REHABILITATION AND SOCIAL REINTEGRATION OF ORGANIZED CRIME MEMBERS AND TERRORISTS

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I. INTRODUCTION

Prisons matter. They have played an enormous role in the narratives of every radical and militant movement in the modern period. They are 'places of vulnerability' in which radicalization takes place. Yet they have also served as incubators for peaceful change and transformation. Much of the current discourse about prisons and radicalization is negative. But prisons are not just a threat — they can play a positive role in tackling problems of radicalization and terrorism in society as a whole.

The objectives of the rehabilitation are to change the individual's belief system, rejecting the extremist ideology, and embracing mainstream values, emphasizes that the extremists do not actually care about us, but callously use them to achieve their own objectives. Also, the prison is to prevent the most ideologically committed individuals from converting more vulnerable persons and offer them alternatives.

II. SUCCESSFUL DERADICALIZATION DEPENDS UPON AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE PATH TO RADICALIZATION

A sound deradicalization programme 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 radicalization is that today it happens primarily over the Internet. As this paper 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. 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.

Researchers 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, as described, the "target's" characteristics are identified to determine their suitability for terrorism. They are then engaged in dialogue, befriended, and their social, financial, or 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 programmes. 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.

III. THE APPROACH IN JORDAN

The Government of Jordan's approach is based on the premise that violent extremism is not a political

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issue but rather stems from "misguided youth" taking a "perverse view of Islam." The state has tackled this issue with a two-pronged approach that focuses on military measures and an education initiative. Much of the state's action has resulted from its own experiences with terrorism, especially the 2005 Amman hotel bombings, which have led it to take a more comprehensive and aggressive approach to violent extremism.

However, the real blow against radical groups has come not from the state's deradicalization activities but from the impact of the 2005 bombings, the devastation of which led to a decline in support for extremist groups.

The security steps taken by the state have led to the infiltration and monitoring of these groups as well as crackdowns, arrests, and prosecutions. Jordan also introduced an Anti-Terrorism Law and a Fatwa Law in 2006, which gives only clerics sanctioned by the state the right to issue fatwas. The Anti-Terrorism Law has been viewed by critics as being detrimental to civil society because of the freedoms it undermines.

The cultural initiative to tackle the problem began with the Amman Letter of 2004, which confronts Islamist extremism with its presentation of a wide consensus against its ideology.

The Letter was issued following an accord with 180 prominent Muslim scholars representing a range of schools of Islamic thought. The aim of the initiative was to refute and delegitimize certain radical interpretations of Islam and bring back the focus to disseminating a moderate and apolitical Islam. This has been followed up with conferences as well as media outreach on television and radio. Interestingly, Jordan has seen a spillover effect from the Saudi deradicalization programme in the form of its prison inmates demanding a dialogue with the state. The demand of prisoners for dialogue with religious scholars led to a two-month ad hoc programme, which included debates and lectures. However, a speaker noted that the programme was not a success, as many inmates felt that the state had not provided tenable, independent scholars—a misjudgement that significantly weakened the programme. The need for a credible prison programme is particularly urgent in Jordan as studies indicate that its jails have proved to be a hothouse for the growth of extremism.

IV. DEREDICALIZATION IN JORDAN

Jordanian deradicalization is based on the following:

A. Contain a mix of different kinds of programming, typically combining ideological and/or religious re-education with vocational training

B. Pay attention to facilitating prisoners' transition from prison back into mainstream society, typically by providing them with the means for a new beginning and by establishing (or re-establishing) social networks away from extremism

C. One of the overriding aims is to reduce opportunities for re-offending and increase the social and material cost of doing so. Much of the activities in sophisticated programmes are consequently geared towards locking prisoners into commitments and obligations towards family, community, and the state

D. The programme realized that the structure and instruments must reflect local contexts and conditions, in particular prisoner population, and their individual and collective needs and motivations;

  1. the nature and ideology of the groups to which prisoners used to belong;

  2. the society from which they originate, its structure and customs;

  3. the dynamics of the wider conflict and other external conditions, which may affect the programme's outcome.

  4. The need to consider what the societies in which they take place find politically and ethically acceptable.

5. The programme realized that it can be significant when both external conditions and the wider political environment are conducive. In particular, they can play an important role in facilitating the transition from conflict to peace when the political momentum is no longer with the terrorists and/or conflicts are winding down.

6. Religious Members, the members will directly engage in the prisoner dialogues and the counselling process. The sheikhs are typically approached on a personal basis and asked whether they would like to participate in the committee activities and engage in dialogue with detainees. Key in selecting members is communication style. One member is a formal extremist who has changed his ideas and perceived as good role model.

7. Members trained on psychosocial support (preferably on psychology) and members trained on social skills, these members focus primarily on evaluating a detainee's social status, diagnosing any psychological problems and determining the type of support the prisoner and his family may need after his release.

8. Security Members, security members are to evaluate prisoners for security risks and then make release recommendations based on input provided by the Religious, Psychological and Social members. One of the Security Members serves as the overall Chief of the Advisory Committee.

9. Media Members. Media members produce materials aligned to the agreed Communication Strategy used for sensitizing the community about the deradicalization project. This will include public educational materials for use in schools and mosques, focused on outreach and education, primarily targeting young Somali men using Internet, radio, television, and print media.

10. The Jordanian deradicalization programme shows that prisons are not just about locking people away, but that they can make a real and positive contribution to tackling problems of radicalization and terrorism in society as a whole.

V. CONCLUSION

Prisons matter. Often ignored by the public and policymakers, they are important vectors in the process of radicalization, and they can be leveraged in the fight against it.

Much of the public debate about prisons and terrorism is about locking people away. This paper has aimed to focus a more sophisticated understanding of the role prisons can play in radicalizing people — and in reforming them. In doing so, it has analysed the policies. Take, for example, prison regimes for terrorists. Governments everywhere have had to address a trade-off between wanting to treat terrorists 'just like other prisoners' and preventing them from mobilizing outside support, recreating operational command structures, and radicalizing others.

The paper showed that there are no hard and fast rules about whether terrorist prisoners should be concentrated, separated and/or isolated. In fact, most of the countries that have been looked at practice a policy of dispersal and (partial) concentration, which distributes terrorists among a small number of high security prisons. Even within such mixed regimes, however, it rarely seems to be a good idea to bring together leaders with followers and mix ideologues with hangers-on.

The wider, and perhaps even more important, problem is that — in most of the countries that have been looked at — prison regimes for terrorists are informed by the demand for security before everything else. While understandable, the 'security first' approach has resulted in missed opportunities to promote reform. Many prison services seem to believe that the imperatives of security and reform are incompatible. In reality, though, reform does not need to come at the expense of security. Prison services should be more ambitious in promoting positive influences inside prison, and develop more innovative approaches in facilitating prisoners' transition back into mainstream society.

Another issue which this paper has devoted much attention to is that of prison-based radicalization. Prisons are often said to have become breeding grounds for radicalization. This should come as no surprise.

Prisons are 'places of vulnerability', which produce 'identity seekers', 'protection seekers' and 'rebels' in greater numbers than other environments. They provide near-perfect conditions in which radical, religiously framed ideologies can flourish. While the extent of the problem remains unclear, the potential for prison radicalization is significant, and the issue clearly needs to be addressed.

Based on the research, it seems obvious that over-crowding and under-staffing amplify the conditions that lend themselves to radicalization. Badly run prisons also create the physical and ideological space in which extremist recruiters can operate at free will and monopolize the discourse about religion and politics.

For many prison systems, therefore, the first and most important recommendation is to improve general conditions, avoid over-crowding, train staff, and provide meaningful programming that allows prisoners to develop stable inmate identities. Prison imams are important in denying religious space to extremists, but they are not a panacea.

Not all the findings in this paper are negative. The paper shows that, while certain countries fall short of even the most basic good practices, others have recognized the enormous potential for prisons to become net contributors in the fight against terrorism, and have encouraged — sometimes sponsored — initiatives that seek to promote disengagement and de-radicalization.

For example, where groups are hierarchical and have strong, authoritative leadership, collective disengagement and de-radicalization becomes possible. Such processes have to be carefully managed. When political concessions form part of the 'deal' between the government and the terrorists, collective disengagement and de-radicalization may, in fact, assume the character of a fully-fledged peace process, and requires the necessary skills, resources, and — above all — patience.

Individual disengagement and de-radicalization, on the other hand, remains understudied and is often misunderstood — despite all the publicity that programmes have attracted in recent years.

Looking at six individual disengagement and deradicalization programmes in the Middle East and South East Asia, the paper has identified key principles, which will help policymakers understand the phenomenon and identify elements of best practice that can be adopted in their own prison systems.

Whether individual disengagement and deradicalization programmes can make a strategic contribution to bringing a terrorist campaign to an end remains to be proven. The programmes that have been examined suggest that they can — as long as the political momentum is no longer with the insurgents and other external conditions are conducive. An over-reliance on individual disengagement and de-radicalization programmes as the primary means of fighting terrorism should be avoided, therefore — they complement rather than substitute other instruments in the fight against terrorism.

In bringing together the experiences of 15 countries, the paper has attempted to show the diversity of policy and practice across the world. Not every lesson may be relevant or applicable in every context, but — taken together — they demonstrate the enormous possibilities for prisons to make a positive and significant contribution to countering terrorism.