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## How Could a Terrorist be De-Radicalised?

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### Abstract

This article addresses the potential to de-radicalize a terrorist, and if so how could this be achieved? The article also outlines the distinction between de-radicalization, counter-radicalization and disengagement. In order to understand the potential of de-radicalization techniques, research examines the factors that might lead to initial radicalization. The strategy of some state-based de-radicalization programs, particularly the Saudi Arabian de-radicalization program are examined and the importance of unique tailoring in these programs is identified. The relevance of ideology and life skill training within de-radicalization programs is also examined. The extensive impact that information communication technology has had on radicalization is also addressed and following on, the potential for de-radicalization and counter-radicalization through information communication platforms is also discussed. The importance of an accurate and appropriately delivered counter-narrative message is examined and the value of such a counter-narrative is discussed in terms of it possibly planting the seed of question in a terrorist, which may eventually support the terrorist questioning of terrorist group ideology. Highly relevant to the future de-radicalization of an 'in organisation' terrorist is the issue of how states might manage the potential return of terrorists who are known to be overseas and whether the best solution is or is not to prevent the terrorist from returning to a home-country, which is examined within. It could be presumed that a terrorist who is returning to a home-country may face some term of incarceration, as an extension of this issue that states must address, the effect that incarceration might have on a terrorist is also examined. The discussions in this article are relevant to policy-makers, de-radicalization program designers and security sector actors.

### Key Words

Radicalization, De-Radicalization, Counter-Radicalization, Self-De-Radicalization, Foreign Fighters

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Is it possible to de-radicalise a terrorist? The answer is that de-radicalisation could be possible and, further the aim of de-radicalising a terrorist is an ambition that should not be abandoned. However, robust data and measurement of the successfulness of de-radicalisation programs does not exist to an extent that it can support the certain success of these programs (Horgan and Altier, 2012).

To understand how a terrorist may be de-radicalised, we must consider what circumstantial factors lead to a given terrorist being radicalised in the first place. From the outset, it is apparent that a given terrorist may become the subject of de-radicalisation strategies at different phases in their time as a terrorist, as such de-radicalisation interventions may be targeted at individuals or groups, and within a terrorist organisation or externally. The effective de-radicalisation of a terrorist is summed up by Rabasa, Pettyjohn, Ghez and Boucek as follows:

“A true (and successful) de-radicalization program should therefore produce a change in an individual’s underlying beliefs, not simply a change in behaviour...behaviour can change while objectives remain constant.” (Rabasa, Pettyjohn, Ghez and Boucek, 2010. p.6).

De-radicalisation strategies differ between terrorists who leave organisations by choice compared with those are compelled through capture or societal impost (Kuhl, 2009; Husain, 2007a; Husain, 2007b; Stern and Porges, 2010). To understand how a terrorist might be de-radicalised, this essay will delve into various points, including broadly how a person is initially radicalised. From this discussion, de-radicalisation strategies that are utilised by different actors will be examined, including their effectiveness and as far as can be quantified; the positive or negative impact associated with each technique. What has been identified through preparatory research is that there is not one standardised guideline

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or toolkit for de-radicalising terrorists, accordingly de-radicalisation programs must be extremely unique and tailored to an individual's circumstances (Butt and Tuck, n.d; Stern and Porges, 2010). Further, the distinction between de-radicalisation and disengagement from action should also be clearly articulated as these terms represent two distinct outcomes (Horgan and Braddock, 2010; Jones, 2014; Abbasi, n.d). This distinction is that disengagement refers to cessation of action only, accordingly a radical can stop active participation in a terrorist organisation without necessarily denouncing or even questioning radical ideals or idyllic support for a terrorist organisation (Horgan and Braddock, 2010; Williams and Lindsey, 2013; Jones, 2014; Abbasi, n.d; Rabasa, Pettyjohn, Ghez and Boucek, 2010). As Rabasa, Pettyjohn, Ghez and Boucek (2010) state:

“De-radicalization is the process of changing an individual's belief system, rejecting the extremist ideology, and embracing mainstream values”  
(Rabasa, Pettyjohn, Ghez and Boucek, 2010. p.xiii).

While a truly de-radicalised person will have stopped both physical support for a terrorist group as well as having abandoned any common sympathy with the terrorist group (Horgan and Braddock, 2010; Jones, 2014; Abbasi, n.d).

Throughout the literature two distinct terms stand out when referring to interventions that address the radicalisation of terrorists: ‘counter-radicalisation’ and ‘de-radicalisation’. The focus of this essay is constrained to de-radicalisation, however one must consider what these two terms represent. As will be discussed further, no one standardised model exists for effective de-radicalisation. Techniques that are adaptable and include counter-radicalisation or de-radicalisation initiatives must be considered and made available in planning individually tailored de-radicalisation programs (Townsend, 2015; Nawaz, 2011; Butt and Tuck, n.d; Stern and Porges, 2010). Townsend (2015), a former United

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States of America Presidential Homeland Security Advisor, defines de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation broadly, with the latter more generalised, preventative and proactive, whilst the former involves reactive and targeted techniques for individuals. However, Townsend (2015) also uses these two terms interchangeably in practical descriptions of methods that state actors might utilise in countering violent extremism. A distinction between the two terms could be explained as counter-radicalisation referring to proactive initiatives that are targeted towards communities to reduce potential risk of radicalisation, such as mass distribution of counter-extremism messages, while the term de-radicalisation is reactive and describes interventions that address a specific individual who has been radicalised and thus efforts should be to reverse this radicalisation (Townsend, 2011; Stone, 2011; Horgan and Braddock, 2010). In reviewing the need and effectiveness of counter-extremist narratives, the Institute of Strategic Dialogue's report states:

“Alternative narratives play an important role in countering the appeal of violent extremism. They do not tend to challenge extremist messaging directly, but instead attempt to influence those who might be sympathetic towards (but not actively supportive of) extremist causes, or help to unite the silent majority against extremism by emphasising solidarity, common causes and shared values” (Briggs and Fave, 2013, p.12).

While there are distinct differences between counter-radicalisation and de-radicalisation, as will be demonstrated throughout, there is some level of necessary cross-over between these two broad strategies. Further, research on de-radicalisation techniques indicates that successful interventions will be built specifically for the circumstances of individual and consist of both counter-radicalisation and de-radicalisation (Kappers, 2011; Stern and Porges, 2010). To explain, the use of counter-radicalisation strategies prior to a

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given terrorist becoming radicalised may have relevance to the de-radicalisation of that terrorist, as these counter-radicalisation messages may remain with the terrorist after they have been radicalised and be supported at a later time by other exit push and pull factors. As radicals become radicalised through many different circumstances and identify with varied motivational causal factors, or push and pull factors a tailored approach is necessary for de-radicalisation (Precht, 2007; Kappers, 2011; Jones, 2015b; Stern and Porges, 2010; (Morris, Eberhard, Rivera and Watsula, 2010).

The role of information communication technology is relevant in considering radicalisation and de-radicalisation, as remote radicalisation is greatly different to the circumstances that radicalise someone through physical interaction (Edwards, Gribbon, Reding, and Von Behr, 2013; Vela, 2015). In the following analysis, a number of case studies will be identified. It is anticipated that factors contributing to the initial radicalisation, including societal circumstances, will be critical in determining the most appropriate and successful strategies to de-radicalise terrorists.

Factors that contribute to the radicalisation of a terrorist may include religious discourse, deceptive teachings, societal station or position, political motivation, cultural and ethnic identity as well as mental competence (General Intelligence and Security Service – Kingdom of the Netherlands, 2004). Although not exhaustive, these factors and the unique individual circumstances of a given terrorist will guide the basis of the most appropriate de-radicalisation methods. Abbasi (n.d) further notes that disengagement in distancing oneself from violent actions does not necessarily require a change in commitment to the motivating factor or indicate a change in radicalisation status. De-radicalisation as a process does not follow a fixed or simple formula that would be applicable in any circumstance with the expectation of success, and as such de-radicalisation programs must be adapted to unique individual circumstances to accommodate individuals, small groups or wider communities (Schmid, 2013; Stern and Porges, 2010). Disengagement consists of an individual turning

away from violent action, although they may retain their radical views. Indeed, there may in fact be no correlation between de-radicalisation and disengagement (Bjorgo and Horgan, n.d). In contrast to Bjorgo and Horgan (n.d), Kruglanski and Gelfand (2015) acknowledge that disengagement from violent action does not amount to de-radicalisation, however suggest that disengagement may be an accompanying occurrence to de-radicalisation. Accordingly, to reach a conclusion with regard to how a person could be de-radicalised, strategies that change the subject's belief system and bring about rejection of the extremist ideology, while also promoting normative community values must be pursued (Rabasa, Pettyjohn et al., 2010). Rabasa, Pettyjohn et al. (2010) also acknowledge that in the case of Islamist motivated extremism, de-radicalisation becomes exceedingly difficult, as the motivating ideology is couched in the subject's commitment to their religion, which can understandably be difficult to bring the terrorist to a point where they are able to separate their faith from violent extremism and renounce terrorism.

Rana (2011) identifies the broad approaches that can be applied to de-radicalisation as being security focused, societal, idyllic and political, as is represented in the table below:

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
<b>Security</b>	<b>Detainee's</b>	<b>Rehabilitation</b>	<b>Reducing security threats</b>
<b>Societal</b>	<b>Vulnerable Persons</b>	<b>Engagement</b>	<b>Developing moderate tendencies</b>
<b>Ideological</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Highlighting religion's emphasis on peace</b>	<b>Developing counter arguments / narratives</b>
<b>Political</b>	<b>Society at large</b>	<b>Winning the hearts and minds of society</b>	<b>Neutralizing security threats</b>

Figure 1: Approaches to De-Radicalisation. Swat De-radicalization Model: Prospects for Rehabilitating Militants. Muhammad Amir Rana, April – June 2011. p.1

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There is an additional issue that contributes to the difficulty of the successful de-radicalisation of a terrorist, in that it is challenging to assess whether a terrorist has been successfully de-radicalised (Rabasa, Pettyjohn et al., 2010). This raises questions directly relevant to how a terrorist might be de-radicalised, as there are noted deficiencies in the ability to measure whether a de-radicalisation technique is effective (Rabasa, Pettyjohn et al., 2010). This is due to various reasons that broadly fit around the motivation for participating in de-radicalisation programs (Rabasa, Pettyjohn et al., 2010). This may include misrepresentation of a subject's post de-radicalisation program beliefs, due to motivation of circumstance, such as wanting to appear compliant in response to detention or treatment (Rabasa, Pettyjohn et al., 2010).

Regarding de-radicalisation techniques, Porges (2011) suggests that de-radicalisation models will not be commonly applicable to all terrorists. Expanding this requirement of unique intervention, this means that whatever model of de-radicalisation is utilised, it must be adaptive and tailored to address the motivations and ideology of a specific terrorist in order to have the greatest chance of effectiveness (Porges, 2011). In designing a suitable tailored de-radicalisation program, it will be pertinent to identify and understand some commonality in what are described as push and pull factors that motivate radicals to self-disengage or move towards de-radicalisation (Morris, Eberhard, Rivera and Watsula, 2010). These push and pull factors are important in the design of a de-radicalisation program, as they are deeply relevant as to what might motivate a person to denounce a previously strongly held ideology (Morris, Eberhard, Rivera and Watsula, 2010). It is important to recognise common push and pull factors, as are identified by Morris, Eberhard, Rivera and Watsula (2010), who observe some commonalities in de-radicalisation or disengagement be societal restrictions imposed by a group, distain for acts committed by the terrorist group and identifying the jarring between doctrine morality of terrorist groups and actions of the terrorist group. External to factors that are tied directly to the terrorist organisation, social



influences or desires have also been noted as factors that pull radicals away from terrorist groups and towards de-radicalisation (Disley, Weed, Reding, Clutterbuck and Warnes, 2011). These factors may include building emotional maturity to a point that the terrorist essentially grows out of the organisation, experiences or refers back to positive social ties such as family support or supportive social networks, changes in tasks that the terrorist must undertake within the group and the tangible potential for alternative livelihood generation (Disley, Weed, Reding, Clutterbuck and Warnes, 2011). A specific radicalised terrorist may not be subject to all of the above influences, however as these factors are identified repeatedly as having relevance to a terrorists' motivation to self-disengage or de-radicalise, they must be considered from the outset of de-radicalisation program design, so that strategies that address the factors acting upon a given terrorist can be prioritised.

In discussing how de-radicalisation can be conducted, given an Islamist extremism terrorist, Rabasa, Pettyjohn et al, (2010) discuss a religious dual focused approach. That is that Islamic religious scholars may be deployed to speak with the terrorist to identify that inconsistencies exist between Islamic doctrine and the twisted propaganda of 'Islamic teachings' of the given terrorist group (Rabasa, Pettyjohn et al, 2010; Nawaz, 2011). Sageman (2008) believes that challenging of the validity of religious doctrine propagated by terrorist organisations as a de-radicalisation strategy will be largely ineffective. Sageman (2008) argues that the broad majority of terrorists do not possess a required level of critical understanding of the Quran or Islamic doctrine to be convinced by a rational critique of the propaganda teachings. Sageman (2008) clarifies this point in noting that the strategy of challenging the religious basis of a terrorist organisation may be effective in contributing to the de-radicalisation of a small number of extremist scholars, however the greater terrorist population would be largely non-receptive to religious challenges. As Sageman states:



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“They would simply have been bored and would not have listened”

(Sageman, 2008. c.8 p.14).

However, in contrast to Sageman’s (2008) view that there is minimal potential for success within de-radicalisation programs that are based upon ideologically challenges, the State facilitated de-radicalisation program of Saudi Arabia places significant relevance on idilocal challenges being presented to a terrorist (Williams and Lindsey, 2013). While the Saudi Arabian de-radicalisation program is not in its targeted at addressing ideology solely, ideology is paid extensive significance with these challenges being presented by Islamic religious authorities, trusted family of the terrorist or successfully de-radicalised former-terrorists (Williams and Lindsey, 2013).

In considering how a terrorist could be de-radicalised, all avenues must be considered. The term counter-narrative is prominent within the de-radicalisation discourse, and will be considered here (Nawaz, 2011; Jacobson, 2010; Townsend, 2015). In ‘The Terrorist Dropouts’, Jacobson (2010) sets out a number of varying focused strategies that may be useful inclusions in a counter-narrative program in order to drive de-radicalisation of terrorists. This includes opportunities while a terrorist remains within a terrorist organisation, what shall be referred to throughout as ‘in organisation’. Jacobson (2010) recommends in the case of the United States Government, that the content of de-radicalisation programs be extended to enhance public messages to a point that these messages discredit and identify hypocrisies that exist within terrorist organisational leadership. The value of this approach to de-radicalisation is extensive, as it is not unreasonable to see that discrediting, particularly in identifying hypocrisies and misrepresentations of Islam would start the questioning of purpose in a given terrorist (Green, 2015). Counter-narratives should also publicise the fact that leaving a terrorist organisation is possible, and demonstrate examples such as Maajid Nawaaz and Mohamed

Mahbub 'Ed' Husain, who both left Hizb-ut-Tarir without violent confrontation (Jacobson, 2010; Rabasa, Pettyjohn et al, 2010; Nawaz, 2011; Husain, 2007a; Husain, 2007b). Jacobson (2010) also recommends highlighting the realities of life as a terrorist, to enable radicals to question the circumstances in which they live. By highlighting the poor circumstances of life as a terrorist it is hoped that terrorists might start to question whether it is worth it. Jacobson (2010) also identifies that while de-radicalisation counter-narratives are often utilised by governments, engaging respected 'champions' is important to increase the receptiveness of the message. Such champions may include former radicals, as they understand both the indoctrination and the experience of successfully extricating themselves from a given group (Nawaz, 2011; Husain, 2007). In support of the need for an effective counter-narrative, Sageman (2008) highlights the existence of a popular and appealing jihad discourse shared among Muslim youth. What can be interpreted from Sageman's (2008) reference to a notion of 'cool jihad', is that these youth are receptive to influential messages. Therefore to effectively combat radicalisation clear, accurate messages shared by well-respected leaders must be utilised and reflects Nawaz's (2011) intention when he refers to a counter narrative. This resembles a standard peer leader system, in which an experienced person (i.e. someone who has experienced a terrorist organisation and left), will be influential in the de-radicalisation of impressionable parties, particularly younger terrorists (Choudhury, 2009). The peer leader system has been applied by the Saudi Arabian Government, which established consortiums consisting of academics, judges and de-radicalised individuals, to disseminate government driven counter-narratives and priorities to radicals (Rubin, 2004). Solomon (2013) believes the government of Saudi Arabia has demonstrated an effective deployment of counter-narratives against violent Islamic extremism, what Solomon and others refer to as Islamism (Nawaz, 2011). Solomon explains this extensive dissemination of the Saudi Arabian counter-narrative in stating:

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“This campaign against Islamism was pursued at several levels, including a media campaign, engaging in a national dialogue, disrupting the activities of those who were promoting violent extremism, a national solidarity campaign against terrorism, the review of sponsored publications, and internet filtering” (Solomon, 2014, p.27).

Additionally, the Saudi Arabian Government’s de-radicalisation programs generally views all relevant parties that are affected by terrorism as victims of terrorism, this includes casualties, families of casualties, communities as well as the radicalised terrorists who commit terrorist acts (Boucek, 2011). In treating the terrorist as a victim, Saudi Arabian de-radicalisation programs can address and counteract motivating factors using techniques that are separate from any criminality or security sensitivities (Jones, 2015a). The Global Counter Terrorism Forum (2014) broadly addresses the need for a two way exchange between law enforcement and the community, including de-radicalised former extremists, as part of the community engagement and counter narrative approach. Choudhury (2009) clearly identifies the need for adequate and publically identifiable support services for terrorists who may question their association to these groups. Specifically, the service needs are identified as being based around intellectual support to assist terrorists in understanding questions regarding organisation ideology, as well as the need for emotional support mechanisms to address apprehensions around leaving an organisation, such as isolation or changing life purpose (Choudhury, 2009).

To address how an individual terrorist may actually be de-radicalised, the motivation for radical ideology must also be understood. While it is clear that any de-radicalisation program must be extensively tailored to address the motivating factors of a given terrorist, the Kruglanski and Gelfand (2015) succinctly summarise the radicalisation of a terrorist as commitment to an explicit goal, which addresses a particular belief. It should be noted that

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the belief is not necessarily religious, as the motivating factor may be political or social (DeAngelis, 2009). Within the context of potential strategies of de-radicalisation, Kruglanski and Gelfand (2015) accurately state that an ideology cannot be defeated only by force, in that one cannot beat terrorism out of a terrorist. In fact, the ineffectiveness of force driven reactions regarding de-radicalisation links back to de-radicalisation entailing a change in the terrorists commitment to extremist ideology, rather than simply stopping violent action as the terrorist may continue to idyllically support extreme ideals (Rabasa, Pettyjohn et al, 2010; Kruglanski and Gelfand, 2015).

One well known strategy for de-radicalising terrorists is de-radicalisation programs delivered in a residential camp or within an incarceration environment (Kruglanski and Gelfand, 2015; Bryans, 2014). Porges (2011) explains that de-radicalisation programs, in addition to religious or idyllic challenges, must enhance the education standard and vocational prospects of the subject terrorist in order for the program to be effective. Burke (2013) refers to de-radicalisation programs that are being administered by state military and police and identifies that these programs classically consisted of vocational training, provision of counselling and challenges to religious or ideological motivating factors. Despite the funding and promotion of the success of these de-radicalisation programs, Burke (2013) questions whether they actually assist terrorists to renounce extremist ideals. This, in part, is the question that this essay aims to answer. Stern and Porges (2010) clearly articulate the componentry of a successful de-radicalisation and recommend that these programs be extensively tailored to the subject terrorist, and include educational, vocational and religious content as well as community re-integration activities. Three consistent general aspects can be observed in examples of de-radicalisation programs. These consist of identifying religious inaccuracy, providing a means for the reforming terrorist to financially support themselves through vocation and community re-integration (Stern and Porges, 2010; Burke, 2013). However, Stern and Porges (2010) do provide some further context regarding the relevance

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of challenging religious misrepresentation as a priority and in contrast promote that a behavioural change approach is more likely to succeed. This view of a behaviour-change approach aiming towards re-integration into normative community lives, rather than focusing on idyllic challenges is also supported by Bjorgo and Horgan, who state:

“Initially, there should be at least as much emphasis on changing behaviour and the relationship with the militant group as on changing the ideological values of the extremist. A one-side focus on changing ideology alone (e.g. through theological debate) is unlikely to work unless it is also combined with influencing their behaviour and addressing their social ties to the group, family members, friends and others” (Bjorgo and Horgan, n.d. p.1).

What should also be identified is the importance of appropriate one to one interaction between reforming terrorist and intervention personnel, which is said by Stern and Porges (2010) to be the single most critical aspect of any de-radicalisation program. This one to one interaction maintained over the duration of the program and potentially beyond becomes mentorship, which is logically a key aspect in preventing recidivism in de-radicalised former terrorists, as mentors will be able to provide advice, guidance and be an example for the terrorist within the program to follow (Spalek and Davies, 2012; Akbarzadeh, 2014). The importance of suitable mentoring within any de-radicalisation program should not be understated with this component’s importance being suitably summarised by Spalek and Davis, who state:

“...it would appear that mentoring is a central aspect to the process of rehabilitation” (Spalek and Davies, 2012. pg. 3).

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Returning to the specific composition of de-radicalisation programs, the Swat Valley in Pakistan provides a useful example. What can be observed is that there is significant gravitas placed into providing alternative income streams to reforming terrorists (Burke, 2013). The value of providing alternative income streams, through practical vocation training and interest-free business establishment loans, is that it removes the financial dependence of the reforming terrorist from potentially returning to terrorist organisations for financial reasons. It should also be noted that in addition to vocational training employed in the Swat Valley, program administrators drew on the expertise of Islamic scholars to challenge the misrepresentation of Islamic doctrine that is promoted by terrorist organisation propaganda (Burke, 2013). This strategy demonstrates a consistent counter-measure to the exploitative grooming and indoctrination that is employed by Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. Tehrik-e-Taliban target financially vulnerable families and provide some gesture of financial sustainability through stipends and shelter provision, in exchange for the children being willing enrolled into Madrassas it administers (Obaid-Chinoy, 2009).

In reviewing a number of alternate de-radicalisation programs, it is apparent that the majority of programs are targeted towards captured radicals, rather than proactive efforts that target initiatives at currently ‘in-organisation’ terrorists. One notable exception is the proactive al Hitar de-radicalisation program of Yemen, which is described by numerous commentators as achieving limited success, primarily due to being inadequately funded and not properly conceptualised, despite possessing some proactive program focuses (Burke, 2013; Hearne and Laiq, 2010; Johnsen and Boucek, 2008). The intention of this point is not to highlight any deficiency within the Yemeni initiative, rather this is intended to highlight that the priority of de-radicalisation programs is targeted at terrorists who are captured and due to physical constraints, have already been disengaged from the terrorist organisation (Burke, 2013; Hearne and Laiq, 2010; Johnsen and Boucek, 2008). Also, importantly the post-program phase of de-radicalisation programs is identified as being critical to a terrorist’s

ongoing refutation of terrorism in both ideology and violent practice (Hearne and Laiq, 2010).

There are a number of de-radicalisation program examples in Europe, specifically Exit Germany, Exit Sweden and Exit Norway, which target de-radicalisation of extreme right-winged groups, such as Neo-Nazi's (Bjorgo and Horgan, n.d; Köhler and Berczyk, 2014). The stated aims of these de-radicalisation organisations are consistently aimed at providing advice and guidance to assist willing 'in-organisation' extremists to find an avenue out of the organisation, with the organisations targeted being right-winged Neo-Nazi or racially motivated extremist groups (Köhler and Berczyk, 2014; Ramalingam, 2014; Butt and Tuck, n.d). The discrepancy in the examples of Germany, Norway and Sweden is that the motivating factor that drives the violent extremism is political or societal, which contrasts with Islamic extremist that is driven by belief in religious doctrine. As Stern and Porges (2010) have noted, it may be much more challenging to convince a radical that their religious beliefs are fundamentally incorrect. Akbarzadeh (2014) also comments on the reliance on engaging Islamic scholars to denounce violent action as being inconsistent with Islam. In his assessment, a de-radicalisation program that relies on rebutting terrorist action as being un-Islamic misses the mark as it does not acknowledge the variance in circumstances that may contribute to a person being radicalised initially (Akbarzadeh, 2014). In making these assertions, Akbarzadeh (2014) infers that a de-radicalisation program must be uniquely tailored to address the contributory radicalisation factors of each individual terrorist.

Looking specifically at potentially de-radicalising terrorists, including perhaps those who have travelled to Iraq and Syria in order to fight with Islamic State, Jones (2015a) believes that the approach of almost banishing these radicals from returning (to Australia) is counter-intuitive to the de-radicalisation of these individuals. Jones (2015a) raises the issue of these potential young radicals who have clandestinely alighted from Australia as needing



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encouragement to return of their own accord to participate in de-radicalisation programs. Further, Jones (2015a) notes that radicalisation and de-radicalisation must be addressed as a social problem in policy, rather than a criminal or state security manner as well as their needing to be separation between de-radicalisation interventions and intelligence gathering programs. As Jones (2015a) also states, the national security sector and criminal intelligence community are most likely not the most suitable entities to manage de-radicalisation interventions, and that these interventions are more appropriately delivered through civil society actors. It may also be accurate to say that in deciding to return from embedment with a terrorist organisation of one's own accord constitutes the commencement of the de-radicalisation process for that individual.

Allowing terrorists to return to a home country does create a practical issue of how terrorists will be managed, whether this be in correctional facilities or living amongst communities (Jones, 2015b). Jones (2014) identifies the prisoner management technique of isolation and limiting contact as being a tactic that is employed to manage the custody of terrorists from a desire to prevent common population prisoners from becoming radicalised by the terrorist. However, this practice goes no way towards de-radicalising that given terrorist. In fact this isolation technique can lead to a continued commitment to violent extremism (Jones, 2014; Bryans, 2014). In the case of terrorism prisoners who are not subject to life sentences, the terrorist may be released at some time and it will be to the wider communities benefit that if at the time of release, the terrorist had progressed towards de-radicalisation (Jones, 2014; Bryans, 2014). In explanation of this issue, Jones states:

“For terrorist offenders, incarceration can reduce their chances of rehabilitation. It may increase disruptive behaviour, as well as enhance the likelihood of recidivism. Isolation can also reinforce the psychology of

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exclusivity and ‘martyrdom’, and may even foster or magnify the causes that led offenders to terrorism in the first place” (Jones, 2014. p.2).

Applying the statements of Jones (2014) to the conundrum of how might a terrorist who is incarcerated be de-radicalised, the answer is not through isolation. Isolation may be detrimental to psychiatric health of the terrorist, which will be negative to the possibility of de-radicalisation (Jones, 2014). Further, isolation from the common prison community is likely to allow for continuation of commitment to extremism (Jones, 2014; Bryans, 2014). Jones (2014) notes that potentially the prisoner management technique that is most likely to support terrorist prisoner de-radicalisation is dispersing terrorist prisoners amongst the common prisoner population.

A further de-radicalisation realm that must be considered is the use of social media by terrorist organisations to recruit (Mohamedou, 2015). As Mohamedou (2015) notes, Islamic State is far exceeding all other organisation in digital capability. One result of the digital capabilities of groups like Islamic State is the radicalisation of individuals to such an extent that they either leave families and communities to join these groups, or remain embedded within communities where they pose a risk of lone wolf terrorism attacks (Edwards, Gribbon, Reding, and Von Behr, 2013; Marret, 2013). Conversely, it is then reasonable to consider there to be potential to utilise digital and social media to disseminate information and resources that are aimed at encouraging disengagement and questioning of a terrorist’s commitment to the terrorist organisation. Ashour (2010) views the use of the internet as a vital tool in disseminating counter-messages and narratives in order to promote de-radicalisation amongst radicalised terrorists. Given the expansive body of terrorist group material that is propagates through social media and the internet, it seems reasonable that the internet is also the platform for publicising effective counter-narrative messages with the aim of promoting disengagement amongst the radicalised (Nawaz, 2011; Stevens and

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Neumann, 2009; Schmid, 2013; Ashour, 2010). This is due to two reasons, firstly as Stevens and Neumann (2009) note, through the vast expanse of digital terrorism propaganda, technical interventions such as taking down webpages or denial of service attacks are ineffective as the targets are too many. While commenting on the ability of state actors to be effective in removing terrorist content from the internet, Schmid states:

“Any strategy that hopes to counter online radicalisation must aim to create an environment in which the production and consumption of such materials become not just more difficult in a technical sense but unacceptable as well as less desirable” (Schmid, 2013. p.35).

In de-radicalising any terrorist through digital interventions, the evidence supports that strategies aimed at removing or hiding terrorism digital content will not succeed (Schmid, 2013). Instead, what is needed is a robust counter-narrative that takes advantage of social media dissemination capabilities, by discrediting and removing the relevance of a given terrorism motivation factor, this approach will create the highest likelihood of de-radicalising any terrorist (Nawaz, 2011; Stevens and Neumann, 2009; Schmid, 2013).

Secondly, what has been seen through the example of Islamic State is that a reaching out to vulnerable people is effective as it reaches vulnerable persons who are searching for purpose through a digital platform (Pantucci, 2011). Accordingly, a comparatively extensive counter-radicalisation social media campaign that is conducted over as many levels as groups like Islamic State utilise, may be effective in de-radicalisation of ‘in organisation’ terrorists (Labi, 2006; Stevens and Neumann, 2009; Pantucci, 2011). Within the digital realm, there is also potential for self-de-radicalisation, given the nature of how self-radicalised and lone-wolf terrorists can become radicalised through exposure to digital terrorism content (Pantucci, 2011; Schmid, 2013; Marret, 2013; Dow Jones and Company,

2014). To explain, just as a lone-wolf terrorist is likely to have, to a varying degree, become radicalised through clandestine exposure to terrorism propaganda, there is also potential that a radicalised terrorist can become self-de-radicalised through exposure to broad counter-radicalisation narratives and also person-to-person de-radicalisation interaction within a digital space (Pantucci, 2011; Marret, 2013; Dow Jones and Company, 2014). The advantage of digital self-de-radicalisation is exactly the same as the advantageous secrecy of digital radicalisation, as it is also available in isolation, can be easily accessed and provides a measure of anonymity and secrecy to the person accessing it (Edwards, Gribbon, et al, 2013). This ability to conceal ones identity and obtain information in a discrete manner, provides a point where information of a counter-terrorist message can be located by the given terrorist, who might be questioning their commitment to violent extremism with a minimised risk of being discovered. In harnessing the potential for online self-de-radicalisation or self-disengagement, what is of paramount importance is the content of the counter-narrative, it must carry the same message and information of any non-digital counter-radicalisation strategy.

Self-de-radicalisation is not limited to clandestine secret enquiring over the internet by terrorists who are currently within an organisation. This self-de-radicalisation can occur through a gradual process of realisation of the inconsistencies contained within the doctrine of extremist organisations (Husain, 2007a). While not being a terrorist involved in violent extremism, a prominent example of this gradual realisation process and eventual exit from a terrorist organisation is that of Mohamed 'Ed' Mahbub Husain, who is explained to have been indoctrinated into two extremist Islamic organisations, namely Jamat-e-Islami and Hizb ut-Tahrir (Kuhl, 2009). Husain was a Muslim child who was raised in the United Kingdom and reported many feelings in life that are common among radicals; of isolation, discrimination, not fitting in and experiencing jarring between normative life in the United Kingdom and his Islamic faith, as well as feeling of commonality to Muslims around the

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world (Kuhl, 2009; Sageman, 2008; Husain, 2007a). What Husain demonstrated is the ability of an individual to self-de-radicalise through a gradual process that involved efforts by close family members identifying the truth of Islam in contrast to the propaganda of terrorist organisations over the long term, as well a crisis point at which time active efforts to extricate himself from the organisation were undertaken (Kuhl, 2009; Husain, 2007a; Husain, 2007b). This crisis point for Husain is identified as the murder of a non-Muslim student on Husain's university campus grounds by a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir. This incident started a process of comparative consideration and questioning of the idyllic motivation of Hizb ut-Tahrir, which led to Husain's eventual de-radicalisation and exit from the organisation (Kuhl, 2009; Husain, 2007a; Husain, 2007b). While the example of Husain demonstrates that a person can de-radicalise themselves and disengage from a terrorist organisation, this example also highlights an opportunity that de-radicalisation programs need to exploit, this opportunity is that of the effectiveness of the counter-narrative (Husain, 2007; Schmid, 2013). As Husain (2007a; Husain, 2007b) explains his father provided a sustained and rational counter-narrative that identified the conflict between Islam and the distortion of Islam that was propagated by the terrorist organisation. While the point at which Husain actively commenced disengagement from the organisation was the murder of a non-Muslim student, the relevance of the counter-narrative that was provided by his father should not be downplayed, as it continually identified the inconsistency of radical Islam (Husain, 2007a; Husain, 2007b). This demonstrates the relevance of sustained, accurate and effectively disseminated counter-narratives that can be applied at all levels of society (Husain, 2007a; Husain, 2007b). What is clear from the Husain example is that counter-narratives work and it would be advantageous in exposing 'in organisation' terrorists to teaching that contradicts with the doctrine of terrorist organisations (Nawaz, 2011; Husain; 2007a; Husain, 2007b; Atran, Bunting, Husain, 2011). This does raise another issue of access or ability to self-de-radicalise. While it is

obvious that Husain would have experienced significant difficulty in disengage himself from the organisation, it is perhaps much harder for a de-radicalising terrorist to disengage from and while in the territory of a group such as Islamic State (Barrett, 2014; Spencer, 2015; Husain, 2007a; Husain, 2007b; Kulh, 2009). This links back to the suggestion of Jones that on assessment of individual cases, terrorists should be encouraged to return to the home country so that de-radicalisation activities can be undertaken (Jones, 2015a). While this will not alleviate the danger of leaving an organisation like Islamic State, at least providing the possibility of returning home and restarting a productive life will remove one obstacle in the road of a terrorist taking steps to de-radicalise (Jones, 2015a; Barrett, 2014; Spencer, 2015).

The answer to this question of how could a terrorist be de-radicalised is multifaceted. There is no one set formula that will turn a terrorist into a functioning member of a community, further to achieve de-radicalisation, a de-radicalisation program must be inimitably structured to every individual case (Stern and Porges, 2010). Additionally, the success of de-radicalisation is not easily quantified (Horgan and Altier, 2012). De-radicalisation can also be a result of reactive de-radicalisation programs, through proactive counter-radicalisation programs, or through the self-de-radicalisation of an individual who becomes unable to reconcile the ideology of an organisation and disengages themselves (Husain, 2007a, Husain, 2007b; Boucek, 2011, Townsend, 2011). Aspects for the successful de-radicalisation of a terrorist should be taken from both counter-radicalisation and de-radicalisation techniques, as each of these broad strategies have the potential to act on the commitment of the given terrorist and contribute to their eventual de-radicalisation (Stern and Porges, 2010; Townsend, 2011). De-radicalising an indoctrinated terrorist is not an easy process, and methods should be adaptable, whilst opportunities for a person to self-de-radicalise should also always be available.

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