A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Deradicalisation: Results from Germany and Pakistan[1]

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Abstract

Deradicalisation refers to the process of distancing oneself from extremist ideologies. As a social challenge, it is usually addressed by specially qualified professionals. In this paper, based on 16 interviews with deradicalisation professionals, we comparatively examine deradicalisation practices in coercive environments in Germany and Pakistan. This cross-cultural comparison using "most dissimilar" cases allows us to distinguish between general and culture-specific approaches, while also allowing the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches to emerge; this can be used to further develop deradicalisation efforts. Based on our evaluation of target groups, goals, professional understandings of radicalisation and its methods, this text elaborates the differences and similarities of deradicalisation practices; we also formulate consequences for deradicalisation practice and outline the need for further research.

Introduction

Radicalisation is undoubtedly a societal problem, and therefore deradicalisation is a societal responsibility. While numerous works have described and modelled radicalisation and an increasing number of studies have also attempted to do so with deradicalisation, we still know too little about the practices of deradicalisation itself. Yet this is precisely the task society should undertake. To understand how deradicalisation work is accomplished – as a remedy

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for the societal problem of radicalisation – we turn our focus to the techniques and micro-local structures that accomplish this, and do so in a cross-cultural comparison using most-dissimilar cases. Specifically, we show how deradicalisation is conducted with violent, religious extremists in coercive institutional environments in Germany and Pakistan.

One example of a reappraisal of contrasting deradicalisation practices was a paper that entered the comparative debate on radicalisation prevention, examining the practices of professionals in coercive institutions, such as prisons (Hardy, 2018). This arena is relevant because prisons constitute an environment where both radicalisation occurs and deradicalisation services operate (Basra & Neumann, 2016). This allows us to observe how deradicalisation work is implemented in a high-risk group under the extreme conditions of this specific setting. By comparing contrasting settings, we can derive the elements of deradicalisation work that are culture-specific, and those that are general in nature. These findings contribute to the further development of both academic discourse and practice.

The aim of this article is to develop an in-depth understanding of the techniques and presumed efficacies of deradicalisation practices in coercive environments. Therefore, the research question of the study is: "How exactly is deradicalisation work implemented in coercive environments in Germany and Pakistan?" Based on 16 interviews with professionals in Germany and Pakistan, we identify deradicalisation practices as well as highlight the differences and similarities between the techniques used in the respective countries. It can be expected that there are cultural influences on the design of the practices, but also similarities due to the nature of the phenomenon. Accordingly, this study can provide an in-depth understanding of deradicalisation work in both countries, as well as conclusions with necessary practical implications.

The article is divided into five sections. After the introduction, the second section briefly outlines the current state of research on deradicalisation work. The third section discusses the empirical design, and the fourth presents the results of the study. The article concludes in the fifth section, where we answer the research question and discuss its implications for deradicalisation practices and further research.

The Current State of Research

The process of leaving violent extremism is often referred to as "deradicalisation". As a definitional starting point, the term obviously implies a reference to "radicalisation", which commonly stands for the gradual acquisition of extremist beliefs (Borum, 2011). Demant et al. (2008) described deradicalisation *ex negativo* as a process in which an individual becomes less radical. Accordingly, the effect that is intended to occur is the reversal of the process by which an individual became a violent extremist. What is understood as an "extremist" can, in turn, vary according to the different political and contemporary or historical contexts.

Hardy (2018) elaborated the idea that deradicalisation policies, or the conditions for deradicalisation practices, are framed in a culturally specific way. Since we are seeking a comparison between Germany and Pakistan, it is necessary to (re)appraise what radicalisation means in these countries. In Germany, the security authorities understand radicalisation as an individual process that culminates in extremism. This includes all active efforts aimed at undermining the fundamental values of liberal democracy, such as human rights, the rule of law, popular sovereignty, the multiparty principle, and the separation of powers (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2020). Since the historical experience of the Weimar Republic, in which the National Socialists eliminated democracy by democratic means, the Federal Republic of Germany combats not only violence-oriented extremism but also legalistic extremism. The implementation of extremist goals and ideas by political means is not acceptable within the existing legal system, with reference to the principle of a defensible democracy (Loewenstein, 1937). In Pakistan, attach importance in democratic values and the rule of law, but with a different meaning. Pakistan has had a turbulent history of colonialism as well as resistance to four military interventions (Muhammad Ayub Khan in the 1960s, Yahya Khan in the 1970s, Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq in the 1980s, and Pervez Musharraf in the 2000s) (see also Ahmed, 2009). A small portion of the country, aligned with Afghanistan, also experienced the rise of Taliban and other extremist groups, which in turn led to greater social resistance from the majority and law enforcement agencies. Nevertheless, the country's democratic structures are still rather fragile. In this socio-political framework, violent extremism is the main concern of law enforcement in Pakistan, whereas the majority of

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extremist activities in Germany (as of now) take place in the aforementioned legalistic spectrum.

Now that we have elaborated what each nation defines as extremism, we will focus on the opposite end of the radicalisation process: deradicalisation. However, the exit process is more complex than the two endpoints of "extremist" and "deradicalised" suggest. In a study by John Horgan (2009), in which he conducted interviews with former terrorists, he found that although "almost all of the interviewees could be described as *disengaged*, the vast majority of them could not be said to be *deradicalized*" (Horgan, 2009, p. 27). According to Horgan and Braddock (2010), "deradicalisation" from violence-oriented extremism consequently consists of two components. The first, "disengagement", refers to refraining from violence, including distancing oneself from the radical milieu's activities, providing support, and abandonment of their radicalised acquaintances. "Deradicalisation", on the other hand, is understood as the abandoning of an extremist ideology (Braddock, 2014). Some scholars have theorised that in addition, a change in one's perceived identity has to take place as well (Barelle, 2015; Winter & Feixas, 2019). Disengagement processes focus on changes at the behavioural level, while deradicalisation processes also require cognitive changes. Horgan (2009) concluded that disengagement was a far more realistic goal to achieve than deradicalisation. From a security perspective, however, a third component of the exit process becomes relevant: desistance. In criminology, "desistance" refers to the sustainable exit from a criminal career (Marsden, 2017). In the field of violence-oriented extremism, this refers primarily to the rejection of politically motivated crimes, although it also explicitly includes general criminal offences.

A study by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland, USA illustrates the complex interplay of these three components. Of the 300 extremist participants, 120 (40%) became disengaged from radical activities and had refrained from delinquency, while 65 (21.7%) did not commit politically motivated crimes for the following five years, but had remained rooted in the radical milieu. Another nine individuals were deradicalised but remained active in the milieu, while 101 became concurrently disengaged, desisted, and deradicalised (33.7%). In addition, a similar difference was observed relating to the duration of the exit process. The START

study showed that 32.7% of the extremists studied (N=300) distanced themselves from the radical milieu within one year, insofar as they had previously been arrested for a politically motivated offence. 14.5% distanced themselves within the first three years, 27% took between four and ten years, while 25.8% took longer than ten years to distance themselves (Jensen et al., 2020).

The reasons why extremists disengage themselves from these extremist milieus has been formulated, for example, by Altier et al. (2014) according to Aho's (1988) push and pull hypothesis. Here, "push factors" refer to the in-group reasons that force radicalised individuals out of extremist groups. "Pull factors" are reasons that pull extremist individuals back into mainstream society. Drawing on findings in psychology, criminology, and sociology, Altier et al. (2014) formulated an extensive list of empirically studied push and pull factors. Their push factors included: unmet expectations, disillusionment with strategy/actions of the terrorist group, disillusionment with the personnel, a difficulty adapting to a clandestine lifestyle, an inability to cope with the physiological/psychological effects of violence, a loss of faith in the ideology, and burnout. Pull factors included: competing loyalties, positive interactions, employment/educational demands, the desire to marry or establish a family, family demands, financial incentives, and amnesty.

Practitioners of deradicalisation work have therefore been well advised to focus on measures that trigger pull factors in the best possible way. At the same time, practical experience has shown that despite the existence of pull factors, not every extremist is able to break away. Demant et al. (2008) identified five reasons that made it hard for those willing to leave. These included: 1) close-knit communities, especially when supplemented by 2) an exclusive claim to (national or religious) identity. In such constellations, retreating from the radical ideology is also perceived as a betrayal of the community (e.g. the Ummah, the Nation, etc.). 3) Psychological and social dependencies play a special role when relationships outside the radical milieu no longer exist. Those who want to leave the milieu sometimes nevertheless refrain from doing so out of fear of being marginalised and unprotected. Another reason for remaining is the belief that 4) the ideal of the "right" (e.g. godly or social) life is no longer possible outside the radical milieu. Accordingly, leaving the milieu is always associated with giving up one's lifestyle and attitude to life. 5) Prison releases without

adequate transition management are associated with the fact that contacts with the radical milieu are not permanently broken. The stigma as an ex-prisoner combined with difficulties in navigating the labour market often leads to renewed contact with former milieu colleagues (Demant et al., 2008, pp. 141). Jensen et al. (2020) validated this finding. They studied 25 right-wing extremists who disengaged themselves from the milieu and 25 right-wing extremists who remained actively rooted. In their study, the greatest obstacle to successful disengagement was incarceration, combined with family members or life partners who were also rooted in the extremist milieu.

The exit process is thus characterised by individual trajectories, because the specific target dimensions (desistance, disengagement, deradicalisation) entail various push and pull factors (and the associated constellations of barriers to disengagement) as well as identity transformations. How such barriers and push/pull factors can be addressed in practice is the key question of professional deradicalisation work. To get a better picture, we can look to the different contours of deradicalisation work in Germany and Pakistan.

There have been several studies that have tried to sketch the German landscape of countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts in general and deradicalisation work in particular (Baaken et al., 2020; Luetzinger et al., 2020; MAPEX, 2021); there are also detailed studies on methods and concepts (El-Mafaalani et al., 2016; Koehler, 2016; Waleciak, 2021). For example, the MAPEX study identified 985 different programmes designed to prevent and combat religiously motivated extremism. 589 interviews were conducted during the study; 89% of the existing programmes are programs of primary prevention (multiple answers possible) and every participant could potentially benefit from joining (Gordon, 1983). 28% of the programmes were "secondary prevention" programmes, which means they were focused on at-risk individuals. 11% of the programmes dealt with "tertiary" prevention – high-risk individuals who appeared to have shown several high-risk factors associated with potential radicalisation. Only 7% of all programmes focused on deradicalisation work (MAPEX, 2021). Methods used in deradicalisation work are political education (81%), methods from educational theory (77%), and methods from social work (75%) (multiple answers were possible). Only 26% incorporated theology-based methods; psychological and therapeutic methods were even further behind, coming in at 11% (MAPEX, 2021). In short, the German

CVE landscape has many multifaceted programmes, taking several different approaches. The vast majority focus on primary prevention, taking place in school settings. The programmes most commonly use methods drawing on political education, educational theory, and/or social work.

The CVE landscape in Pakistan lacks the extensive mapping research that characterises Germany. Although civil society organisations operate in various fields of prevention work, the extent of these organisations and the exact methods they use is unknown (Orakzai, 2017; Qadeem, 2019). Pakistan's National Action Plan (NAP) has called for zero tolerance with respect to "militancy". It is thus more focused on combatting terrorism than preventing extremism. This has been conducted by disrupting militants' communication networks and financial streams (Naseer et al., 2019). In addition, deradicalisation work seems to have a rather high priority in Pakistan. There are currently six military-run facilities located in the Swat Valley entrusted with deradicalisation projects: the Sabaoon Rehabilitation Facility, the Mishal Rehabilitation Centre, Project Sparley (the Spring), Project Rastoon, Project Pythom, and Project Heila (Shahzad Gill et al., 2020). The methods of these projects employ range from psychological work and religious modules to vocational training (Azam & Bareeha Fatima, 2017).

Although there are some noteworthy publications regarding deradicalisation work in Pakistan, no systematic comparison between the practical aspects of deradicalisation work in Pakistan and Germany has been conducted yet. The methods employed, and the influence of the culture-specific understanding of radicalisation on deradicalisation practice has not been adequately addressed either. Therefore, we compare the practices of deradicalisation work in Germany and Pakistan to develop an in-depth understanding of the practices and assumed outcomes of deradicalisation work in coercive environments. We limit our focus to coercive environments because Pakistan has no voluntary participation programmes. Although most scholars have found non-coercive measurements to be more effective due to greater motivation and less strain on the relationship between clients and therapists (e.g. Koehler, 2016), there may nevertheless be specific benefits to a coercive setting. For example, it is possible to reach individuals who are otherwise not susceptible to most approaches. It is these high-risk offenders who need intervention the most. Recent research furthermore indicates

that it is not necessarily true that coercive environments negatively affect client and therapist relationships in all circumstances (Cherney et al., 2021).

Research Design

Case Description

We selected Germany as a secularised European state and Pakistan as a majority-Muslim state for our research on the practices of deradicalisation. The primary advantage of a cross-cultural comparison with most-dissimilar cases is the ability to reveal different perspectives of the same phenomenon and thus gain a better understanding it. In addition, a comparison between such countries can also cast a critical light on these practices and reveal weaknesses in the justifications of a given course of action. This paper makes no assessment between the two countries, but does carry out an analytical comparison.

Deradicalisation work in the field of religious extremism in Germany is still a relatively young area of activity, but it is generating increasing interest in light of religiously motivated terrorist attacks in Germany and the rest of Europe. Fuelled by a rising level of extremist threats, the security situation in society as a whole is worsening, making deradicalisation services and interventions increasingly relevant.

Although the practice of deradicalisation work is under-researched (Koehler, 2016; Koehler & Fiebig, 2019), we have been able to draw on an extensive study that examined the current landscape of deradicalisation projects dealing with religiously motivated extremism in Germany (MAPEX, 2021). In addition, we chose Pakistan for comparison. Although the distribution of deradicalisation projects in Pakistan is limited, the country has a long history of various political conflicts, and with its numerous experienced practitioners in the field of rehabilitation generally and deradicalisation specifically.

Due to the lack of sufficient data on the practice of deradicalisation work in either Germany or Pakistan, we conducted guided expert interviews with practitioners active in the field of deradicalisation work. For the interviews in Germany, we interviewed social workers, psychologists, political scientists, Islamic scholars, and religious scholars. The survey participants in Pakistan were psychologists, political scientists, and Islamic scientists.

In order to cover the heterogeneity of the various practices, we included at least one project from each agency in Germany involved with religiously-motivated deradicalisation. This included governmental as well as non-governmental programmes (according to Koehler's 2016 typology). The projects had to be active in a coercive environment, which in Germany meant correctional facilities. In total, nine projects in Germany were investigated, each with an expert interview.

Deradicalisation programmes are not only run by the Pakistan government, but also by civil and non-governmental organisations in close cooperation with the law enforcement agencies. Hundreds of these organisations work all over Pakistan, offering training and workshops for religious teachers to promote tolerance, give a moderate interpretation of religion, and provide counternarratives.

One limitation of the deradicalisation programmes in Pakistan is that they are usually tertiary prevention, and thus often address people who have already been radicalised and start after an incident has occurred. Programmes that monitor radicals normally do so only for religious seminaries, even though most young extremists actually attend mainstream schools. In addition, the effectiveness of some methods used, for example religious rehabilitation, have not been proven. Another criticism is that there is a lack of methods that include working with the family system, even though this has been shown to have an impact on radicalisation processes (Noor, 2013).

For this study, we conducted seven interviews with experts in Pakistan. All of the interviewees worked at facilities where deradicalisation strategies took place in a coercive environment, in so-called "deradicalisation centres" run by the Pakistani military. Access to the facility was gained through a request from Quaid-i-Azam University. One interview per deradicalisation facility was conducted. The anonymity of all interviewees was assured.

Data Description

Data collection in Germany took place between December 2017 and February 2021; in Pakistan, between February and April 2019. In Germany, experts from non-governmental organisations were interviewed, which was not true for Pakistan. There, practitioners were usually members of the military. The interviews were conducted using a standardised

guideline questionnaire to establish comparability between interviews. The interview guide was structured as follows:

Questions about the target group: Who is the target group of the project? How does the project reach the target group? Is this voluntarily or by force? Are there difficulties in reaching the target group?

Questions about the goals of the project: What are the goals of the project? Who sets these goals?

Questions about tools and methods: What is the theoretical concept of the project? What is the strategy? What tools and methods are used? Are topics about ideology, religion, and politics discussed with the clients?

Questions about the understanding of radicalisation: What is the understanding of radicalisation? Does the practitioner use scientific models? Is there a connection between the understanding of radicalisation and deradicalisation? Is deradicalisation a reversed process, or is it something else? Are there certain parameters that show a person is in the process of deradicalisation? How does the practitioner know if someone is deradicalised? Does the client undergo certain phases throughout that process?

Questions about the factors of radicalisation: What are the reasons for joining a radical group? Does ideology play a role in becoming radicalised?

From the survey in Germany, nine audio files are available in German with an average length of 01:22:39 (min.: 00:28:29; max.: 02:18:33), which were transcribed. From Pakistan, seven interviews are available for evaluation in written form as transcripts in English, since audio recordings were not permitted in the deradicalisation centre due to security reasons. According to German academic standards, no institutional ethical approval was necessary.

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Nevertheless, the study obtained informed consent by the interviewees, during which the purpose of the interviews was explained in detail, as well as the use of the data.

Analytical Strategy

The nine interviews from Germany and the seven interviews from Pakistan were analysed following Meuser and Nagel (2009) using MAXQDA 2020. The interviews were analysed using specific categories to compare deradicalisation practices in the two countries more accurately. We derived the categories according to the guideline-determined topic areas and supplemented them with a collective category. Individual text segments (codes) were then assigned to these categories, with a single code potentially applying to multiple categories. We used the following categories:

Code/category	Total
Target group	50
Goals of the project	42
Understanding of radicalisation	112
Tools and methods	151
Others	67
	422

Empirical Results

By analysing the qualitative interviews with experts, it is possible to make a cross-cultural comparison of deradicalisation work between Germany and Pakistan. In order to understand the reason behind the practices in both countries, we investigated the following categories: *target group* and *goals of the work,* as well as practitioners' *understanding of radicalisation* and (presumed) *radicalisation factors,* followed by the *methodological approaches* category at the end. In order to make a comparison, we analysed the interviews by category. The following sections present the results of the data from Germany and Pakistan according to the

above categories; each section is followed by a comparison of the similarities and differences between the results.

Target Group

This category includes statements from practitioners about who they see as the target group and how they reach clients.

Germany

The target group includes inmates and ex-prisoners who are supported in the context of re-entry programmes. The clients in this target group can be people who have been involved in religiously motivated radical milieus in Germany and have committed politically motivated crimes in this context, as well as those who have actively supported terrorist organisations abroad.

> For example, my work is mostly in prisons. There are people convicted of certain things, which means they already have this stamp of radicalism. I've worked with someone who was with al-Qaeda, I've worked with someone who was with IS, I've worked with someone who belonged to a Salafist mosque, who was watched by the intelligence services, so [was] known in the milieu. (Interview 6)

The target group of deradicalisation projects in Germany may be very specific, with a direct reference to the phenomenon, or exclusively preventive on a tertiary level, as the following quote shows:

> The people who are counted as cases and processed by us have committed politically motivated crimes at least once. (Interview 4)

However, there are also projects targeting a broader group. While they are not the subject of this study, it should be mentioned that these projects are not only limited to tertiary prevention work in prisons, but they are also active in other areas of prevention work. In this

case, activities take place not only with people who have already been radicalised and convicted of crimes in the area of politically motivated crime, but also with groups who are at risk of becoming radicalised and those at the primary prevention level. In addition, these practitioners also provide advice to social workers, teachers, and security authorities. The fact that there are so few services exclusively active on the tertiary prevention level in prisons can be explained by the fact that the number of prisoners who want to leave their radicalised milieu is too small in relation to the number of services available for a provider to specialise in.

> That's the lowest threshold we have, so we try to make small adjustments to prevent getting to that point. That is the lowest level. And then everything else, the path of radicalisation all the way up to people who are already definitely radicalised and perhaps have already committed crimes, such as Syrian returnees. We work all the way up to these individuals. (Interview 3)

Reaching the target group depends on the connection to a deradicalisation service provider. In the cases of services that are not directly affiliated with government agencies (such as the security authorities or the BAMF (German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees)), there is still exchange with the relevant authorities. This consists of government agencies who commission practitioners to assess the degree of radicalisation in a particular case and may refer affected individuals to deradicalisation practitioners if necessary. In some cases, the correctional facilities make a referral to the relevant practitioners themselves directly. The basic assessment of a potential security threat is mainly conducted by the security authorities. Before an incarcerated person is released from prison under parole conditions, the practitioners may also be tasked with making an assessment.

> So, there are cases where people are sent to us directly by the security authorities with the goal to address the young people and work with them.... Or perhaps someone is already in prison for a relevant crime and will soon be released, or they are on

probation or something similar. And there is a desire for someone to work with him on the topic. (Interview 7)

The following statement shows that another point of reference for the target group is the public relations and networking efforts of these organisations themselves. Radicalised individuals do not usually make initial contact with deradicalisation programmes themselves; instead, this usually takes place via third parties. These may be governmental or public agencies, but they may also be people from the client's social circle.

Well, they know it, because it was said over and over again via mailing lists that we exist. Because we often invited ourselves, or were invited to, what do I know, all the youth welfare offices. In the police departments. Also, in the prosecutorial sector. So, so to speak, everywhere where professionals are and where they might be involved with the issue of radicalisation in some way. (Interview 5)

Working with deradicalisation practitioners is in principle voluntary for clients. However, it is difficult to truly speak of a voluntary decision if this occurs within a coercive environment. The practitioners emphasised that they considered it more effective to work with clients who made use of their services on a voluntary basis. Accordingly, such work usually takes place with people who are probably already in the deradicalisation process or who already have at least a cognitive opening.

That's why it's important for us that the counselling does not usually take place in a coercive context. There is definitely the variant that we are a condition of probation, but that is often with people whom we have previously counselled within the correctional facility. And they decide for themselves that they would like to work with the [programme] beyond their prison term. And that can often contribute to people being released early, of course, because then the public prosecutor or the judge has some assurance that there's someone behind them besides the probation service, for

example, us as experts. Thank God, this is not used so often because, as I said, with us the focus is on voluntariness. (Interview 2)

Another way of reaching the target group can be through coercion, for example, due to probation conditions. The prospect of early release or the possibility to reinstate a revoked passport taken by the security authorities can also be a reason for participation.

Even potentially dangerous people would report to us. This person does this because he expects it to count for something in order to get rid of his status of being a potential danger. That is the primary reason in the vast majority of cases that in some way have a coercive context. But in many cases, they come to us very, very sceptically. They also believe, 'I'm fooling them.' And then, however, because of course, we have trained staff here […]. If only because nobody really listened to them for a very, very long time. And we talk openly about certain topics in the way that we do then. (Interview 5)

The above statement makes clear that practitioners also see the coercive environment as a positive aspect, because it allows them to reach a target group that would not otherwise participate in the services (due to these clients' progression in the radicalisation process). However, not all potential clients can be reached, since participation remains voluntary. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on who exactly becomes a client and under what conditions, particularly in the context of coercion. This is not evident from the interviews and requires a follow-up assessment.

Pakistan

According to the practitioners interviewed, the target group of deradicalisation centres in Pakistan are clients who once belonged to an extremist group. They have either directly been involved in terrorist activities or supported extremist groups by other means, including financial or logistic support.

All militants who are involved in terrorist activities are the target group of the project. There are different categories we have assigned those terrorists to. They include: black, grey, light grey, and white. Among all, the black category terrorists are the most dangerous. Those who were involved in violent terrorist activities against the state are put in the black category. After black, grey comes next. In this category, the terrorists are not that dangerous compared to the black. Further on the list follows light grey. Those persons are not involved in any type of terrorist activities themselves but have been accused of facilitating and supporting terrorists. Their support varies. Sometimes, they support terrorists logistically, sometimes financially. Additionally, they can also help terrorists by providing them food, shelter, and any other kind of specific or hidden help; those people are grouped in this category. (Interview 11)

Clients continue to be cared for after their stay in the deradicalisation centres and consequently form another target group.

As a senior social worker and monitoring officer, I exclusively work with those clients who were recently released from the deradicalisation centre. (Interview 14)

The following statement illustrates the fact that the target group is reached via military authorities and, under certain circumstances, through intelligence activities. Clients are brought to deradicalisation centres by these authorities. The practitioners themselves do not get any further information on how the clients were reached or where they came from. In all interviews (N=7), none of the practitioners had any additional information regarding this question.

According to the client, we are basically not concerned with target group members, how they are reached is a secret with the relevant authorities. (Interview 10)

Becoming a client is a prerequisite for entering the coercive environment in Pakistan, and clients do not lose this status, even after successfully attesting to deradicalisation. This

means that they remain permanently under the scrutiny of the military, which holds a prominent position in Pakistan's security architecture.

A Comparison of the Similarities and Dissimilarities

The deradicalisation work offered in Pakistan is more specifically tailored to a target group, i.e. clients who have actively participated in terrorist activities. Only those with direct involvement in terrorist activities are assigned to (coercive) deradicalisation centres. At the same time, even after a person has been certified as deradicalised, they must retain their status as a client of the centre. In Germany, the target group of the services is broader and not exclusively limited to people who are as far advanced in the radicalisation process. In addition, not all detainees classified as "radical" participate in the deradicalisation measures, as the principle of free will applies here. Another difference is that all the clients in Pakistan had direct contact with extremist organisations. In Germany, this mainly applies to a few people in a relatively small group of returnees from Syria and Iraq.

While deradicalisation services are not offered on a voluntary basis and clients are brought to deradicalisation centres by the security authorities in Pakistan, in Germany the programme setting takes place in a coercive environment, but the services as such are based on voluntary participation. As a result, there are different conditions for the target group in the different countries. It can be assumed that clients who voluntarily participate in the services that German correctional facilities offer have already started the process of deradicalisation or cognitive opening, compared to those who participate out of coercion. There are both similarities and differences with respect to target-group outreach. In both countries, clients are referred to the programmes through the security authorities; however, this is the only method of referral in Pakistan, while in Germany the deradicalisation services also conduct their own public relations and outreach.

The Aims of the Work

Germany

In the case of deradicalisation services provided by public authorities, there is a clear overriding focus on security aspects. The goal the security authorities have set for social

workers is primarily to discourage violence and minimise the security risk to society rather than providing care in the context of social work:

> "The mission that also comes from the ministry is deradicalisation, which, first of all, goes hand in hand with turning away from violence and, if possible, also turning toward democratic values, etc. And then, on the other hand, of course, we also have to take into consideration the actual wishes of the counselled recipient who calls us there, especially when we work systematically." (Interview 7)

The above statement also illustrates that the goals are oriented towards the needs of the client. In the interviews, the practitioners referred to the different needs and goals they set, but which are also developed together with the client. These are primarily goals that address socioeconomic and systemic factors. Socioeconomic factors include, for example, integration into the labour market, support in finding housing, and mediation during appointments with (social-welfare) authorities. Systemic factors include both coming to terms with and stabilising the client's family situation, establishing a reliable support network and reintegrating into society.

> Typical goals are mostly related to the areas that we have already mentioned. In fact, it is not uncommon for us to deal with people who need to be integrated into the labour market, which is definitely the classic demand. It is also not uncommon for us to deal with people who are also looking for accommodation, because they are in a decisive phase of their lives and want to develop independently, for example. Putting distance away from their original social contacts, their [previous] social environment, ideological goals, including religiously motivated extremism, but also, of course, coming to terms with their family situation. (Interview 1)

It became clear through the interviews that for the German government, convincing individuals to withdraw from violence (either through disengagement or behavioural deradicalisation) is the primary goal of deradicalisation work. In this context, distancing from

radical ideology, or "cognitive deradicalisation", is a much-discussed topic by the experts. The following statement shows that practitioners see this area as a challenge in their practice. Cognitive deradicalisation is not named as a primary goal of the interviewed experts. As the following two statements show, it is clear that practitioners handle the aspect of disengaging from violence or extremist ideology in different ways:

> I think I would say in general that we also assume that the very first step is to turn away from violence in some way. Beyond that is the point where it becomes difficult. I think, then we somehow focus on attitudes towards democracy, our values and norms, and employment. (Interview 7)
>
> Yes, maybe, for example, if someone is following a radical ideology, we work with him to break down this ideology, and then work on his worldview and so on. Then he can still be religious in the end. (Interview 1)

The goals of deradicalisation work in Germany can be divided into two areas. The first set of goals encompasses social integration through support, for example, in the search for an apartment or a job. This kind of support is based on the assumption that social integration, in the form of basic support services, makes it less likely that the client will seek renewed support of radical groups. The second set of goals concerns moving the client away from advocating violence, and this type of support is also in line with the aims of the security authorities. It is unclear how this goal is exactly achieved and evaluated, but it nevertheless remains a fixed point of the deradicalisation work.

Pakistan

The objectives for the social work of those working in the deradicalisation centres in Pakistan are set by the Pakistan security forces and deeply influenced by security interests, as the following statement exemplifies:

> The goals of the project are primarily set by the Government of Pakistan, the Pakistan Army, and the FC [Frontier Corps]. The FC is a province-based law enforcement

agency working in the provinces of Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. (Interview 10)

While the project goals also concern ideological, social, and socioeconomic aspects, the main goal is ideological work and the reappraisal of what the practitioners see as a false understanding of religion:

The main goal of the project is to rehabilitate criminals in every aspect of life: religious, social, psychological etc. Religion in particular takes precedence over other aspects, and the peaceful message of Islam is taught and indoctrinated. We mainly focus on the ideological basis of the militants and try our best to dissociate their present from their murkier history. (Interview 10)

The primary goal of the Deradicalisation Centre is ideological reappraisal, as the following statements emphasise. Extremist narratives and, according to the statements, a misunderstanding of Islam are dealt with and a more appropriate interpretation is conveyed in the form of religious re-education.

Every technique and step fail if the ideological aspect of an offender is ignored. Working on someone's ideology is the main focus of our project. The offenders' minds are saturated with the wrong interpretation of religious knowledge; therefore, we are supposed to carefully work on that. (Interview 16)
We have to clean their minds from the wrong interpretation of religion. (Interview 15)

These statements show that the goal of the work is not just disengagement from violence, but also moving away from extremist ideology, a change of cognitive attitudes and religious narratives, and the promotion of peaceful coexistence.

Besides the goal of ideological re-evaluation, the interviewees most often mentioned the importance of working with clients on a psychological level. The aim is to understand what kinds of problems clients are experiencing and work with them accordingly. However,

the social workers gave no details of their goals and methods regarding their psychological work, and the statements remained general:

> As a psychologist, we primarily focus on the mental health of a terrorist. We try to know the reasons and problems of those terrorists. (Interview 11)
>
> Their depression, anxiety, and frustration are the main targets for professionals. (Interview 11)

Another goal of the deradicalisation work addresses the socioeconomic level. Here, the focus lies on the actual ability to work and earn an income. The goal for clients is to be reintegrated into society and also back into their families. According to the practitioners, this includes being able to support themselves and their families:

> Job training: because they reside in the peripheral regions of the country, terrorist activists are not well-aware of technical skills that would allow them to have a satisfactory way of earning income for their family and household. In the Deradicalisation Centre, we expose them to those technical skills. To achieve this, we have certain professionals to give them training. (Interview 11)

The goals of deradicalisation work in Pakistan are mainly related to dealing with personal problems, which are mostly of an economic (poverty, unemployment, etc.) and psychological nature. An almost clinical attitude dominates here: radicalisation is a phenomenon to be cured and finds its roots in the false interpretation of religion. Therefore, social work focuses on dealing with clients' personal problems and ideological convictions. This is combined with efforts to enable these clients to earn their own living after being released from the Deradicalisation Centre.

A Comparison of the Similarities and Dissimilarities

The objectives of deradicalisation work in Germany and Pakistan differ in that there are clear objectives in the deradicalisation centres in Pakistan. The goals are set by the government or

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the security agencies. In Germany, this is also the case for services that are affiliated with government agencies, but the focus lies on the security aspect. During the course of deradicalisation work, practitioners can set their own goals.

With regard to deradicalisation goals, there is a significant difference between the two countries that is critically important for radicalisation research: disengagement and cognitive deradicalisation. In Germany, the primary goal is disengagement from violence. Cognitive deradicalisation, including distancing oneself from extremist ideology, may sometimes be another goal, but this is not necessarily the case, and it is described by practitioners as a challenge. In Pakistan, on the other hand, cognitive deradicalisation is the main goal, with the aim of instilling new religious narratives. This objective differs significantly, which can have an impact on the methodological design of deradicalisation practice, as the analysis below shows.

In both Germany and Pakistan, additional objectives address socioeconomic factors, such as integration into school, education, or work. In Germany, the improvement of systemic factors, such as the establishment of a strong (family) environment, primarily determines the objective. In Pakistan, however, emphasis is placed on both psychological and economic aspects, including those that address the mental health of clients. What should not be misinterpreted is that family ties are also important in the Pakistani social work, but the institutional mechanisms (social workers, etc.) to strengthen family bonds are still lacking in the deradicalisation work.

The Understanding of Radicalisation

This section includes statements by practitioners about their understanding of radicalisation, the factors that lead to this, and conversely also what deradicalisation means as a result.

Germany

In most interviews, radicalisation is seen as a process whereby the client moves away from democratic views and the values and norms of the majority society, as the following statement shows:

We understand radicalisation more as a process where individuals, during the course of this process, acquire ideologies, thoughts and beliefs that make them behave in the direction of, unfortunately, contempt for people, hostility to democracy, rejection of other values and norms, ideologies, and religions. (Interview 1)

The practitioners in Germany mentioned a wide range of possible factors that promoted the radicalisation of their clients. The most frequent factors stated in the interviews are related to the individual's personal life. These can include family problems, job loss, or feeling stuck without any prospects:

I've often had the experience that when someone actually gets carried away with extreme actions, then it was almost always accompanied by at least a subjectively felt lack of future opportunities, or hopelessness, or different emotions. 'I don't have a job anymore, I'll never get a wife again, I have so much debt, or even damn, I don't have a job or I can't feed my wife and kids anymore, and/or I don't want to be with my old lady anymore' or all that. So, especially with those returning from Syria, this was very often the case. This perceived inability to somehow deal with the situation that [the client] now find[s] [themselves] in, and ultimately it was always more of an escape from the current situation than an – 'oh, I absolutely have to go there because I want to help my brothers and sisters.' That was always the pretext, sure, logical. In general, this whole ideology, or this lived ideology, is full of excuses and justifications for one's own failure, escape from really unsolvable positions. That's where this perspective, I think, or perspective building is a very essential point. (Interview 3)

This statement clearly shows that the practitioners do not conceptualise radicalisation as a purely ideological problem, but rather view personal issues and crises as a leading cause, while religion and ideology are only pretexts. According to the experts, no one turns to religiously motivated extremism because they are convinced by the ideology, but solely out of perceiving deficits in their personal lives. This is exemplified by the following statement:

What we notice, for example, on the topic of radicalisation in practice, is that the topic of religion and faith are indeed already a topic, but not the main focus. In other words, there is always something else in the background. If you look at it from a biographical perspective. (Interview 8)

The interviewees identify the influence of "identity" as a further radicalisation factor. Clients are said to be looking for recognition and belonging, which they hope to achieve by joining an extremist group. At the same time, religion and ideology are not seen as playing a special role, but rather as the narrative framework. Instead, biographical or structuralist arguments are referred to more often.

Difficult. So, I think the main issue with many, is this strong identity-forming factor. This being accepted, no matter what mistakes or negative things are confided to me, it doesn't matter. The fact that 'I can very quickly become a member of a group.'... In the end, finding out what function radicalisation fulfils on an individual basis is already an essential point of our work. I think identity plays an important role very often. (Interview 3)

Furthermore, there are contradictory statements from the practitioners regarding the influence of discrimination on the radicalisation process. Some social workers emphasise the influence of discrimination, as is illustrated by the following statements:

I don't even know if it's so decisive that it happened to you. But actually, this can also be the extended circle, so to speak. If the parents have been discriminated against, girlfriends have been discriminated against because they wore headscarves. It feels like that then. (Interview 7)
Well, it is always very individual, but if you put it together a little bit, it shows that they have already had many experiences of exclusion, especially in school. Often in their youth, or also in their childhood, they were already in these victim roles. So, you can already see that they are simply looking for support. (Interview 8)

However, there are also practitioners who consider the influence of discriminatory experiences and racism on radicalisation processes as secondary and only minor:

Yes, it is an issue. But it is only one of many. So, it may be that in the case of an individual discrimination experience, it can really be recognised as a point that strongly reinforced it. But otherwise, I can't say that it's a common thread. It is one of many issues. Anybody who states that it's conducive to radicalisation is right. But when he says discrimination is the cause of radicalisation, that's just not the whole truth. That's part of the truth, but it's only a part and nothing more. (Interview 3)

Those who think anti-Muslim racism explains the world are wrong and ideologically led. That means they are not doing real work. Because we've looked at over four hundred biographies at [our organisation] and not one of them radicalised primarily because they experienced racism or because they were treated in a racist way. (Interview 6)

One of the interview topics focused on the understanding of deradicalisation, the reverse process of radicalisation. The radicalised person comes to terms with themselves and their ideological beliefs, and opens up to society instead:

So, for example, I can see a change in openness compared to the initial phase to deal with certain things. For example, it can be regarding belonging to a group. If he is able to question that, to somehow establish the problematic nature of that. Then that's a signal to me that he's dealing with it. (Interview 6)

Practitioners in Germany had difficulty describing an explicit understanding of radicalisation. Instead, the behaviours of clients were described in a way that allowed an indirect conclusion of their practical understanding of radicalisation. Regarding the question of what constitutes risk factors leading to radicalisation, the discussion focused on discrimination. However, from the perspective of professionals in Germany, discrimination is not seen as a radicalisation factor. Instead, it is mentioned in some of the interviews in general

terms and described as experiences of exclusion or a feeling of not belonging. Some practitioners deny discrimination as a significant radicalisation factor altogether, and this risk factor seems to be regarded as ambivalent by practitioners.

Pakistan

Professionals from Pakistan also understand radicalisation as a process in which the person goes through different stages, where the last stage is the exercise of violence:

> Yes, there is a connection between the understanding of radicalisation and deradicalisation. This connection is very clear if we look at the process of radicalisation, how they enter the process of radicalisation. There are different stages in radicalisation. A radicalised person passes through these stages [No more explanation of the other stages], then in the last stages they become violent and sometimes become morally and physically violent by having an extremist outlook (Interview 10)

The process is characterised by a negative attitude towards the state and society:

> "For me, radicalisation refers to negative thoughts and violent views about the government, the Pakistan Army, public and other social institutions, and more tragically those views that are forcefully implemented on others. These thoughts are not in favour of society. […] For this reason, we have established the centre. (Interview 11)

According to the practitioners, radicalisation is primarily understood through extremist ideologies and extremist narratives of religion. It is assumed that their clients misinterpret Islam, which is seen as the reason for the radicalisation process; a misunderstanding of Islam and little religious education, they are susceptible to an ideology that justifies extremist actions. The clients are instructed and taught the "correct" Islam by religious authorities as part of the deradicalisation programme.

Yes, ideology plays a major part in the process of radicalisation. Multiple cases of radicalism originate because of manipulated ideologies. The holders of radical ideologies do not know the basic pros and cons of religion. […] Their ideology is not in favour of the state, religion, and society. During encounters with some of the offenders [in the deradicalization center], you see they are not clear about the basic tenets of Islam. That is why they are easily vulnerable to terrorist ideologies. (Interview 11)

The misunderstanding of the Quran and the Islamic religion can be linked to another radicalisation factor, namely a lack of formal education and knowledge. Many clients come from educationally deprived regions and have not been able to obtain sufficient schooling, or they are minors who join extremist organisations and are more vulnerable to extremist ideologies due to their young age. In other cases, people lack the fundamental needs to live (food, health, and housing) and receive shelter from a radical group that exploits them, and instils some ideological interpretations to their personal and/or organisational interests. These incarcerated clients did not gain knowledge of the religion through religious education, but rather received a second-hand or third-hand perspective thought by the radical group in question, coloured by their interpretation and ideology, leading the clients to become involved in violent extremism.

A lack of education: most of the militants come from tribal areas of Pakistan. These areas do not have proper school and college facilities where they can have an education. The area under question has remained highly susceptible to terrorist activities for a long period of time. Terrorists have built strongholds over there, and have never allowed basic educational facilities for people to change their lives. (Interview 10)

Immature, from my point of view – mental immaturity matters the most at the age of 13 to 14, where a child cannot differentiate between good and bad. They are like white clothes, which are easily vulnerable to dirt. That is why radical organisations manipulate them according to their narrative and they naively join those organisations.

So, it is one of the major elements that the terrorist organisations exploit that I have observed. (Interview 11)

A third issue is the influence of socioeconomic factors, such as poverty, social and economic deprivation, or a lack of social recognition. For example, the clients receive a monthly monetary stipend for their membership in terrorist organisations, and hope that this will improve their economic and social living situation, or social prestige:

Poverty can also be one of the reasons for joining a militant organisation. The terrorist organisations, on the other hand, provide them with a monthly stipend leading to them become radicalised. (Interview 10)

In a terrorist organisation, someone is provided with a huge amount of money, big vehicles, and light weapons. And it is a kind of social prestige to have such resources in a poverty-ridden social structure. Sometimes, the people go to join those organisations for the sake of gaining power and benefiting from such prestige. (Interview 12)

Another point mentioned by the practitioners in Pakistan is the influence of local (family) conflicts concerning land ownership. If there are conflicts between two parties, it can be a reason for them to join a terrorist organisation in order to gain more power and higher status, as the following statement describes:

In a tribal society, groups are formed on the basis of shared land (estate) and businesses. Several family members share the land and they economically depend on the land. Their social relations are determined by the quantity of land they jointly hold. For crop production, they take water from a collectively built system of wells, which sometimes creates problems in the proper distribution of water. In this situation, some of the cousins become weak and cannot fight against their competing cousins. In order to be equal in status to their cousins, they then join a terrorist organisation. The same applies to cases of murder. When an individual kills someone in the village, he is

forced to take asylum somewhere. To deal with this, he joins a terrorist organisation in order to limit the threat of revenge. (Interview 12)

According to the practitioners, deradicalisation is simply the opposite of the process of radicalisation. It is a process that is measurable, and where it is possible to assess how far the client has progressed in the deradicalisation process on the basis of various parameters:

Precisely speaking, deradicalisation is the process of bringing someone to a normal form of behaviour. There are various stages for measuring the process of deradicalisation. (Interview 10)

The Pakistani professionals took a clear deficit-oriented stance towards the clients and mainly emphasised the causes of radicalisation. From their perspective, radicalisation is characterised by a false religious understanding, a lack of education and future opportunities, and helplessness in family conflicts. Therefore, their deradicalisation work focuses on eliminating these deficiencies, but less on enabling the clients to do this themselves, in the sense of an empowerment approach.

A Comparison of the Similarities and Dissimilarities

In both Germany and Pakistan, practitioners understand radicalisation as a process, often using a stage model, for example by Fathali Moghaddam (2005). Interviewees from both countries also shared an understanding of deradicalisation as the reverse process of radicalisation, which is followed by finding a way back into society.

However, factors contributing to radicalisation are understood differently in the two countries. In Germany, the two most frequently named factors were personal disruptions or crises, and identity conflicts. According to these experts, discrimination seems to have an ambivalent influence on radicalisation. These potential radicalisation factors were not mentioned in the Pakistani interviews at all. In Pakistan, extremist ideology and a misinterpretation of Islam are seen as the main radicalisation factors, while religion is not stated as a reason for radicalisation in the interviews in Germany. In addition, the Pakistani

practitioners brought up the relevance of local (family) conflicts, especially involving land ownership. These people joined extremist organisations to strengthen their position and bargaining power within the community, or to be protected from possible consequences. This aspect was completely absent in the interviews from Germany. However, there are overlaps in the socioeconomic factors. For example, poverty or a lack of prospects are mentioned as possible causes of radicalisation in both countries.

The Tools and Methods of Deradicalisation Work

In this section, we present statements on methodological approaches and interventions with reference to the results mentioned so far.

Germany

As a rule, deradicalisation work begins with a classic method in social work, namely social diagnostics. Information about the client, his or her living environment and circumstances is gathered through individual interviews with the client or with staff in the detention centres:

> Well, it's like this at the beginning, of course, we do something like an inventory. So, where does the person stand right now? These are classic terms in social work, taking an anamnesis. Where does someone stand, where does he stand socially, what does he need to be stable, and what is his ideological orientation, so to speak. (Interview 2)

This is followed by a joint goal-setting process. The assistance plan and the goals it contains are developed in a participatory manner with the client and are based both on what people in the other people environment consider necessary as well as on needs that the client formulates himself or herself. In this way, the client has a decisive influence on the assistance process and can determine the direction of the goals, whether it is primarily an ideological debate that is required, socioeconomic needs that need to be met, or psychological factors that need to be addressed. This is illustrated by the following statement:

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Why are we together now? Where do we want to go? What are issues? The so-called goal setting. Here too, of course, we take into account that the objectives in the so-called initial meetings may actually look different than how it develops later, because it becomes clear in the course of the consultation that there are also sometimes other needs that we also address. And then here and there, the wish is expressed "well, that's right, maybe this and that should also be stabilised, and this should also be stabilised." (Interview 1)

Another building block of methodological deradicalisation work in Germany is relationship work, building bonds and trust between the practitioner and the client:

Bonding works and working on bonds, maintaining bonds. Reactivating bonds. Good bonds that are connected with trust. And with dialogue at eye level. With honesty. So, a subject like honesty is also a big issue. We don't have that in many families, where you realise that somehow there are family secrets that no one has ever talked about. If you put those on the table, often the wind is taken out of the sails of radicalisation. (Interview 5)

According to the practitioners, a sustainable working relationship should be followed by long-term support. The social worker should maintain contact even when the client is far advanced in the deradicalisation process and his or her life situation has stabilised. This is designed to provide a lifeline in case the client returns to a critical situation during which they had previously found support in the extremist milieu. This should make the deradicalisation work effective in the long term:

Yes, they say that the support lasts between two and five years. The process is so long, because of course we often simply intervene at the first moment. That is, there is nothing preventive at the beginning, but the person is offered support, so to speak, because he is somehow in trouble. And in the context of prevention, the more sustainable we want to be, the longer the support will last. This means that even if the

person is stable, even if the ideological reappraisal is already far advanced, we are still an anchor. That means that someone still has the opportunity to contact me afterwards, someone in the radical milieu can call me and we can discuss it. Or if he loses his job again. In his past, there were strategies to turn to old brothers again. So, that is, the client and I decide together how long the counselling process goes. (Interview 2)

In the interviews, the experts mentioned socioeconomic, systemic, psychosocial, and ideological approaches to deradicalisation work, all with varying degrees of importance. The social workers have attempted to establish themselves as permanently available alternative contacts for their clients in social and everyday matters, reducing the recourse to narratives from the extremist milieu.

Socioeconomic approaches attempt to improve the clients' material living situation, including the following interventions: support in finding housing, placement in (vocational) education or employment, or assistance with appointments at the job centre. These measures serve as tools for reintegration into society and are intended to bring stability into the clients' lives:

And then it's sometimes the case that the first thing that is relevant are very practical, everyday things. For example, if someone is released, the most important thing is to have a secure living arrangement: Where do I live? Where do I work? Where do I get my money from? And then we continuously check what the person needs. So, sometimes it is the case that social stabilisation is first in the foreground.... But if he needs support, I give it to him. I don't take anything out of his hands. I also don't have an apartment that I give him. But when he has appointments, I go with him. Or help him look for apartments." (Interview 2)

Systemic approaches address clients in the context of their relationship structures (family, friends, and the extended social environment). In addition, these approaches facilitate an understanding of the individual's situation and aid diagnostics. The biographical approach, often used by the interviewees, is an attempt to understand why the client has become

radicalised. Behind this approach lies a hypothesis that people enter an extremist milieu because of biographical disruption or crises. These driving factors should be worked out and explained to the client. Other interventions that fall under "systemic approaches" include the development of a support network, work with the (family) environment of the clientele, and systemic counselling and systemic discussion techniques; these were frequently mentioned in the interviews.

> We actually do that with all clients. Biographical work is actually a very large part of the work. So, you can start with different things, as I said just now, either with a timeline or you work on things, themes, step by step. Or you just let the young people tell you what they want to tell you, what may or may not have moved them in some way, and then you can pick up where you left off. So, that's already a very big part of the biographical work. (Interview 8)

Psychosocial approaches address the clients' mental health and emotional well-being. As the following statements show, there are opportunities that psychologists or therapists take over the course these interventions to work with the clients. This work includes trauma therapy and trauma education, or other forms of therapy, and client-centred conversation techniques. However, there are also services who are trained in psychological work. At this point, referrals are made to appropriate agencies.

> Of course, we also have overarching needs, for example, trauma therapy or trauma-psychological approaches. General systemic counselling approaches, which of course you can't limit to just one area. So, we also have psychologists in [our agency], who of course then automatically have to be deployable in every area. (Interview 4)

The fourth approach involves ideological work, including dealing with extremist beliefs the clients hold. In practice, this approach takes on different forms. For example, some organisations and practitioners do not consider ideological debate and theological work with

the clients to be their task, nor do they consider it to be helpful, as the following statement shows:

> Of course, we don't work theologically with him now, that was the case for us as we discussed the other day, of course, we have the responsibility to inform the client or to show him what you are talking about. We know what we're talking about, we weren't born yesterday. We also try to communicate a certain degree of authority and address these topics. But it's not about just dealing with these issues theologically, an imam can do that for all I care, that's not our job. (Interview 1)

If there is a need for a theological discussion during the course of the work with the client, practitioners can draw on an existing network of Islamic scholars or theologians and consult them. However, it emerged from the interviews that the practitioners did not generally see ideological concerns as a component of their work and that their clients were referred to an imam for this. It is unclear, however, if there were already existing contacts for referral or whether the client was supposed to establish this contact himself.

> It is helpful to have colleagues who are either Muslims themselves, who are more familiar with Islam than I am, for example. I have a basic knowledge, but that is often enough. Of course, we also receive training in these areas, but I am still no substitute for a cleric. Or an Islamic scholar. That is indeed the case. But we also have the option of resorting to Islamic studies if that is necessary in individual cases. But it's not usually the case. (Interview 2)

Other practitioners did perceive ideological and theological work with the clients as their task. In practice, this was primarily about challenging and breaking down radical ideology, ideas, and narratives.

> And here I don't often have to be an Islamic scholar and explain religion to them, but simply put it into a question. "Why do you believe this? What does it mean? Have you

ever thought about what that actually looks like in practice? Can you reconcile that with your conscience? Is that fair, is that unfair?" And then it's very easy for doubts to arise, which you then reinforce, as an example. So that you simply question the knowledge that they have. You don't stand there as a senior teacher and say "No, that's the way it is." But simply to question, "Why do you believe that? And where did you actually hear that?" (Interview 2)

Another important component of the practical work is networking. Practitioners have to work with different schools of thought and have a wide range of professional contacts as well as people in the client's family environment in order to facilitate demand-oriented support and the long-term success of their work:

As I said, as a psychologist, I think highly of the psychological perspective, but I say that we always have to link and network all the actors together if we are to do proper deradicalisation work. Of course, I don't need them in prison. If I know that someone will be here for five years, then I can work with them individually myself. But at the final stage, when new factors are added, for example going out, finding work, release, family, then I have to keep all these factors together. My work would be ruined if I didn't communicate with the police. If I didn't present my point of view there either. My work would be invalidated if social workers didn't work with parents or didn't work with him. (Interview 6)

Deradicalisation work providers have academically and culturally diverse teams made up of people from different disciplines, including social workers, psychologists, social scientists, scholars of Islam, theologians, religious scholars, political scientists, and therapists. In addition, many employees are trained as consultants who are familiar with a systemic approach.

Because we are a very multidisciplinary team, consisting of police, constitutional protection officers, the judiciary, Islamic scholars, social workers, and psychologists,

the person is evaluated from different aspects. In the end, we offer the best possible course of help. (Interview 2)

It clearly emerges from both the analysis and the interviews that a plethora of different methods are utilised. A mix of methods – "the more the merrier" – seems to be the attitude. There are no clear courses of action or standardised procedures comparable to, for example, the assessment of child welfare risks used by child and youth protection services. The course of action depends on the consultant and the client, as well as the provider of the deradicalisation measures.

So, I don't believe that a single main effective method exists, quite simply. So, it's a mix of methods that is necessary to ultimately find the goal for the respective client, the respective individual situation, and to get the maximum success possible. You don't come out at the same time or with the same goal for everyone, but you have to think about, "What is realistic for a specific case? How far can I get in the end? With what effort?" And I think you should never close your mind to that. In other words, creativity and innovation. That's the great strength of some exit programmes, to say "I'm open to everything, as long as it helps the client, as long as it helps to trigger a process of distancing or a process of reflection, then I don't care at all whether I try improvisational theatre with the client or whether I read biographies of dropouts or watch a film and discuss it, I don't care at all." The point is to help the client. And if there are methods that seem to make sense here, to try them out, I don't see any difficulties at all. (Interview 4)

The results were absolutely not important to me. So, I didn't go there and say, "Within a year I want him to be deradicalised." But I want to support him, simply make him more aware of certain attitudes, certain personality structures that he has, and to think about it a bit and reflect on what led him to make this decision to go to Syria, for example. (Interview 6)

This way of working can offer a chance to respond to the individual needs of the clients, but it can also mean a lack of professionalism and uncertainty. The practitioners utilise any kinds of methods that they expect can be successful, but at the cost of being unable to justify their choices in more detail. A threat assessment is always carried out.

The above evaluation shows that deradicalisation work in Germany is characterised by a framework that allows several methodological approaches. This diversity can be observed in the use of systemic methods, networking and/or psychosocial approaches. However, there are virtually no clear expectations about the outcome of a given method, and the justifications for a specific method or approach are not made explicit.

Pakistan

The procedures practitioners in Pakistan use begin with an anamnesis and a social diagnosis. For this purpose, practitioners engage in conversation with the families of the clients, and in some cases, there is also a contract between the two sides in which the practitioners assure the families that the client will never join a terrorist organisation again after their stay at the Deradicalisation Centre. Practitioners in Pakistan claim that the techniques they apply are very effective. However, like in Germany, there is no scientific evidence to confirm these statements. The needs and interests of clients are determined through these conversations and further addressed during the deradicalisation process.

> Similarly, in this phase we meet his family members and tell them the whole story of his custody in detail. We sign a formal contract with his family members – the contract is signed by the offender's family members and the centre. Usually, we assure his family that when he gets well, both physically and psychologically, he will be sent home immediately and we convince them that he will never be able to rejoin terrorist organisations. Focusing on his technical skills, we ask about the interests of the offender. Either he wants to be an electrician, a plumber, or something else, so he should be taught those activities with careful attention. (Interview 11)

For the diagnostics, the clients are observed in various social situations and their behaviour is analysed. This method is used both at the beginning as well as later, over the course of the process, to assess behaviour, possible changes, and the stage in the deradicalisation process, as illustrated by the following statement:

First of all, we have observation as an effective tool of assessing someone's mental health. After spending a longer period of time at the centre, we closely observe how an offender meets and behaves with his colleagues. If he shakes a hand with his colleague, it is considered a good gesture. Furthermore, we observe the attitudes of a given offender at the centre. How he behaves and meets his friends is the second priority. If he is asked an awkward question, we can judge how he [the offender] responds to it. Based on the changes in someone's behaviour, we apply and provide more treatment. In social interactions, we overwhelmingly emphasise religious teachings. Even their way of eating is not exempt from close observation. If he eats the way Islam teaches us to eat, it is a positive sign that he has improved a lot. Finally, while going through the whole process, we can easily assess that someone has deradicalised his mind. (Interview 15)

After leaving the deradicalisation centre, clients continue to be supervised. This supervision takes place by observing their behaviour in social situations, as well as monitoring their financial situation:

After leaving the centre, we closely observe someone's behaviour with his family members. We want to know through family members whether they are satisfied with the person in his personal life. Second, his economic activity is regularly under surveillance. Did a particular amount of money result from hard work or by some other means, is the key target [of surveillance]. Beyond family, we want to observe an offender's interactions with other members of society. Finally, if they are OK in such parameters, we can state that they are now normal human beings. (Interview 16)

The methods used by the practitioners in Pakistan can be categorised according to the approaches already mentioned in the section on work in Germany (systemic, socioeconomic, psychosocial, and ideological). Psychosocial and ideological approaches were most frequently mentioned in the interviews. Methods with a systemic reference were rarely mentioned.

According to the practitioners, psychological approaches are also important for successful deradicalisation work in Pakistan. Methodologically, the approaches are based on classical psychological and psychotherapeutic principles, as the following statement shows:

Our entire process and work is based on practical activity. As psychologists, we primarily focus on the mental health of a terrorist. We try to know the reasons and problems of those terrorists. Our target in psychological tests is to work on their personality, the social behaviour and interaction with their fellow men through psychoanalysis, behavioural therapy, and cognitive creative therapy." (Interview 11)

Psychological tests are designed to determine the extent to which clients are radicalised and how the deradicalisation process is progressing. Accordingly, practitioners can use these tests to assess the potential security risk of their clients. The following tests were cited in the interviews, albeit without further evaluation: the House-Tree-Person Test, the Bender Gestalt Test, the Rorschach Test, Screening of incomplete sentences, Human Figure Drawing, the Personality Emotion Positive Test, and IQ Test:

From a psychological point of view, we mainly focus on the behaviour of militants with the help of various psychological tests, e.g. the HTP (House-Tree-Person test), Personality, Bander Gestalt, Rorschach Inkblot, and Personality Emotion Positive tests are the most psychologically applicable. (Interview 10)

"If there is a radical change in the attitudes of individuals, then we can assess that, yes, changes have taken place within their mind and he is okay to live peacefully in society. For example, I want to share a test I conducted on an offender. The test name was HTP (House-Tree-Person). It is all about the family and its structure. The offender

is given a piece of white paper and a pen. He is supposed to draw a colourful house on white paper. If he draws a big and well-furnished house, we can gauge that he is well-prepared for living among family members. Contrarily, if he draws a small house, we can judge that he likes an isolated life, not a collective one. Through such tests, we primarily assess the quality of the centre, and the improvement in the mental structure of an offender. (Interview 12)

All the statements made about psychological tests describe how practitioners were able to use them to measure the extent to which a client is radicalised or deradicalised. Interviewees did not mention how deradicalisation work was driven by psychological approaches, but the great importance of these approaches is clear.

A major focus of deradicalisation work in Pakistan is the ideology of clients. Behind this lies the assumption that an important reason people become radicalised is because they have been taught a false image of religion based on a misinterpretation of the Quran. This radicalisation factor is addressed by these workers carrying out religious education work with their clients, implemented in the form of teaching Quranic verses, regular prayer, and Islamic instruction:

We use the following techniques for moving someone closer to deradicalisation. They are the following: 1) Early in the morning, we start our day with the holy verses of the holy Quran; 2) regular prayers five times a day; 3) we provide offenders [information about] events in the history of Islam. (Interview 15)

Another aspect of deradicalisation work concerns the improvement of the socioeconomic position of clients and their reintegration into society. After completing the (imposed) programme, the clients receive money to improve their economic situation and their position within society. In addition, the financial support is intended to prevent another radicalisation factor, namely the receipt of monetary benefits by joining a terrorist group.

To be able to finance their own livelihoods in the long term, practitioners offer vocational and technical training opportunities to ensure that their clients have a positive long-

term outlook socioeconomically and can integrate back into society. Another reintegration strategy is reconnecting clients with society through their participation in social life and regular contact with their families. The utilisation of these methods is demonstrated in the following statements:

> After the completion of the course, they are paid a sum of money for the sake of improving their economic position in society. Along with that, they are taught to engage in socially approved activities. (Interview 11)

> We provide and teach offenders different technical expertise in various fields. That means that they are not just brought to the centre and put there for six to twelve months; instead, we are also – primarily – concerned about their future. If they leave without any kind of technical education, they might rejoin those terrorist organisations again. In order to avoid such situations, they are also being prepared for the future. After leaving the centre, they must get involved in different social and economic activities. When the offenders enter society again after completing training over here, they should be economically independent. This is only possible by involving them in different social and economic activities. (Interview 12)

> Socially, we involved them in different social activities which were fruitful for their life among family, household, and society at large. We arrange occasional meetings between terrorists and their family members once a month so that they don't feel socially segregated. (Interview 11)

The methods employed in deradicalisation work in Pakistan are determined by a predefined framework, in this case in the form of a contract with the client's family. During the client's time in the deradicalisation centre, various tests and intensive observations are conducted during everyday situations. However, it is unclear how these are documented and evaluated; the same applies to the interpretation of the test results. Direct communication with clients focuses on conveying a "correct" understanding of religion and only secondarily on

addressing personal concerns by means of specifically developed methods. However, access to vocational training is key, and this should not be underestimated in the Pakistani context because it provides the chance to secure a livelihood after their stay at the deradicalisation centre.

A Comparison of the Similarities and Dissimilarities

In Germany, the practitioners' statements primarily reflect systemic and socioeconomic approaches. The methods include biographical work and systemic counselling techniques. Reintegration into society is promoted by providing support with finding jobs and housing. Ideological approaches are rarely mentioned. If they are addressed, then the work generally focuses on questioning religious convictions, but with little confrontation. In the case of profound religious disputes, third parties, mostly Islamic scholars, are consulted. In the case of psychological approaches, respondents frequently mentioned that clients were referred to psychologists or therapists. The interviews in Germany revealed a variety of methods – "the more the merrier." There are no standardised procedures, which may indicate a lack of professionalism in the use of methods. These findings seem to validate earlier results (Koehler, 2016; Koehler & Fiebig, 2019).

In Pakistan, the focus is different than in Germany. Psychosocial and ideological approaches are particularly important there. In terms of the methods used, the ideological approaches primarily involve religious education work and, according to the practitioners, changing "false" religious narratives. Psychological work with clients is repeatedly emphasised in the interviews, and interviewees named a number of psychological tests that they use to measure the (de)radicalisation process. However, they are routinely used as diagnostic tools. How exactly *disengagement* takes place on the basis of psychological methods was not mentioned. Practitioners in Pakistan repeatedly described their work as highly effective, but no information is available to support these statements.

Integrated Discussion

Overall, deradicalisation work in the area of religiously motivated extremism in Germany and Pakistan builds on differences in the basic conceptualisations of radicalisation

factors, and therefore the work addresses these dissimilar understandings in different ways. This can be seen in both goal setting and the deradicalisation methods. In Germany, the work is primarily based on systemic approaches and an understanding that the clients radicalise due to biographical disruptions and crises; ideological approaches form the basis of work in Pakistan, where the clients are thought to radicalise because of a misinterpretation of religion, gravitating towards extremist narratives. For this reason, deradicalisation work primarily focuses on religious education. One common feature is an approach to socioeconomic issues, which are addressed in both countries.

It became apparent that there is a need for professionalisation in the practice of deradicalisation work in Germany and in Pakistan, both in the selection of methods and the evaluation of the services offered. In Germany, a mix of methods is used, but the effect of individual methods is not clear and there is a need for the standardisation of deradicalisation practice, e.g. to decide that a client is deradicalised or not. In addition, practitioners lack working methods that address ideological convictions. According to the practitioners in Pakistan, the techniques they apply are very effective, but there is a lack of evidence to confirm these statements. In addition, there is a need to expand the repertoire of methods to include other psychological approaches, apart from the diagnostics already used, as well as to include systemic factors.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to develop an in-depth understanding of working methods and the assumed efficacy of deradicalisation practices in coercive environments. We began with an outline on the state of the art of deradicalisation, followed by a more in-depth examination of deradicalisation practices in coercive environments in Germany and Pakistan. We then presented wide-ranging insights into the practice of deradicalisation work in Germany and Pakistan, which was based on 16 interviews (nine from Germany, seven from Pakistan) with professionals in the field, and we highlighted the similarities and differences. These interviews were then analysed according to the topics of the target group, the goals of the work, the professionals' understanding of radicalisation, and to the methods and tools these

practitioners used. This structured approach allowed a comparison even in such different contexts.

Based on the results obtained, it is possible to answer the research question: "How exactly is deradicalisation work implemented in coercive environments in Germany and Pakistan, and what are the similarities and differences?" While voluntary engagement and empowerment prevail in deradicalisation work in Germany, deradicalisation work in Pakistan puts a greater emphasis on coercion. In addition, a clear deficit-oriented approach can be identified. Another fundamental difference is that in Germany, ideology and religious understandings play only a secondary role and social factors are placed in the foreground, while in Pakistan the reverse is the case. The work in both countries shares the characteristic that it is structurally framed: in Germany by means of an assistance plan, in Pakistan by a contract with the family. In addition, in both countries, the socioeconomic situation is diagnosed as a risk factor for recidivism, and this is addressed, whether in support during the search for employment in Germany or via vocational training in Pakistan. In addition, diversity in working methods is evident in both Germany and Pakistan in the form of different approaches or test procedures; unfortunately, one commonality is that the respective interpretation for the practical consequences of these tests is unclear in both countries.

By reviewing the practice of deradicalisation work in Germany and Pakistan, we have contributed to the debate on the reintegration of violent, religiously motivated extremists into society. Concerning deradicalisation research, we have been able to provide deeper insights into practices in coercive environments in both Germany and Pakistan, the comparison of which has also generated new perspectives. However, this work is not free of limitations. We were only able to include the perspective of professionals, not clients, due to the accessibility of the group. In addition, the exact effectiveness of the methods and approaches cannot be assessed based on the data. Moreover, only a small number of deradicalisation projects have been analysed; no claims can be made about the prison systems of these countries more generally.

The results of this study provide suggestions for the further development of deradicalisation practices in both Germany and Pakistan, and show how helpful a cross-cultural comparison with dissimilar cases can be. There is a need for further development of

the practice in both countries. In each case, it is necessary to examine whether the accessibility to deradicalisation programmes has had an influence on their success. This also implies that greater professionalisation of this work is needed; in Germany and Pakistan alike, professionals were unable to give a more precise description of the effectiveness of the methods they employed. In practice, it does not seem to be clear which method is effective in what situation; an evaluation procedure for the respective method is sorely needed.

These results point to the need for further research. The comparison of practices between different countries is fruitful and should be pursued further. As demonstrated, this can help to distinguish general procedures from culture-specific characteristics, and also to expand the respective repertoire of deradicalisation methods. In Germany, for example, the focus on ideological imprinting plays only a minor role, and the reasons for this should be examined. The same is true in Pakistan, where the clients' psychological problems are known, but their ideology remains the primary focus. It is also necessary to examine the effectiveness of deradicalisation methods and to further advance the professionalisation of this security-relevant field of practice.

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