

Deradicalization Programs and Counterterrorism: A Perspective on the Challenges and Benefits

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Broadly speaking, the word "radicalization" can be used to describe a process whereby individuals (and even groups) develop, over time, a mindset that can—under the right circumstances and opportunities—increase the risk that he or she will engage in violent extremism or terrorism.¹ It therefore follows that the word "deradicalization" should only be used to refer to the methods and techniques used to undermine and reverse the completed radicalization process, thereby reducing the potential risk to society from terrorism.

However, confusion can arise as the term deradicalization is also erroneously used as a broad, catch-all to encompass other, different-but-related methods and techniques aimed at reducing society's risk from terrorism, including counter-radicalization (the term used to describe methods to stop or control radicalization as it is occurring) and anti-radicalization (the term used to describe methods to deter and prevent radicalization from occurring in the first place).

In both of these cases, not only has the individual not yet become involved in terrorism, but also the process of radicalization itself may not have been completed or even begun in earnest. Consequently, these individuals are not held in state/government detention and, hence, are not subject to the direct and rigid control that detention brings. When they are held in detention, it is because they have already moved beyond the radicalization process and have become actively involved in terrorist activities. As a consequence of their arrest and detention, they may also be required to undergo some form of state/government deradicalization program. Only this type of program administered under these circumstances (for individuals incarcerated and detained due to their active involvement in terrorist activities) can be accurately be described as "deradicalization."

This chapter sets out to examine the contexts and conditions under which each of these types of programs (deradicalization, counter-radicalization, and anti-radicalization programs) are applied, examining both the benefits and the challenges they present to the task of counterterrorism and the organizations charged with carrying them out. It draws on a variety of examples in a number of different countries, from the radicalization of ideologically driven extreme right-wing individuals and groups to those involved in acts of terrorism committed during an insurgency. However, the chapter's overall focus is on deradicalization programs aimed at individuals and groups inspired and motivated by violent jihadism based on the ideology promulgated by Al Qaeda, with a particular focus on those who seek to achieve one of its main aims: to carry out terrorist attacks in Western countries.

¹ See *SAFIRE – Scientific Approach to Finding Indicators of and Responses to Radicalisation: Results and findings of the FP7 Project*, (2013), at <http://www.safire-project-results.eu>.

Challenges for counterterrorism

1) The terminology used to describe both the process of radicalization and its counter measures lacks clarity and consistency.

Before consideration is given to term "deradicalization" and the difficulties of applying it under certain circumstances, it is necessary to examine in more detail what the words "radicalization," "violent extremism," and "terrorism" are understood to mean. During the aftermath of 9/11, radicalization was portrayed as a constantly moving escalator of attitudes and behaviors that transported disaffected individuals (predominantly Muslims) from a condition of societal normality into the realm of actions and behaviors designated by the term "terrorism." The constraints of this paper preclude a review of how this view has changed in light of over a decade of additional research and experience.² Time has demonstrated that the reality is significantly more complex than a single definition can convey and that there are still many areas that need to be explored.

For the purposes of this chapter, radicalization is understood to be a complex, dynamic, and non-linear process of change in the mindset of an individual that leads over time to a significant alteration in world-view, perception of external events, and his/her internal understanding of them. As these changes occur, they can be reflected in the individual's behavior, which can ultimately—in certain individuals—escalate to the point of engaging in violence, violent extremism, or terrorism.

Though it may be a truism, it bears repeating that while all committed terrorists have become radicalized, not all individuals who are radicalized go on to take part in terrorist attacks or become violent extremists. They may ultimately hold political, ideological, or religious views with which many others may disagree, perhaps to the point of finding them distasteful or even unacceptable. However, they are entitled to hold these views, and indeed—as long as they act lawfully—to express them as well. As long as this remains the extent of their "radicalism," there is a well-founded expectation that under normal circumstances, Western states will not take actions against them, coercive or otherwise.

In the European Union, this entitlement to hold one's own viewpoints is legally enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in Article 10, which protects freedom of expression. In the United States, a similar right to freedom of speech is guaranteed in the First Amendment of the US Constitution. In addition to national and regional legislation, equivalent concepts of free thought and expression are upheld in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Understanding radicalization as a phenomenon is further complicated by how it operates in the context of other, different ideologies or extremist behaviors. In Europe, these include "nationalist and separatist ideologies, those inspired by *Al*

² For an insight into the wider issues and debate see P. Neumann, "The Trouble with Radicalisation," *International Affairs*, Vol. 89 Iss. 4 (2013): 873-893.

Qaeda, violent left-wing, anarchist, and right-wing ideologies.”³ Any of these can generate violence, extremism and terrorism. Consequently, it is now recognized that radicalization in its broadest sense is not confined to individuals who are motivated or inspired by the ideologies of Al Qaeda or similar groups.

An understanding of what is meant by radicalization was initially complicated by the use of the phrase "violent radicalization" to describe it (a phrase that can be found in official EU documents produced from 2005 onwards).⁴ However, the European Union today acknowledges that “the trends, means and patterns of radicalization have evolved and broadened,” and greater clarity has been introduced through their use of the phrase “radicalization to terrorism and violent extremism.”⁵ This distinguishes more clearly between those whose views may be judged as radical or extreme but whose actions stop short of supporting, encouraging, or engaging in violence, from those who become radicalized and personally participate in or support terrorism and violence.

As a result of these new phrases, activities referred to as violent extremism or terrorism now lay beyond the rhetoric of radicalization. From the late 1960s onward, modern terrorism has spread and evolved while debate still rages over its exact definition. Terminology revolving around terrorism has tended to be straightforward and descriptive of the cause that motivated it (e.g. Irish republican terrorism, or Palestinian terrorism or Left-wing terrorism) or of the terrorist group that perpetrated it (e.g. Irish Republican Army (IRA) terrorism, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) terrorism, or Red Brigades terrorism). Today, more than forty years later, there is still no universally-accepted definition of terrorism, but its core components are now generally recognized (e.g., the use or threat of violence motivated by a political or ideological aim; the objective to create widespread fear as well as death and destruction; and the targeting of civilians).

However, since 9/11 an additional category of violent behavior associated with terrorism seems to be increasingly recognized under the label of "violent extremism" (VE). The United States government defines violent extremists as “individuals who

³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee of the Regions, *Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response*, Brussels, 15.1.2014, COM (2013) 941 final, 2, ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/policies/crisis-and-terrorism/radicalisation/docs/communication_on_preventing_radicalisation_and_violence_promoting_extremism_201301_en.pdf

⁴ For example, see Commission of the European Communities (2005) *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council concerning Terrorist Recruitment: Addressing the Factors Contributing to Violent Radicalisation*, Brussels, 21.9.2005: COM(2005)313 and Commission of the European Communities (2008) *Opinion of the EU Economic and Social Committee on the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Radicalisation*, Brussels, 19.8.2008: (2008/C211/17).

⁵ Communication from the Commission (2014).

support or commit ideologically-motivated violence to further political goals.”⁶ In the United Kingdom, the phrase tends to be used to describe the activities of individuals who play a significant role, not only in radicalizing others, but also in encouraging them to become active participants in violent jihadism.⁷ Generally speaking, they do not involve themselves directly in violence, but their words and actions can be very influential on others. This type of behavior by charismatic or forceful individuals who exhort or encourage others that they must “do more” to contribute to their cause, can occur at very localized levels, particularly within groups of radicalizing individuals. In the United Kingdom from the mid-1990s onward, so-called “radical preachers” such as Abu Qatada, Abu Hamza, and Omar Bakri Mohammed were looked to by many others seeking justification and encouragement to engage in violent action. While their activities were eventually curtailed, the global spread of the Internet and the rise of new violent extremists have ensured that the influence of this type of individual remains as pervasive as ever.

The net result of all this terminological complexity is the blurring of the lines between radicalization, extremism, violent extremism, and terrorism in terms of the behaviors, tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) associated with each. Without clear boundaries between these terms, it becomes difficult to determine the most effective counter-measures to apply in each circumstance.

The lack of clarity and consistency that characterize how we define radicalization, violent extremism, and terrorism also extends to the measures taken to counter them. “Counter Violent Extremism” (CVE) is now in regular use, but perhaps one of the most misapplied words in the lexicon of counterterrorism today must be that of “deradicalization.” Bjorgo and Horgan captured the problem succinctly: “...we find the lack of conceptual clarity in the emerging discourse on deradicalization striking. Deradicalization often appears to be understood as any effort aimed at preventing radicalization from taking place.”⁸

This common way of defining deradicalization presents a logical paradox as the prefix “de” in “deradicalization” implies it is a process that can only be applied to individuals or groups *after* radicalization has occurred. A great deal of effort and resources have been devoted by programs in different countries, both to stop or mitigate the growth of radicalization as it is actively occurring and to prevent it from developing in the first place. To describe all of these programs together under the umbrella of deradicalization is a misnomer, and it can make tackling the problem even more complicated. Another limitation of using the term deradicalization is that it “gives the impression that there is an overarching single solution—in this case, most

⁶ The White House, *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*, (2011): 1, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/empowering_local_partners.pdf.

⁷ House of Commons and Local Government Committee, *Preventing Violent Extremism: Sixth report of session 2009-10*, 1, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcomloc/65/65.pdf>.

⁸ T. Bjorgo and J. Horgan, eds., *Leaving Terrorism Behind* (London and New York, Routledge, 2009), 3.

often assumed to be: change in beliefs, and we see a change in behavior,”⁹ and as a consequence, “this linear approach does not allow for easy engagement with the problem at hand.”¹⁰

One option to counter this is to use the words "disengagement from terrorism" when examining how groups and individuals separate from terrorist groups, activities, and behaviors, but the temptation to use the word disengagement as a replacement for the word deradicalization must be resisted. For a group or individual to disengage from terrorism, they must first be engaged with it. Hence, "disengagement from terrorism" can only be an objective in the specific context of deradicalization programs aimed at those who have been involved in terrorism; therefore it is not accurate or useful to use it to encompass counter radicalization and anti-radicalization programs as well.

2) There is no one-size-fits-all approach (and referring to everything as "deradicalization" does not create one).

Table 1 shows how three main types of deradicalization program can be derived according to the type of behavior they target, the wider societal conditions under which the behavior takes place, and the desired end state the behavior is used to achieve (or to try to achieve).

Table 1 – The derivation of the required program type (based on targeted behavior, social conditions, and desired end state)

Type of behavior targeted	Dominant societal conditions under which behavior is exhibited	Desired end state	Type of program required
Insurgency Terrorism	High intensity conflict Low intensity conflict	Cessation of violence	Deradicalization
Transition to terrorism Violent extremism	Non-violent ‘normality’ predominates	Prevention of violence or further violence	Counter-radicalization

⁹ J. Horgan and M. Taylor, “Disengagement, De-radicalisation and the Arc of Terrorism: Future directions for research,” in *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge*, edited by R. Coolsaet, (2011): 176.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Extremism			
Vulnerability risk of radicalization and violent extremism	Non-violent 'normality' predominates	Prevention of violence Minimizing risk from further radicalization	Anti-radicalization

The table shows that rather than describing all of these factors as aspects of deradicalization and therefore demonstrating the need for a deradicalization program, it may be more informative to differentiate between three main types of possible programs, only one of which should be considered a deradicalization program. A second type of program is counter-radicalization, used to describe programs where steps are taken to stop, slow, or mitigate radicalization while it is actively occurring. The third type is anti-radicalization, used to describe the measures taken to prevent and deter radicalization from appearing and taking root in the first place. Table 2 takes as its starting point these three types of programs and sets out the different types of behaviors each of them are targeted against and their key characteristics. It encompasses the main aims and objectives for each, and the conditions likely to be present during their implementation.

Table 2 – Summary of key characteristics relevant to deradicalization, counter radicalization and anti-radicalization program

Type of program required	Type of behavior targeted	Main aims of program	Main objectives of program	Conditions under which program implemented
Deradicalization	Insurgency	Rehabilitation	Cessation of violence Reintegration	Post surrender Post detention Post

	Terrorism			conviction
Counter radicalization	Transition to Terrorism	Mitigation	Disengagement	Pre-conviction
	Violent extremism		Reintegration	Pre-detention
	Extremism		Rehabilitation	Active radicalization
Anti radicalization	Vulnerability to risk from radicalization and violent extremism	Prevention	Detection Deterrence	Pre-radicalization Early radicalization

A wide degree of variation is apparent between each of these. The behaviors targeted can range from "terrorism" at one end to "vulnerability to/at risk from radicalization and violent extremism" at the other. Equally, the program can involve individuals whose conditions range from being held in detention by the state (either as a convicted criminal, someone awaiting trial, or someone who voluntarily surrendered to the authorities), across the spectrum to individuals who live freely in the community and have committed no illegal acts but who may be vulnerable to, or at risk from, radicalization. A further factor in emphasizing that one size does not fit all is that the main aim of each of the three types of program must necessarily be very different. Consequently, the objectives to be achieved in pursuit of these aims will also be different. The net result is that no program with a single aim can encompass all of these requirements.

In practical terms, what would each type of program look like? The following programs from the United Kingdom and the Netherlands offer some examples.

The concept of deradicalization, in its very specific context of trying to reverse the radicalization process, has been part of the UK counterterrorism effort since the aftermath of 9/11 when individuals involved in committing terrorist offences driven by violent jihadism began to be arrested, convicted, and imprisoned. The immediate issue was how to manage them during their period of imprisonment, and then, as many of them were not given full-life sentences, the next issue became how to manage them after their eventual release.¹¹ Within the prison system, it has led to the creation of a training program that “uses behavioral and theological interventions with extremist offenders or those vulnerable to extremist views to encourage disengagement and diversion from extremist views”.¹² Upon their release, the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), which have been in place since 2000 and manage violent and sexual offenders, were extended and adapted to cover those convicted of terrorist offences.¹³ This required the formation of new organizational partnerships and ways of working to develop, often among the same agencies, authorities and community representatives, such as police, social workers, and educational providers, who were also engaged in anti-radicalization activities.

The other two differing aspects of deradicalization, namely counter-radicalization and anti-radicalization measures, are illustrated by an integrated program that has been operating since 2007 in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Here, a clear line was recognized between what they referred to as “preparatory actions” occurring as a result of radicalization (these were deemed to fall under police responsibility, whether the actions were unlawful or not) and the “ideological radicalization” that had developed before the actions occurred.¹⁴ Dealing with ideological radicalization became the responsibility of the city municipal authority who set up a broad, preventive program known as “*Wij Amsterdammers*” (“We Amsterdammers”). In addition, they also set up structures and systems designed to detect and tackle specific cases of radicalization. Between the police and municipal authorities, the city's program encompasses both anti-radicalization and counter-radicalization approaches. The concept and objectives of the Amsterdam approach were “informed by the gap in coverage between general prevention activities, such as intercultural dialogue and the like, and the case-level counterterrorism monitoring and policing measures.”¹⁵

¹¹ G. Hannah, L. Clutterbuck, and J. Rubin, *Radicalisation or Rehabilitation: Understanding the challenge of extremist and radicalized prisoners*, RAND Corporation, 2013, <http://www.rand.org/publications>.

¹² Christian Turner, Speech of British High Commissioner to Kenya, *Counter Violent Extremism – “Communities beat terrorism,”* 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/counter-violent-extremism-communities-beat-terrorism>

¹³ E. Disley, K. Weed, and A. Reding, *Managing Terrorist Offenders Upon Release from Prison*, RAND Corporation, 2013, <http://www.rand.org/publications>.

¹⁴ C. Mellis, “Amsterdam and Radicalisation: The Municipal Approach,” *Radicalisation in Broader Perspective*, National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb) (Netherlands, October 2007): 44-48

¹⁵ Ibid.

3) Programs must be evaluated in the wider context of their location and its prevailing conditions.

When considering the “success” or “failure” of any type of program targeting radicalization, the wider context under which it has been implemented is important. Ignoring the context and focusing only on the mechanics of the program will compound the difficulty of judging its success. The country where the programs are taking place and the socio-political norms of that country are key contextual elements. For example, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Indonesia have all pioneered deradicalization programs that aim to deradicalize captured terrorists or insurgents.¹⁶ As these programs are all in Muslim countries, the philosophies, rationales, and approaches used may be difficult to replicate in a non-Muslim, Western country. Morocco has taken perhaps the most comprehensive approach of all the Muslim countries, from actively reinforcing and promoting its own traditional Maliki form of Islamic law to producing a government-approved curriculum for imams to use.¹⁷ It also takes active measures to promote Moroccan values in Moroccan communities living abroad. The king of Morocco plays a personal role in the lives of his subjects as the “Commander of the Faithful” and hence is able to shape opinions in Morocco in a way that would be difficult or impossible even for other Muslim countries to achieve.

There are also significant differences among European countries, as well as between European countries and the United States. They include the recognition in a number of European countries, such as Germany and the Netherlands, that radicalization is a process that can be driven by ideologies other than that of violent jihadism. Consequently, there is a history of intervention through state and local anti-radicalization programs to prevent and disengage from radicalization that is motivated by different causes and ideologies. For example, widespread and well-known programs such as “EXIT Deutschland” in Germany and “EXIT Fryshuset” in Sweden are designed primarily to tackle extreme right-wing radicalization and have been doing so for well over a decade.¹⁸ There is a strong focus in the United States on countering violent jihadism and related terrorism in countries where US military forces have been deployed, namely Iraq and Afghanistan, although the domestic element is increasingly receiving attention.¹⁹

¹⁶ See for example R. Barret and L. Bokhari, “Deradicalisation and rehabilitation programmes targeting religious terrorists and extremists in the Muslim world: An overview” in *Leaving Terrorism Behind*, edited by T. Bjorgo and J. Horgan, (London and New York: Routledge, 2009): 170-180.

¹⁷ E. Thompson and W. McCants, *Partners Against Terror: Opportunities and Challenges for US-Moroccan Counterterrorism Coordination*, 2013, <http://www.cna.org/sites/default/files/research/PartnersAgainstTerrorism2.pdf>.

¹⁸ T. Bjorgo, J. van Donselaar, and S. Grunenberg, “Lessons from disengagement programmes in Norway, Sweden and Germany” in *Leaving Terrorism Behind*, edited by T. Bjorgo and J. Horgan (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 135-151.

¹⁹ The White House, *Empowering Local Partners*.

The prevailing socioeconomic and political situations within a society—whether it is predominantly stable and subject to the rule of law or whether it is suffering from widespread or intense civil conflict or insurgency—can also have an impact on which deradicalization measures are appropriate and necessary (see Table 1). Arguably, the more a country deviates from a predominantly peaceful state and into violent civil conflict, insurgency, or terrorism, the less effective anti-radicalization and counter radicalization programs are likely to be.

The second set of contextual elements to be considered when examining deradicalization programs are the local conditions under which the program operates. Tables 1 and 2 show the types of behaviors that can indicate the presence of prior radicalization of individuals, whether they are involved in terrorism or violent extremism, or whether they are in transition from radicalization to terrorism/violent extremism. Each of these categories are different, and therefore a different type of program is required for trying to deal with each of them. Finally, the degree of freedom the individual has (and hence the degree of control that can be exerted over him or her) is also an important element and can be broken down into three main levels depending on whether the subjects of the program are incarcerated in some way; whether they are living freely but are likely to be detained if their behavior continues on current trajectories; or whether they are living freely and openly in society.

In summary, so-called deradicalization programs can differ from each other not only in the aims, objectives and the methods they employ but also in the wider societal context under which they operate. This context includes the local conditions prevailing in the country where they are located, the type of behavior being targeted, and the degree of control that those responsible for delivering the program are able to exert over the targeted individuals. Without taking these into full consideration, any attempt to evaluate the performance of a specific program will be incomplete.

4) Programs can have undesired impacts outside of their aims and objectives.

Undoubtedly, all programs and initiatives are created with the intention of achieving positive outcomes. However, even when the desired outcomes are achieved, the programs may also have unforeseen and undesired consequences. The case of the United Kingdom's over-arching counterterrorism strategy, known as CONTEST, will be examined as an illustration of this.²⁰ The stated aim of CONTEST, established in April 2003, was “to reduce the risk from international terrorism over the next few years, so that [their] people can go about their business freely and with confidence.”²¹ Then, as now, it operated under four main strands, each of which had its own objectives and individual programs: *Pursue, Prevent, Protect, and Prepare*. One of the main objectives of *Prevent* was to preclude the development of a new generation of Al Qaeda-inspired terrorists in the United Kingdom. Since 2006, the *Prevent* strand has been led by the UK Department for Government and Local Communities

²⁰ W. Bowen and A. Stewart, eds., *Terrorism in the UK: Broadening the Government's Counter terrorism response*, Occasional Paper No. 50, UK Defence Academy and the Airey Neave Trust, (2004): 30.

²¹ Ibid.

(DGLC), first under the program name “Preventing Extremism,” and then changing to “Preventing Violent Extremism” in 2007.²²

The *Prevent* strand also consists of a number of other programs aimed at countering radicalization. These include a support program for prisoners convicted of terrorist offences and any prisoner assessed as being at risk of radicalization after their release, plus the ‘Channel program’, which focuses primarily on extremism inspired or motivated by the violent ideology of Al Qaeda.²³ Police across the United Kingdom play a key role in implementing Channel by employing 200 officers as local Prevent Engagement Officers who work closely with statutory partners, local government, education officials, appropriate community leaders, and others to identify individuals at risk from being influenced by the violent extremism of others and to assess their potential to influence others. Appropriate community interventions can then be determined and implemented.²⁴

However, the strong police involvement in Channel has proven to be controversial, with allegations being made that individuals are becoming criminalized through its activities. Charles Farr, Director General of the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT), has strongly denied this. In 2009 he stated, “If someone is involved in activity which suggests they are being drawn into the world of violent extremism...if that activity stops short of something which is illegal under the Terrorism Acts...that is the sort of person we would expect to get referred to Channel, not to criminalize them but precisely to avoid them criminalizing themselves.”²⁵

The use of police officers dedicated to understanding community dynamics and the activities of extremist and terrorist groups predates the Channel program and was traditionally carried out by the special branch of each force. Their work with the local communities was not clandestine, but rather relied on “a tradition of community policing practice that allowed specialist police experts to discuss terrorist threats with experts in the community...premised on mutual interest and a shared civic duty to protect public safety, and characterized by expert understanding of the terrorist organization under discussion.”²⁶ In order to maintain community trust, the police should take great care to demonstrate that these types of open and overt activities are not also being used as a means to covertly gather intelligence within communities. They are fundamentally different from intelligence-gathering work by the police, such as the use of individuals as informants (paid or unpaid) and the recruitment of longer term paid and tasked intelligence sources.

A UK Parliamentary enquiry in 2009 found that the single aim of the *Prevent* strand of the government's counterterrorism strategy (to reduce the risks posed by growing

²² House of Commons and Local Government Committee, *Preventing Violent Extremism*, 6.

²³ *Ibid*, 14.

²⁴ Turner, Speech of British High Commissioner.

²⁵ House of Commons and Local Government Committee, *Preventing Violent Extremism*, 16.

²⁶ R. Lambert, “Competing Counter-radicalisation Models in the UK,” in *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge*, edited by R. Coolsaet (UK and US: Ashgate, 2011): 176.

Al Qaeda influence in the UK) had created other problems at the community level.²⁷ This focus on Al Qaeda has inevitably led it to shine a spotlight on Muslim communities, who are the primary target of Al Qaeda's radicalization and recruitment activities. As a consequence, Muslim communities have come to see themselves as the sole target of counterterrorism programs and to feel that they are all viewed by the state as potential terrorists due to the actions of a small minority within their communities. In turn, they perceive that overt, counter, or anti-radicalization programs (specifically Channel) are being used as a means to gather intelligence on their communities, including individuals who have not committed criminal offences.²⁸

Extremist groups opposed to this type of state-sponsored counter activity, such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir, have been able to exploit these fears, but the enquiry also found that "...the misuse of terms such as 'spying' and 'intelligence gathering' amongst *Prevent* partners has exacerbated this problem [and that] clear definitions of these terms [should] be provided in all public guidance inviting bids for *Prevent* funds."²⁹ The issue of funding can also be divisive since the allocation process is not straightforward. Also, since pre-existing mainstream funding was diverted to pay for the *Prevent* program, this led some non-Muslim communities to feel that they are missing out on financial support for other projects. At the same time, some communities deliberately played up or emphasized the Muslim aspects of their identity as a means to gain an advantage in securing funds.³⁰

The UK experience shows that no program of this type should be undertaken lightly. Potential issues must be identified, carefully considered, and then robustly managed.

What are the benefits of 'deradicalization' for counterterrorism?

A report from 2008 that analyzed 648 terrorist groups existing between 1968 and 2006 concluded that there were two main reasons for their elimination.³¹ In 83 percent of cases examined, they either rejected violent tactics and became part of the political process, or they were destroyed by the actions of local law enforcement. Deradicalization, particularly counter radicalization and anti-radicalization programs, can contribute to bringing about both of these outcomes and can do so in two ways:

1) 'Deradicalized' individuals can assist directly in countering a terrorist group or network.

Individuals who become deradicalized and disengage from a terrorist group—either with the assistance of a formal program or on their own (such "self-deradicalization" is often precipitated by disillusionment with the cause or disenchantment with the

²⁷ House of Commons and Local Government Committee, *Preventing Violent Extremism*, 15.

²⁸ Ibid, 10.

²⁹ Ibid, 18.

³⁰ Ibid, 19.

³¹ Of 268 completed 'endings', 43% were as a result of politics, 40% from policing, 10% from victory and just 7% from military actions. See S. Jones, M. Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for countering Al Qa'ida*, RAND Corporation (2008), <http://www.rand.org/publications>.

group they were in)—can sometimes be persuaded to "throw in their lot" with the government and actively assist in the defeat of their former comrades. One of the earliest indications that deradicalized actors could be of benefit to counterterrorism operations was seen in Malaya during the "Emergency" of the 1950s. An active insurgency developed in Malaya from 1948 onwards as predominantly Chinese "communist terrorists" (CTs) took to the jungle and, operating under the name of the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA), launched attacks against the government, security forces and the local population.³²

A successful counter-measure was implemented early on as every surrendered enemy personnel (SEP) or captured enemy personnel (CEP) "was treated as a most valuable source of operational intelligence" (Comber 2008).³³ They were screened to separate the "hardened communists from misguided sympathizers" and then assessed for their suitability for rehabilitation and release. After thorough debriefing, often with the involvement of a number of previously "turned" high ranking MNLA officers, select individuals were chosen to return to the jungle in so-called "Q operations" against their former comrades. By 1954, there were 300 surrendered or captured CTs who had 'deradicalized' to the point that they voluntarily served in the police-run "Special Operations Volunteer Force," a unit dedicated to this type of operation.³⁴

Although the parallels are limited between this example and more recent counterterrorism operations taking place in conditions outside of wide-spread insurgencies or civil conflict, it does illustrate the potential presented by individuals involved in terrorist activities and groups who have become "deradicalized." They can work with counterterrorism organizations to provide valuable information and access that would otherwise be difficult to gain. The MNLA example also highlights an ethical dilemma for contemporary counterterrorism organizations. Once individuals have disengaged, should the goal be to assist them in leaving their terrorist organizations or networks, or should it be to convince them to remain and gather intelligence? With a mandate to preserve national security, many of today's counterterrorism organizations would prioritize working towards the disruption, disengagement, or destruction of a terrorist group or network (by using former members as informants) over trying to dismantle it one individual at a time (e.g., by helping former members escape or leave). If this is the case, then they must ensure that any well-placed individuals acting on their behalf can help achieve this end. Their organizational effort will therefore be aimed at the group and not at the individual level, although this does not preclude them from seeking the prize of disengaging and "turning" a high-ranking individual.

2) Deradicalization can assist in preventing the recruitment of a new generation of terrorists

Perhaps just as importantly as above, deradicalization, and more specifically counter-radicalization and anti-radicalization, can sometimes play a role in "turning off the

³² L. Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60: The role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency*, (Australia: Monash University, 2008): 13-14.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, 4-5.

tap" of terrorist recruitment by reducing the flow of individuals likely to become committed enough to a terrorist cause to take action on its behalf. At the beginning of the terrorist recruitment cycle, anti-radicalization measures can be used to reduce the pool of those vulnerable to extremist propaganda, while counter-radicalization measures are used to reduce the numbers of those "transitioning to terrorism" before those willing to join terrorist groups actually succeed in doing so. In addition, successful initial targeting of those who are potentially willing to join if the opportunity arises makes it riskier and more difficult for terrorist groups or networks to identify, "groom," and recruit individuals.

At this point, the question must be asked whether any counterterrorism strategy can afford *not* to include organized attempts to target radicalization and individuals subjected to it. The following example may help to provide an answer. Hasib Hussain was 18 years old when he detonated an improvised explosive device (IED) on a London bus on July 7th, 2005, killing 13 people. This made him the youngest of the four July 7 conspirators as well as the youngest of the 38 individuals involved in the six most significant terrorist plots in the United Kingdom between 2004 and 2007.³⁵ In presenting evidence in 2009 for the UK House of Commons inquiry into the effectiveness of the Prevent strategy, the Chief Constable of the South Yorkshire Police said of Hussain: "He had never come to the notice of the police at any stage in his young life...what we did discover is that his [school] exercise books were littered with references to al-Qaeda [and] they could not have been taken as other than supportive comments. To write in one's exercise book is not criminal [but] the whole ethos, the heart of *Prevent* is the question for me of whether someone in society might have thought it appropriate to intervene. I do not mean kicking his door down at 6 o'clock in the morning and hauling him before the magistrates. I mean should someone have challenged that?"³⁶

When early detection of radicalization may be possible, yet there is a lack of counter mechanisms other than law enforcement measures, a situation could occur where the criminal law becomes stretched or misapplied in an effort to deal with the issue. This in turn could lead to resentment among communities that may already feel targeted, perhaps even launching individuals into radicalization or empowering those already in the process of radicalizing. Ultimately the risk to themselves and to society will then have increased.

Recent examples in the United States illustrate a different approach to dealing with radicalized individuals who are seeking to make a transition into terrorism.³⁷ They include the case of a Pakistani-American, aged 34, who was convicted of a plot to plant a bomb at the Arlington Metrorail Station in Virginia in 2010 and a Somali-born

³⁵ L. Clutterbuck and R. Warnes, *Exploring Patterns of Behaviour in Violent Jihadist Terrorists: An analysis of six significant terrorist conspiracies in the UK*, RAND Corporation (2011): 23, <http://www.rand.org/publications>,

³⁶ House of Commons and Local Government Committee, *Preventing Violent Extremism*, 17.

³⁷ See both articles, E. MacAskill, "Man charged over US subway terror plot after FBI sting operation," *Guardian Newspaper*, Oct. 28, 2010: 26 and "US teenager tried to blow up crowds at Christmas Lights ceremony, claims FBI," Nov. 29, 2010: 25.

naturalized American, aged 19, who was convicted of attempting to bomb a Christmas tree-lighting event in Portland, Oregon in 2011. In both cases, the FBI was in contact with the accused for an extended period prior to the arrests. Undercover agents played a number of roles, including those of supposed “fellow jihadists” and in the Portland case, they also provided the equipment and explosives needed to facilitate the suspect's progress towards carrying out the attacks. In the Arlington Metrorail case, FBI agents detonated a backpack of explosives during a supposed test run in order to convince the individual that the bomb they had provided was viable, and on the day of the planned event, they even drove him to the designated attack target area.

These cases are used to illustrate the complex legal and practical problems to be addressed when taking steps to target radicalization at the individual or group level. Examples like these raise ethical and moral questions. Van de Poel and Royakkers characterize A moral problem as one that cannot be described thoroughly before it arises, that unfolds concurrently with the decision-making process, and that does not lead to a single best solution, all while the possible alternatives for action are widespread.³⁸ This type of problem is not confined just to live counterterrorism operations but also exists in programs designed to achieve deradicalization, counter-radicalization or anti-radicalization outcomes, and recognizing and dealing with moral and ethical issues in these programs is of no less importance than dealing with them when individuals are planning or preparing for a terrorist attack or other forms of violence.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that even when deradicalization measures achieve their desired objectives, they still present challenges. They are resource intensive; positive results may only become apparent much later, and when they do it may be difficult to accurately evaluate or quantify them. There is also a risk of recidivism, whereby individuals who appear to be disengaged or even deradicalized become re-engaged with radicalized or terrorist groups.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that devising and introducing any program to deal with radicalization, whether it is aimed at deradicalization, counter-radicalization, or anti-radicalization, is a task that should not be undertaken lightly. This chapter has tried to outline both the benefits that could be achieved from such programs and approaches and the challenges that also must be confronted.

As with so many of the words that are used to describe the phenomenon of "terrorism" and its associated tactics and processes, (including those that are employed to detect, deter, and disrupt it), the use of "deradicalization" as *the* single word to describe such a multi-layered series of processes, conditions, and outcomes revolving around "radicalization" (also a complex term) does not generate clarity, nor

³⁸ I. Van de Poel and L. Royakkers, “The Ethical Cycle,” *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 71, no.1 (2007): 1-13, cited in A. Reding, et al., *Handling Ethical Problems in Counterterrorism: An inventory of methods to support ethical decisionmaking*, RAND Corporation (2013), <http://www.rand.org/publications>.

does it contribute to consistency between programs and approaches. However, just as progress has been made in combating "terrorism" by using a working-level understanding of the term, an imperfect or incomplete definition or understanding of "deradicalization" should not stand in the way of devising, implementing and evaluating programs that contribute to its objectives.

In general, the term "deradicalization" should be applied only in the context of individuals who have not only become radicalized but also have made, or are in the process of making, a transition from the realm of rhetoric and ideas to the reality of terrorism or violent extremism. Finding ways to deal with such individuals in order to curtail their activities is vital, with the primary aim being to persuade them to disengage from the use of violence and also the desire to use it. Only when this occurs are wider issues of deradicalization likely to be successfully addressed.

Definitional issues are not the only challenges for practitioners of counterterrorism. They must take a wider perspective on radicalization that considers more than the process or measures put in place to combat it as these types of measures are dependent upon a variety of factors, including geographical location, the conditions under which the measures/program operates, and the type of behavior they are designed to address. Further challenges arise during the evaluation period in trying to determine whether the measures or programs introduced could be considered successful. As with any program evaluation, it is common for those closely involved in program delivery to declare a program or measure to be a success when a dispassionate evaluation of the evidence by objective third parties may show different results.

Finally, second and third-order impacts originating from these types of programs, as previously outlined based on the experiences of the United Kingdom, may not only be unexpected and undesirable, but they may also even be counterproductive or create an atmosphere of suspicion easily exploited by their opponents. To help minimize these types of unintended consequences, it should be considered normal practice that, while counterterrorism organizations have a key role to play in deradicalization and counter-radicalization, the responsibility for anti-radicalization programs should not be theirs alone. Social organizations, schools, and the police must together take the lead in anti-radicalization programs, acting in an overt and transparent way. However, experience with *Prevent* activities in the United Kingdom also shows that in order for these community leaders and authority figures to be able to make informed decisions, there must be a flow of relevant information and intelligence from police and security agencies. This effective sharing of information is in itself a difficult process to manage.

Yet, despite the many challenges and potential pitfalls, the benefits that appropriate, well designed and implemented programs generate warrant their inclusion within any comprehensive counterterrorism strategy, albeit an inclusion that should be carefully considered, professionally managed, and robustly overseen.