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DERADICALIZATION AS COMBATING TERRORISM STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

Counterterrorism in the last ten years, come to the fore of international relations, and remains in the news almost daily. This is due in large part to the ongoing conflicts in some place in the world, which in turn have also prompted something of a backlash against such military or “hard” approaches to countering terrorism. Partly in response, states and civil society have sought out softer, often preventive, measures to deal with violent extremism, many of which have been deemed more successful than military approaches and less likely to foment a new generation of violent extremists.

“Deradicalization” programs, which are geared toward peacefully moving individuals and groups away from violent extremism, have grown both in popularity and in scope of late, even in just the past five years. While these programs vary widely, with differing subjects (e.g., prisoners, potential terrorists, convicted criminals, repentant extremists), aims (e.g., abandonment of extreme views, disengagement from terrorism, rehabilitation into society), sizes (from just a handful of participants to hundreds), and forms (from arranging jobs, marriages, and new lives for participants, to merely educating them on nonviolent alternatives to their methods), common themes and problems can be discerned.



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With recent high-profile cases of recidivism by supposedly “deradicalized” individuals, questions are being raised about the efficacy of these programs and about how best to design them.

Background: Definitions and the Radicalization Process

Deradicalization,” meanwhile, refers to the process of divorcing a person, voluntarily or otherwise, from their extreme views, while “disengagement” refers to the process of moving a person away from their extreme group’s activities, without necessarily deradicalizing that person or changing their views. Generally public did not draw this distinction, but focused primarily on deradicalization, except where noted “Counterradicalization,” on the other hand, encompasses those measures taken to prevent a new generation of extremists, and is thus less reactive than deradicalization.

Successful deradicalization depends upon an understanding of radicalization itself. Often due to a person’s socializing with radical individuals, radicalization can take many forms. A detailed study of radicalization is beyond the scope of this paper, but a brief consideration of the paths to radicalization is important for the purposes of this discussion.

As Experts frequently noted, a sound deradicalization program needs to learn from how individuals become radicalized: indeed, both radicalization and deradicalization lean heavily on family or other social ties, and the Internet is increasingly playing a large role in both. Indeed, a particularly striking feature of



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radicalization is that today it happens primarily over the Internet. As researcher will explore in greater depth later on, an individual need have had no prior contact with a terrorist group, nor have ever traveled to those countries where the group is active, to become directly involved with terrorism. Few example explain that terrorists are often radicalized “remotely,” sometimes through the Internet alone (exp. “Jihad Jane” in USA¹ and the July 2005 bombings in London²). This trend of “self-recruitment” has moved many governments and NGOs to look more closely at the Internet’s role in both terrorism and counterterrorism.

Expert described those generally susceptible to radicalization as having a combination of the following characteristics: trusting a person already involved with a radical group; being “spiritually hungry” and dedicated to their faith, but having limited knowledge of their religion; and being desperate, naïve, or simply in need of money. Those seeking to recruit such people try to cater to their needs and interests.

During the process of radicalization, also described by expert, the “target’s” characteristics are identified to determine their suitability for terrorism. They are then engaged in dialogue, befriended, and their social, financial, or

¹ Ed Pilkington, “Colleen LaRose: All-American Neighbour or Terrorist JihadJane?” The Guardian, March 10, 2010, p.3. Like LaRose, Sharif Mobley, a New Jersey man with no prior connections to radicalism, is being held on terrorism charges in Yemen due to his alleged membership of al Shabab, the Yemeni branch of al Qaida. See Scott Shane, “Arrest Stokes Concerns About Radicalized Muslims,” New York Times, March 12, 2010, p.4-A.

² Kim Sengupta, “The Police's Nightmare: Home-Grown Terrorists,” Independent (London), July 13, 2005. The July 7, 2005, terrorist bombings that targeted London’s public-transport system were deemed more shocking by the fact their perpetrators were “homegrown,” though the Internet afforded a strong link with extremists abroad, who even provided online instructions on bomb-making.



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psychological needs are addressed as a means of gaining their trust. This part of the process closely resembles the initial steps taken in many deradicalization programs. However, throughout the recruitment process, radical groups will often isolate the targeted individual and “educate” them about the cause. If they refuse to participate in violence, they may then be asked to do something seemingly innocuous, like renting a car or an apartment to help out the group. This act is then leveraged to elicit continued participation. For example, they may be told that “the security forces now know about you, and they may torture you.” The targeted individual is consequently drawn closer to the radical group.

Deradicalization

While “hard” approaches to counterterrorism are more militaristic in approach—involving targeted assassinations or even warfare—“soft” counterterrorism programs seek to undo the radicalization process by engineering the individual’s return to moderate society, usually by providing them with a stable support network, probing their original reasons for radicalizing, and divorcing them from their extreme beliefs and social contacts. Other goals of deradicalization are, reducing the number of active terrorists; resocializing ex-members; sowing dissent among terrorists; reducing the financial and social costs of imprisonment; boosting government legitimacy; and reducing dependency on repressive forms of counterterrorism.



Deradicalization in Indonesia

Indonesia's experience with radicalism was being similar to that of Saudi Arabia. Indeed, the motives for individuals' initial involvement in radicalization overlapped significantly, with subjects in both countries citing the media's biased or negative portrayal of the misinformation about jihad. Characteristics of extremists being mostly single, young (aged for the most part in their twenties), high-school graduates, predominantly from middle-class families of above average size (where some have argued that it is hard for parents to control their children), and over half had fathers aged over sixty years, thus it was suggested that where parental control is weak extremism more readily appeals.

In tackling the problem, the Indonesian government engaged in a trial-and-error exercise initially, arriving eventually at deradicalization. In crafting the program, the objectives of deradicalisation were determined, namely: first, to make terrorists abandon acts of terrorism and violence. Second, radical groups transform into moderate and tolerant thinking. Third, radicalists and terrorists can support national programs in building the life of the state in the frame of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia³

Run by the police's Special Detachment 88 Anti Terror Unit, the Indonesian program is based on the theory that filling the void that withdrawal from a terrorist group leaves in a person's life will successfully remove that person from the path of violent extremism. As such, the main facets of the program are

³ Strategic plan (2010-2014), Deputy for Prevention, Protection and Deradicalization.



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dialogue, including conversations between program beneficiaries and professors, clerics, and farmers; family involvement, to ensure the beneficiary has a sound support structure beyond terrorism; prayer sessions; medical care; support in starting businesses and other ventures; and even weddings facilitated by the police. Like many other deradicalization programs, this one first studies the prospective participant to determine their commitment to deradicalizing—or their potential to commit—then diagnoses how challenging their deradicalization will be, before tailoring the steps that need be taken to achieve it.

Focusing mostly on splinters from the Darul Islam group and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), and on detainees, the program takes advantage of participants' respect for authority, and the important role of social bonding in terrorist groups. In addition, the specific motives of the individuals are taken into account. An interlocutor described these as “spiritual” (the “true believer” in extreme interpretations of his or her religion or cause); “emotional” (a person desiring social interaction and the group bonding that extremist groups can provide); and/or “material” (a person seeking financial or other material gain through involvement in terrorism). While its creators tout the program's relative successes, they note that certain problems were encountered, including the lack of an inter agency approach to deradicalization, as well as the scant legal basis for it.⁴

⁴ International Crisis Group in 2007 published an excellent report on prison deradicalization in that country: Crisis Group, “Deradicalisation’ and Indonesian Prisons,” Asia Briefing No. 142, Jakarta, November 19, 2007.



Indonesian Deradicalization Strategy

Since 2010, the Indonesian government has tried to eradicate terrorism through the National Counter Terrorism Agency (BNPT), which in recent years began to intensify a “soft-approach” de-radicalization program. One of its tactics is involving former terrorists in the program, that call as “soul approach”⁵. One of the former terrorists recruited was Ali Fauzi Manzi, he is former chief bombing instructor for teroris.

Manzi is brother of one of the Bali bombers, once a chief bomb maker for terrorist group Jemaah Islamiah, the group responsible for the bombing of the club in the Kuta area of the Indonesian tourist island of Bali on October 2002, leaving 202 people dead. Manzi (now 46), was once jailed for terrorism offences in the Philippines, where he had helped build a military training camp for extremists. He learned bomb-making from a man called Hambali, who was sent to the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay in 2002.

Manzi now to be reformed and committed to deradicalizing other would-be terrorists by setting up a foundation to steer people away from the lure of Islamic State. He told The Globe Post that only a former terrorist can handle a radicalized person in the right way; “To handle terrorism, it takes a variety of methodologies. Strategy between one person with another must be different,”. Ali Fauzi Manzi is

⁵ Golose, Reinhard Petrus (2016). Deradikalisasi terorisme : humanis, soul approach, dan menyentuh akar rumput



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now busy persuading former extremists to live peacefully and integrate back into the community. He used to be a bomb-assembling instructor for terrorists.

In March 2016, Mr. Manzi with the support of BNPT established a community called the Circle of Peace Foundation (YLP), where former terrorists spread a narrative of anti-radicalism. Manzi began to approach these men when they were still in prison. He said he tried to win their hearts, such as by helping their families or befriending them through discussion.

At least 37 former terrorist prisoners have joined YLP in 2016, and about 20 of their children are under the foundation's guidance. Manzi said his community supports former terrorists to be financially independent, such as by giving them jobs and skills, and supporting them morally. He said the de-radicalization process is not achieved through economic assistance alone, but there needs to be a community whose members understand the situation of the former prisoners. "Because when a terrorist is out of jail while his environment ignores him, then it is possible he will return to their community," Manzi said.

One man who was persuaded by Manzi to leave his network was Agus Martin, who was jailed for four years for supplying weapons to a terrorist group. Martin, who Manzi had recruited into a radical group, said his heart was not touched when he was advised by the BNPT official and the police, "but when the person who ever recruited him was advising, he began to realize." He has now joined the YLP and along with other former prisoners is helping the government in an effort to de-radicalize jihadists.



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In addition to YLP, at least two nongovernmental organizations have been involved in a number of projects aimed at working directly with prisoners, released prisoners and their families. The Indonesian Alliance for Peace has a program to bring the victims of terrorist bombings into a dialogue with convicted terrorists, with hope that there will be reconciliation between the bomber and victim.

Yayasan Prastasi Perdamaian has been working with prisoners to try to contain the influence of extremist teaching. They are building libraries in a few prisons with books that challenge key tenets of extremism and then bringing in experienced an ustadz, or religious teacher, to hold discussions with inmates. YPP is also helping families of current and former prisoners with small-scale loans and business expertise.

Although it seems successful they are not just released on the move. They are monitored continuously and periodically evaluated by the National Counter Terrorism Agency.

Conclusion

Radicalization is a reality of the contemporary world that will not disappear any time soon. Indeed, some radicals may never leave behind their extreme views, but, if most can be persuaded to, and if more still can disengage from violence, deradicalization programs represent the best means of achieving such progress via soft counterterrorism.



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Indonesia's strategy for de-radicalization is to involve former terrorists who are referred to as soul approaches to persuade terrorists to return to society. These results look more effective than other strategies. However, all their activities are not released but they are evaluated periodically.