-Pakistani cage-fighting coach, Usman Raja, TUI conducts ideologically based interventions and provides counseling to prisoners in group and individual settings (The Unity Initiative n.d.). The UK Probation Service’s Central Extremism Unit now channels cases to them. Utilizing former extremists, the program employs indirect means such as cage-fighting to achieve the main goal of prompting ideological changes through a sense of belonging and community. The interventions use individualized risk assessments to better tailor their programming and measure change. TUI has been enlisted to work with at least 30 ISIS returnees (The Unity Initiative n.d.; Kirkpatrick 2017; Robertson and Cruickshank 2012).

TUI claims to have successfully reintegrated over 50 released terrorist prisoners over eight years, and none have committed a terrorist act (The Unity Initiative n.d.). Still, without external evaluation, it is impossible to confirm TUI’s self-reported success at reducing recidivism.

Germany: Violence Prevention Network (VPN)

VPN is a network of programs, several being prison-related, that have been externally evaluated. In contrast to the “first-generation” deradicalization programs of Saudi Arabia, VPN is a multi-faceted network of programs throughout Germany that includes prevention and intervention services in addition to deradicalization programs that address a variety of ideologically and religiously motivated forms of extremism. The programs provide assistance with employment, housing, and counseling, and some work with juveniles, and many involve family members. VPN programs begin in prison, but once prisoners are released, programming can continue for up to 12 months. While this highly individualized and comprehensive approach may be expensive, the model is flexible enough to respond to specific contexts and the variety of underlying reasons for an individual’s initial interest in terrorism (Korn et al. 2015, pp. 6, 12; Radicalisation Awareness Network 2017, p. 104; Stern 2014, p. 450; Violence Prevention Network 2014).

The programs’ effectiveness is continually measured, both externally and internally. For recidivism to violence (but not necessarily terrorist violence), rates have decreased from
41.5 percent to 13.3 percent for those who took part in their programs (VPN Annual Report 2014, p. 14). But it is unclear which aspects of the programs yielded such positive results.

**Germany: EXIT**

EXIT helps individuals leave extreme far-right movements. Founded by a criminologist and former Neo-Nazi, participation in EXIT is voluntary. They arrange contacts, provide practical aid and individual counseling, and answer questions regarding personal safety and social problems. EXIT helps individuals with obtaining education and employment, as well as providing family counseling as needed. EXIT also offers awareness training to prison staff. As with VPN, EXIT offers a variety of services for extremists, making it flexible and adaptable, and uses the narratives of former extremists.15 There are, however, impediments to EXIT’s ability to reach prisoners, since prisoners often need to write letters to EXIT or go through a tutor or social worker to contact the program.

While it is unclear whether the program was externally evaluated, EXIT claims a very small 3 percent recidivism rate. As with VPN, it is unclear which program elements yielded positive results, when and why, and whether success rates are based on general recidivism or terrorist recidivism.

**The United States**

To date, the authors are unaware of any prison-based deradicalization or disengagement program existing in the United States.16 Abdulahi Yusuf, a young Somali-American who was arrested for attempting to travel to Syria, is undergoing some form of deradicalization provided by a Minneapolis non-profit for troubled youth and adults, Heartland Democracy. The program reportedly includes counseling and courses on “civic engagement” (Temple-Raston 2017). But this initiative appears to be a one-off and administered upon the personal conviction of the judge on Yusuf’s case, Judge Michael A. Davis.

However, American Jesse Morton has provided a personal account of his own experience post-incarceration for terrorist offenses. Morton was convicted in 2011 for terror-related charges, having founded the group Revolution Muslim and recruited for al-Qaeda. Morton says he deradicalized on his own and became an informant for the FBI. Later, he became the first former jihadist to step into a “public role” in the United States (Callimachi 2016). However, there was no post-release stabilization plan for Morton. Though not a recidivist to terrorist activity, he was re-arrested in early 2017 on drug and prostitution charges. The authors asked Morton what could have prevented his return to illegal activity. He told the authors, despite personally requesting psychotherapy, appropriate therapy was not provided and was difficult to obtain. Morton contends, without proper post-release stabilization, it did not matter what progress he had made in prison. Unsupported and needing mental health assistance, he returned to criminal behavior (Jesse Morton, personal communication, September 19, 2017).

**Linking studies on criminal recidivism to terrorist recidivism**

Criminals and terrorists both use illegal violence, though terrorists claim to be motivated by a violence-promoting ideology. Just as the reasons for and the process of joining a gang may be similar to joining a terrorist group, the recidivism process may be similar across the two
populations. As such, we hypothesize that programs that have decreased ordinary criminal recidivism may be relevant to decreasing terrorist recidivism, both in terms of the program’s substance and how the programs are evaluated.

Several programs have turned to rehabilitative, rather than purely punitive, approaches in order to address high recidivism rates across the West. A study by Mark W. Lipsey (2009) tests seven different intervention philosophies for juveniles: surveillance, deterrence, discipline, restorative, counseling, skill-building, and coordinated (an array of services provided in a package). Lipsey found that interventions that provided “therapeutic” services, such as counseling and skills training, were more effective than strategies of control or coercion (p. 144).

The Boston Reentry Initiative (BRI) has helped transition violent adult offenders, including gang members, back into society (Braga et al. 2009). The methods tailored each intervention to the individual using mentoring, social service assistance, and vocational development. Those who went through the program were approximately 30 percent less likely to be rearrested for a violent crime (p. 11).

BRI and Lipsey’s study found success in decreasing recidivism rates by equipping individuals for life after release. But importantly, by directly impacting recidivism rates, these programs and studies show what can actually make communities safer.

Research on gang disengagement

The study of gangs in the context of terrorism is a potentially fruitful avenue for study. A study by RAND and IMPACT Europe finds that nearly all gang evaluations reviewed were applicable and/or transferable to CVE (Davies et al. 2017, p. vii). These parallels may exist because, unlike analysis of general crime, group dynamics, feelings of camaraderie, group-think, and social identity all operate within gangs in similar ways as they may operate among extremists (Decker et al. 2014, p. 270). For many terrorists, the search for identity and group dynamics may be more important than grievances (Stern 2010).

Researchers have found that several key factors prompted or helped facilitate the gang member’s desire to leave. For some, exposure to violence gave way to disillusionment with the lifestyle and leaders, and propelled them to re-think the directions of their lives. Seventy-three percent of respondents, however, noted that family was a main motivator for leaving (Decker et al. 2014, p. 277). Second was obtaining new employment, or acquiring new “adult responsibilities” (p. 277). Skills training and counseling were seen as the most effective strategies in rehabilitating individuals for life after prison. Similar to Altier et al.’s findings, providing alternatives to the criminal life was important in compelling some to leave.

The use of former gang members has also been seen as useful in gang interventions. In many gang intervention and rehabilitation programs, such as Grasp in Denver, CO; the Professional Community Intervention Training Institute in Los Angeles, CA; or BUILD in Chicago, IL, former gang members were founders and/or worked as mentors or interventionists (Leitner 2014; Build n.d.; The Professional Community Intervention Training Institute n.d.; GRASP n.d.). Irving A. Spergel, who created one of the first comprehensive and evaluated models to reduce gang violence, found that former gang members were useful as youth workers because they had respect and legitimacy among gang members, and could use that respect to garner trust as a foundation for mentoring and providing assistance with aligning themselves with “legitimate institutions” (OJJDP 2009). Overall, Spergel’s model was found to be successful in reducing serious violent and property crimes, gang re-involvement, violent crime,
and drug arrests for the target group, and increased involvement of gang members in educational and employment endeavors (Spergel and Grossman 1997).

**Evaluating programs targeting regular criminals**

Substantive elements of the programs discussed above may be directly applicable to terrorist prisoners. But elements of how these programs are evaluated may also be applicable to deradicalization efforts.

**Risk assessment**

Initial and standardized evaluations of the prisoners are linked to the overall effectiveness of a program. Programs that holistically evaluate the risks and needs of individual prisoners, and tailor the findings to interventions and programs, are shown to be more effective in reducing recidivism. The Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) model, which is widely used in correctional settings, is based upon a psychological assessment of a criminal and the nature of a criminal’s conduct. It evaluates an offender’s underlying needs that led him or her to criminality (“criminogenic needs”), putting the individual at risk of reoffending (Bonta and Andrews 2007, p. 1). Utilizing the tool has been shown to reduce recidivism rates by as much as 17–35 percent in certain settings (p. 12). A separate study found that those programs that targeted 3–8 criminogenic needs, as opposed to targeting 1–2, showed a 29 percent reduction in recidivism – this is possibly because there is unlikely to be one or two causal risk factors (Gendreau and French 2006, p. 201). The incorporation of the RNR model is crucial in overall program evaluations, because it more clearly shows what mechanisms work best in which settings. Notably, there are now risk assessment models geared towards extremists specifically, such as the VERA-2, the ERG 22+, TRAP18, and RRARP. VERA-2 contains at least 30 indicators specifically related to violent extremism, divided between five areas: beliefs, attitudes, and ideology; social context and intention; history, action, and capacity; commitment and motivation; and protective/risk-mitigating indicators. There are another 30 additional indicators based on the scientific literature, divided between five domains: criminal history; personal history; radicalization; personality traits; and psychiatric characteristics. The use of the model allows for the collection of information that can provide evidence of behavioral change, a key component of program evaluations (Pressman 2016).

**Program evaluation**

The need for individualized programming does not preclude the possibility of developing common assessments. The Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI) and the Correctional Program Checklist (CPC) are widely used assessment tools that incorporate indicators shown to be effective in reducing recidivism, and discern how well a program adhered to the principles of effective intervention (“program integrity”). The CPC measures a program’s capacity to deliver interventions, and the substance of the program’s offerings (University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute n.d.). Both tools use criteria based on empirically derived principles of effective programming across eight different domains. Since the CPAI is now standardized and widely used, it allows for comparison between different programs. Programs that scored better on the CPAI assessment showed a 10–14 percent decrease in recidivism, compared to programs that scored worse and showed a 11–17 percent increase in recidivism (Lowenkamp et al. 2006, p. iii). Moreover, Edward J. Latessa found
that, in each of his studies, the more the programs incorporated tested tools of effective intervention, the greater the reductions in recidivism (2013, p. 72). As such, a reverse process can occur: if adhering to program integrity yields such good results, it may be beneficial to design programs with the CPAI, or other standardized assessments in mind. When programs incorporate standardized evaluations – both of individuals and of the program itself – and continually measure results, it helps program-designers to continually tweak their programs, ideally improving recidivism rates over time.

Assessment and evaluation do not have to be completely “in house.” Roca, a Boston-area intervention program for young people at high risk of reoffending, uses the Social Solutions’ Efforts to Outcomes platform, an external software program that helps organizations gather and arrange data and measure impact (Roca n.d.; Social Solutions n.d.). In fact, Social Solutions advertises its services for “acing” the CPAI and the CPC assessments (Social Solutions 2017).

Conclusions

We propose that programs consider adapting counter-recidivism tools designed for ordinary criminals to terrorist offenders, with the caveat that continuous evaluation is imperative for determining success. We also propose that deradicalization programs adopt a common definition of recidivism and that they subject their programs to outside evaluation. Below is a synthesis of our findings and tentative conclusions.

1. Programs should span time in prison and time beyond prison: The immediate security risk posed by a terrorist inmate is temporarily mitigated by incarceration. Based on descriptive evaluations available in the literature as well as the experience in anti-gang programs, we hypothesize that deradicalization or disengagement programming should begin in prison, and should continue post-release. If programming begins in prison, there may be a decreased chance of radicalizing others within prisons, mitigating the net risk posed by incarcerated and released terrorists alike. A shortcoming of this approach is that programs that start earlier may be more expensive, and require sustained dedication.

2. Outside resources should be utilized: Those implementing rehabilitation post-release can benefit from the experiences of what worked in other fields. The Rome Memorandum notes that a broad range of experts, psychologists, former terrorists, and scholars should be involved. VPN and EXIT Germany are examples of this utilization of outside resources.

3. Programs should not focus on ideology alone: It is impossible to measure a shift in beliefs: participants may simply lie. In addition, people engage and disengage from violence while still holding radical beliefs. Therefore, it does not make sense for programs to adopt a solely ideological approach because ideological beliefs may have little bearing on an individual’s behavior. However, we argue that different cultures may call for different approaches, some more ideologically oriented than others. Most of the programs that claim to be successful incorporate a variety of tools, such as both vocational training and dismantling of extremist beliefs.

4. Promoting alternatives to involvement in terrorism: All three of the following possible alternatives were provided in the programs that report low recidivism rates. However, what remains unclear is in which contexts these options worked.
Using former terrorists may be useful in prison settings: Former gang members were useful in mentoring and assisting with other gang members' disengagement. The use of former terrorists may be equally useful. Many successful “Exit” programs in Germany and Sweden, for example, employ formers in their deradicalization approaches. But as far as has been reported, the effectiveness of using formers has not yet been compared with similar programs that do not rely on formers as service providers.

Incorporating family and friends: Socially re-anchoring individuals has been proven to be useful in both juvenile and gang member rehabilitation. Similarly, this has been beneficial in several of the deradicalization programs that report high rates of success, such as VPN.

Vocational training and employment assistance: Such options were found to be successful in decreasing both criminal and gang involvement, and are used in many deradicalization programs. While these options may not compel people to leave terrorist groups, they may deter recidivism.

Individualized and tailored programming: As noted, terrorists engage and disengage in terrorism for a number of reasons, meaning that there can be no one-size-fits-all approach to deradicalization. A downfall of truly individualized programming is that it could be cost-prohibitive. The Rome Memorandum notes that utilizing effective intake forms and ongoing assessments and classifications for terrorist prisoners could allow for easier implementation of individualized approaches. An example used for normal criminals includes the “risk-needs assessment,” discussed above, while the VERA-2 presents an analogous model specifically for extremist prisoners. Importantly, programs for regular criminals are more successful when risk assessments are utilized. It has been argued that there is no agreed-upon way to house terrorists in prison; dispersal, concentration, isolation, and so on. But, similar to our argument that deradicalization should be individualized, we also argue that perhaps there shouldn’t be an agreed-upon way to house terrorists in prison. Different social and cultural contexts, just like different individual contexts, make it difficult to determine a common set of housing practices. Terrorists vary in the severity of their extremist commitment and activity, and cultural differences can affect the success of terrorist recruiters.

Addressing broad prison reform in connection with prison radicalization and deradicalization is important: As long as prisons remain symbols of repression and marginalization, prison time can be harnessed and manipulated by terrorists. If prisons are not doing enough to address poor conditions, overcrowding, mistreatment, and so on, these negative experiences can eclipse the benefits of deradicalization and disengagement programs. Many studies note that poor conditions, poorly trained staff, and mistreatment can in fact have a “criminogenic” effect, meaning systems, places, or situations that are likely to cause or increase criminal behavior. The same may hold for terrorist prisoners, who carry a powerful narrative of victimhood and martyrdom with them, for which they can leverage mistreatment.

There is more to learn from general criminality: Both in terms of program substance and evaluation, there are many future avenues for comparison. This may be particularly true for gang intervention models and evaluations, since some elements of joining, belonging to, and leaving a gang resonate with the process of radicalization and joining and leaving terrorist groups.
8. *A common approach to evaluation is urgently needed:* Without a common approach to evaluations of current deradicalization and disengagement programs, claims of success are difficult to compare, and may be only speculative. It is imperative that outside entities perform evaluations to prevent conflicts of interest, and that evaluations include controls. Moreover, it will be important for common definitions to be created and adhered to. Finally, if clear program targets, definitions, and goals (outcomes) are stated along the lines of a broadly agreed upon system of possibilities, it will be easier to discern which programs can and cannot be compared. Until then, it will be impossible to determine definitively what works, and what does not, and in which legal and social context. Notably, IMPACT Europe is developing a toolkit and database for evaluations of CVE programs in Europe, where best practices and approaches to evaluations will be organized. 19

**Notes**

1 According to Clarke R. Jones, prisonization can also have the opposite effect. Variables such as the quality of the prison, the religious make-up, activities offered, and policies of isolation or segregation can either contribute to further radicalization or encourage the prisoner to disengage from violent extremism (Jones 2014).

2 Daniel Koehler notes in Chapter 2 that a main difference between disengagement and deradicalization is that deradicalization is the reduction of ideological commitment, while a physical role change and desistance from illegal behavior would be disengagement. Koehler’s chapter discusses how the process is often far more complicated; disengaging from terrorist activity does not necessarily mean a reduction in ideological commitment. Koehler highlights several scholars’ contention that, while disengagement may be more feasible, it is necessary to address extremist beliefs in order to reduce recidivism (2017).

3 By “ordinary,” we mean those incarcerated for non-terror related offenses.

4 Mark Hamm notes that “very few” prisoners who convert to a cause actually end up turning to violence upon release (2008). Clark R. Jones, citing a study by the United States Congressional Research Service (2011, p. 23), finds that “widespread terrorist-inspired radicalization or recruiting” is not occurring in prisons (Jones 2014, p. 78).

5 The authors acknowledge that there are different types of prisons, jails, and detention centers which have different goals and methods of detention, or are affected by broader social or cultural contexts – all of which have different effects on individuals. For example, Abu Gharib held combatants without charge, where the main purpose was interrogation and intelligence collection. It is unlikely that deradicalization attempts would work within such a context. In short, despite similar programming, individuals may react differently in different places (Clarke Jones, personal communication, August, 2018).


7 Other terrorists who became more violent after time in prison include Ayman al Zawahiri and Abu Musab al Zarqawi.

8 Cherif Kouachi, Coulibaly’s accomplice and close friend, had been previously imprisoned for attempting to fight with jihadists in Iraq (and was, like Coulibaly, also previously a pretty criminal) (Chrisafis 2015).

9 Harry Sarfo is now convicted for his role in a Syrian mass execution. Amedy Coulibaly was one of several terrorists who launched coordinated attacks on the offices of Charlie Hebdo and the Hypercacher Kosher Supermarket.

10 Of those attackers who converted to Islam, 73 percent had criminal backgrounds, compared to 53 percent of those who did not convert (Vidino, Entenmann and Marone 2017, pp. 17, 56).

11 While prison deradicalization programs are not offered to ordinary prisoners, these individuals could be indirectly affected by deradicalization programs that target terrorists in prison who may have, otherwise, recruited or influenced them.
12 AP reporters in 100 countries filed requests and conducted hundreds of interviews to obtain these numbers.

13 Two prominent al-Qaeda members, Said Ali al-Shihri and Mohammed Atiq al-Harbi of al-Qaeda, were formerly Guantanamo detainees, had been repatriated to Saudi Arabia, and enrolled in Saudi Arabian deradicalization programs. Upon release, Shihri stated that “By Allah, imprisonment only increased our persistence in our principles for which we went out, did jihad for, and were imprisoned for.” Harbi reemerged as an al-Qaeda field commander (CBS 2009).

14 This study claims to be the first external and empirical study of a deradicalization program.

15 Demant et al. (2008, p. 163) found that former extremists were useful in an Exit program in Stockholm, and lend the program credibility and make the program more approachable and relatable.

16 Peter Neumann has discussed how the United States and several other Western countries have relied on “security first” approaches, ignoring rehabilitative or reformative options (2010, p. 13). Tony Parker notes that, without attention to this issue, the United States will remain in “a reactive posture” to both prisoners who may have radicalized in prison, and those who went into prison radicalized and remained so (2013, p. 3).

17 France has a reconviction rate of 59 percent over a 2-year period, the Netherlands has a reconviction rate of 48 percent over a 2-year period, and the United Kingdom has a reconviction rate of 45 percent over a 1-year period (Fazel and Wolf 2015). In the United States, for those who served time in federal prisons, 49.3 percent are rearrested, and 24.7 percent are reincarcerated (The United States Sentencing Commission 2016, p. 1).

18 For more on how prisons can be criminogenic, see: Chen and Shapiro (2007); Drago et al. (2009); Ruderman et al. (2015); Vacca (2004).

19 Additionally, RAND has developed a toolkit to assist with evaluation of CVE programs generally, and how to utilize evaluation findings (Helmus et al. 2017).

Bibliography


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