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Deradicalization: Using Triggers for the Development of a US Program

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Abstract

Although the United States (US) is leading the fight against transnational terrorism, and the United Nations (UN) has strongly encouraged an interdependent approach, the US still lacks guidance for a coherent US Deradicalization Program. This is of critical concern given that the US recently received its first publicly known US Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant defector, but currently lacks a policy or program to handle this population, outside of standard incarceration. Moreover, this population, along with homegrown extremists and returning fighters from Syria pose the most likely continued jihadi presence in the US. The purpose of this paper is to review successful program options, and establish a basis on which to develop an effective US program. This paper outlines the known triggers for deradicalization, the known characteristics of the US jihadi population and analyzes the most useful deradicalization program components based on successful international models. Using a qualitative, cross-national content analysis of former jihadi personal narratives, international deradicalization program structure evaluations and major research findings, this paper concludes that a standardized UN sponsored program, with comprehensive services which include credible ideological and psychological support, and amnesty incentives tailored to the US jihadi population, would be the most effective way to address former jihadi population needs while enhancing US national security objectives. Key Middle Eastern stakeholders and Western states must cooperatively develop best methodologies for target populations, by leveraging each other's competencies and capabilities.

Keywords: deradicalization, deradicalization program, Complex Interdependence, Containment, jihadi, defector, terrorism, amnesty

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Introduction

In the last year, the world has experienced a surge of violent activity by the hands of radical insurgency groups and radicalized extremists. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has become infamous as the worst perpetrator of violence and recruitment. Thirty-four terrorist groups around the world have pledged allegiance to ISIL, 100 countries have been effected and there are approximately 25, 000 foreign fighters travelling in and out of conflict areas (UN 2016; UN 2015a). Eyewitness reports from ISIL defectors, confirms the presence of US citizens working for ISIL- approximately "fifty Americans...big guys, blonde...", were seen in Syria as part of the foreign fighter component (Speckhard and Yayla 2016, 123). The numbers of persons involved in transnational violence is unprecedented. At a Congressional Hearing in October 2015, Counterterrorism and Intelligence Sub-Committee Chairman Senator Peter King provided the following data developed from FBI information obtained at that time:

At least 55 people in the United States have been arrested for links to ISIS so far this year. Over the past several years, approximately 200 more have traveled to the Middle East to join [ISIL]. . .the FBI had an estimated 900 active investigations of suspected Islamic State-inspired operatives and other home-grown violent extremists across the United States, and has previously noted that such investigations are taking place in all 50 states. (1)

These numbers are now higher and approximately 38 currently incarcerated jihadis will be ready for release between 2016-2018 (Ibid.). George Washington University's Program on Extremism Report, "ISIS in America", provided the following research results: "ISIS supporters who have been charged come from a wide range of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, many share core characteristics: they were American-born, under age 30, and had no previous history of radical views or activities" (Vidino 2015, 2). This population, which is currently incarcerated, is not the hardened psychotic criminal type we imagine the average jihadi to be. The report also explained they shared a "search for belonging, meaning, and/or identity appears to be a crucial motivator for many Americans (and other Westerners) who embrace ISIS's ideology" (Ibid., 15). This population, along with defectors and returning fighters from Syria, pose the most likely continued jihadi presence in the US.

In March 2016, the US received its first publicly known US ISIL defector, Mohamad Jamal Khweis, through Kurdish forces assistance. Khweis represents the population for which



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we currently have no policy or program to handle, outside of standard incarceration. These facts predicate the question of what to do with the individuals who disengage from extremist activity once detained, or those with incidental involvement who manage to flee or defect for their own safety. The purpose of this paper is to review the program options the US has to address this problem.

Many countries with histories of conflict have United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping sponsored programs which address more traditional models of conflict, with a resolution framework that formally assists individuals who wish to come out of politically motivated violence called Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). The UN defines Demobilization as "the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces and groups, including a phase of "reinsertion" which provides short-term assistance to ex-combatants", and Reintegration as "the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income." (UN 2016a). These programs assist individuals who wish to come out of politically motivated violence, and operate under special laws and charters. DDR programs have become a conflict intervention norm, yet are still in need of formal processes to evaluate their impact, perceived successes, and which individuals best suit these programs (Schulhofer-Wohl and Sambanis 2010; Humphreys and Weinstein 2007). How and why these programs are successful is important, and may have meaning for the new Islamist terrorism phenomenon. Islamist terrorism is not covered by these UN programs, and in recent years the states most affected by this problem-set have piloted their own indigenous programs to tackle these issues locally. These programs have been termed Deradicalization Programs.

Deradicalization is the process of breaking with radical belief systems as well as the violent behaviors associated with them. These programs work to harness and facilitate the deradicalization process in a formal context. These programs have varying structures internationally—from highly comprehensive models which include amnesty incentives, psychological support, financial and educational assistance; or programs which conduct basic ideological and psychological interaction with almost no incentives at all. The US, not having a history of internal conflict does not have either system in place to engage these personnel. This emerging US jihadi population presents an urgent catalyst for the US to act decisively in the development of a program which will bolster its national security, and assist in the demise of support for terrorist organizations. This paper asks the question: Given the known triggers



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for deradicalization—what deradicalization program model would effectively enable US jihadi deradicalization and enhance US national security?

The US attitude towards these programs is mixed. There is fear, skepticism and negative sentiment in some circles; typically surrounding doubt about whether deradicalization is truly possible, and concern that these programs risk recidivism and future violence. Conversely, there is growing evidence, testimony and support for the deradicalization process and its associated programs, matched with growing concern that prison-based programs foster recruitment and increase the drivers to radicalization. (US Government 2015; Speckhard and Yayla 2012; Silke 2011; Koehler 2016). Recently, the UN officially declared its support for jihadi rehabilitation programs, yet is currently relying on individual member states to implement and enforce their own programs (UN 2016a; UN 2016b). This paper proposes that given the transnational scope of the issue, the UN should move to standardize a comprehensive program framework drawn from best practices of diverse member states; a standardized, comprehensive framework based on the known deradicalization triggers, which can be tailored at the state and local level. This would be the most effective way to support jihadi deradicalization while enhancing US national security objectives.

Current State of Deradicalization Models and Evidence

At the forefront of the literature is the growing amount of personal narratives of individuals who have themselves been deradicalized. There is such a substantial amount of deradicalized personnel interacting in various contexts and programs, that some have informally self-identified as "Formers"—meaning former radicalized extremists. Several prominent deradicalized individuals have started their own Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), and are either actively supporting the growth of existing programs, or have worked with Western intelligence agencies in the targeting of violent extremists. The first-hand accounts of many of these individuals can be found in published documents, web-sites and video interviews on-line. Some noteworthy individuals are Jesse Morton at George Washington University, London-based Quilliam Foundation director Maajid Nawaz, Canadian Mubin Shaikh, American Life After Hate founders Antony McAleer and Angela King, Swedish Just Unity founder Youssef Assidiq, and Dane Morton Storm. Government



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programs and NGO's alike are discovering that individuals do, can and want to leave extremism behind—the challenge is supporting them through the process while ensuring the safety of the public. These prominent Formers, unilaterally attest to the need to have solid support once the break with extremism takes place.

There are a variety of program structures to provide this support internationally. Some programs are NGO's with no government assistance, and others are NGO's receiving some type of government assistance. There are government programs run with community initiatives, and full government programs using law enforcement monitoring and some type of connection to intelligence services. Virtually every type of imaginable structure was represented— including an online virtual community for formers. The question remains, which is the right model for the expected US population?

The majority of the current programs use a government sponsored, comprehensive approach, which includes controlled levels of amnesty, psychological and ideological support, financial support, and extensive after-care in the form of education and job assistance (Rabasa, Pettyjohn, Ghez and Boucek 2010; Ramalingam and Tuck 2014; Horgan and Altier 2012; Horgan and Braddock 2009a; Duchesne 2011; Stern 2010). The programs also include the jihadis family members as critical anchors in the process. The program durations are several months to several years.

In Europe, the government funded programs known as "Exit Programs", originally created to address White Power and Neo-Nazi groups, and are now being used to assist jihadis. An assessment of these programs states: "These programmes not only break down movements themselves, they also offer good value for money: they prevent criminal action and violent action, undercut the costs of incarceration, and ensure individuals who would otherwise be entrenched in lives of criminality become productive members of society" (Ramalingam and Tuck 2014, 2). Additionally, the German Exit Program claims, "since the year 2000 over 500 individual cases have been successfully finished with a recidivism rate of approximately 3%" (German Exit 2016).

The recidivism rates claimed by deradicalization programs are unilaterally low, in particular when compared to national numbers from conventional penal systems. Conventional criminal US recidivism rates are particularly high, even in relation to its large population. The US National Statistics on Recidivism Bureau of Justice Statistics studies "have found high rates of recidivism among released prisoners. One study tracked 404,638



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prisoners in 30 states after their release from prison in 2005-2010. The researchers found that: within three years of release, about two-thirds (67.8 percent) of released prisoners were rearrested." (Durose, Cooper and Snyder 2014). Rates are still within the 60 percent range. An attempt to use the Bureau of Justice Recidivism Rates Analytical Tool to determine rates for the known demographic of US jihadi produced a sample "too small to yield reliable recidivism estimates" (BJS 2016). It became clear that this new classification of jihadi recidivism is too new to be tracked effectively by national tools. The rates tracked by well-established international programs were substantially lower than conventional criminal recidivism rates, but the data lacks specific variables and criteria which provide something replicable and link the direct causal relationships which decreased recidivism.

The metrics and empirical research evaluating the success of these programs is not well-developed, due to: 1) the lack of criteria for success, 2) difficulty of measuring success, 3) the difficulty of assigning measurable values and valid causal relationships to psychological drivers, 4) difficulty with external validity. (Williams and Kleinman 2013; Mastroe and Szmania 2016; Horgan and Altier 2012). Without these metrics, the wealth of qualitative exploratory work has difficulty in certain application, especially when attempting to create national mechanisms which require formal structures. Romaniuk and Fink (2012) offer suggestions for program evaluation methods which would enhance the potential of these programs. International standards for eligibility and criteria are deemed useful, as would be a proper research design to evaluate these frameworks (Williams 2016; Williams and Kleinman 2013). There are several strong empirical suggestions from leading researchers on methodology which can be utilized to monitor and gage the effectiveness of these programs (Williams 2016; Koehler 2016). However, regardless of the amount of growing data and discussion, no formal approach has taken ground in the US. The last formal, published US government funded research on deradicalization was completed in 2010, prior to the rise of ISIL, and escalated US citizen's involvement in transnational terrorism. The skepticism towards deradicalization has minimized in 2016, due to a clearer understanding of the continuum of radicalization; positive case studies and a sense of urgency regarding the escalation of terrorist threat. Funded research is again underway and expected to be completed throughout the next year. However, there is currently no published material outlining a framework for a US specific program, which is the subject of this research question.



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The White House introduced its national counterterrorism program, "Strategy for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States", or colloquially referred to as the "CVE" program (Countering Violent Extremism) in 2011. This program focuses on the "proactive actions to counter efforts by extremists to recruit, radicalize, and mobilize followers to violence. . . [and to] address the conditions and reduce the factors that most likely contribute to recruitment and radicalization by violent extremists" (US Government 2016, 2). The program has evolved since 2011, and in 2016 it maintains three major pillars of effort: "(1) empowering communities and civil society; (2) messaging and counter-messaging; and (3) addressing causes and driving factors" (Ibid.). These pillars focus on the early initial phases of radicalization and recruitment; the CVE program was created as a preventative measure and does not outline post-radicalization tasks, or postdetention models. The latest 2016 CVE guidance, devoted one paragraph of a fourteen page document to the discussion of disengagement, "Task 3.3: Identify and support the development of disengagement and rehabilitation" (Ibid., 12). While this is a positive step in formally addressing the reality of deradicalization in counterterrorism, rehabilitation as an option is still grossly underrepresented in US government research and planning.

The US national effort to specifically address deradicalization and reintegration is extremely new and only exploratory. US NGO, Life After Hate, which focuses on violent nationalist extremism is beginning to incorporate jihadi deradicalization into its program focus, and is assisting the National Institute of Justice in the development of a tool which may be of use in assessing where in the arc of radicalization to deradicalization an individual may be situated (McAleer 2016, email to the author). Although sporadic partnerships, such as these, are being created to explore options, no clear national approach has been published. This lack of guidance is heightened by the fact that many terrorism cases are still pending, and funded research is not yet complete.

The bulk of the CVE effort is happening in what can be categorized as the "primary" and "secondary" prevention and intervention phases, taking place in community outreach and engagement programs using a blend of law enforcement and civil groups (Williams, Horgan and Evans 2016; Mastroe and Szamania 2016). There are several important pilot programs using this blend in Maryland, New York, Los Angeles and Minnesota (Williams, Horgan and Evans 2016; Southers and Heinz 2015; Vidino 2011), but these programs are not tailored to support populations in post-radicalization phases such as returning fighters and defectors.



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Heartland Democracy, a Minneapolis based NGO, and Judge Michael Davis are trying a new post-radicalization phase approach to help address the recidivism problem. They are handling Abdullahi Yusuf, a young man referred to them, as part of his sentencing in a case involving several youths who attempted to travel to Syria to support ISIL. Heartland Democracy does not currently run a deradicalization program, however, in conjunction with US Probation and Pretrial Services in Minneapolis, they are looking at European Exit program models and Judge Davis enlisted the assistance of a known European deradicalization expert to advise, train local staff and provide formal evaluations of the subjects. Currently, this is the first and only case of its kind in the US. Yusuf was enrolled into a "civic-engagement" curriculum, wearing an ankle monitor and living in a halfway house, where he met with religious mentors, program staff and his lawyers until he was again detained for an alleged probation violation (Jordan and Audi 2015; Koehler 2016).

A critical characteristic of this case proceeding is that Yusuf was formally evaluated by the deradicalization expert from Europe, who also testified in court on the phenomenon of deradicalization, and assisted in articulating to the court whether Yusuf and his coconspirators were possible candidates for a deradicalization program. Yusuf, was categorized as "low risk" by the deradicalization evaluator, and displayed evidence of potential for successful deradicalization (Koehler 2016, email to the author). Sentencing for this case took place on November 14, 2016—Yusuf was not returned to prison but was sentenced as time served, which included his previous 21 months of incarceration, with 20 years supervised release (Karnowski 2016; Koehler 2016, email to the author). The details and scope of the supervised release were not available to the researcher, but reporting suggests a minimum of electronic monitoring will be conducted (Kare 11 2016). The other subjects of this case, which were not evaluated as low risk, were given varied lengths of incarceration (Karnowski 2016; Koehler 2016, email to the author). This is a groundbreaking moment for US terrorism cases involving US citizens, and may lead to a possible precedent in alternative prosecution methodologies. The enduring urgent problem evidenced by this case is the lack of a formal program to support those who may be eligible for such alternative prosecutions.

There is some variance in outlook on amnesty and alternative prosecution methods internationally. England and Singapore were less inclined to offer amnesty incentives due to the culture of the government and perception of softness; others have concerns that jihadis will cheat the system and pretend to be rehabilitated, then go back to violent activity upon



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release. Incarceration and prison-based programs attempt to resolve that issue, however, they have their own issues, particularly because prisons have been common recruiting grounds for jihadis and Islam is the fastest growing religion in the US penal system (US Government 2015; Boucek 2011; Speckhard 2012). There are transitional justice issues, regarding the need to strike a balance between impunity, justice for victims and reinforcing critical civil norms. However, findings suggest the most successful pull factors (program aspects that provide incentive to jihadists to deradicalize) are amnesty—the forgiveness of offenses— and vocational, educational assistance (Ramalingam and Tuck 2014; Chowdhury Fink and El-Said 2011; Horgan and Braddock 2009). Those findings match the successes found in traditional reintegration programs worldwide (Carames and Sanz 2008).

Theoretical Approach and Triggers for Deradicalization

In order to conduct the assessment of current deradicalization programs, a qualitative approach, consisting of a cross-national comparative methodology of secondary data and case studies was used. A universalist approach which focused on finding general patterns across countries, was used to review the case studies of international programs. Individual cases were incorporated in an emerging fashion, and not pre-selected due to certain characteristics or variables. A large body of secondary data was used as the sample population.

The secondary data consisted of international research on deradicalization, previously conducted by leading scholars and analysts. Some of the material was original research conducted during field work at program facilities and with deradicalized personnel in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Pakistan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Europe's "Exit" Programs. The research consisted of interviews, questionnaires, surveys and program impact evaluative findings, and program web-sites. Original documentation from the following international NGO deradicalization initiatives was also included: "Just Unity" operating in Norway, "Life After Hate" operating in the US, and "Quilliam Foundation" operating in the UK. Government documents, policy briefs and government funded research reports were also included. Reports from the UN Security Council, Department of Homeland Security, RAND Corporation, and George Washington University's Program on Extremism emerged as anchors in the process and provided credibility and validity in the strategy and overall



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hypothesis. Interviews with several deradicalization experts and NGO's were also conducted to provide detail to the current status of programs and research.

The theoretical framework was rooted in two major disciplines: International Relations and Criminology. The two main theories framing this research are Complex Interdependence Theory and Containment Theory. Containment Theory—a Criminology theory which can be applied in a rehabilitative context, is "a control theory in which the inner and outer pushes and pulls on an individual will produce delinquency unless they are constrained or counteracted by inner and outer containment measures" (Akers and Sellers 2013, 21). This theory is the theoretical basis for pursuing US program development based on the deradicalization triggers. This basis assumes a program built on the unique, common underlying personal experiences of jihadis and the interconnectedness of these phenomena may decrease recidivism, decrease negative strains, and increase the overall success of the program.

Finally, from the International Relations perspective, Complex Interdependence Theory:

Refers to the various, complex transnational connections (interdependencies) between states and societies. Interdependence theorists noted that such relations, particularly economic ones, were increasing; while the use of military force and power balancing were decreasing (but remained important). Reflecting on these developments, they argued that the decline of military force as a policy tool and the increase in economic and other forms of interdependence should increase the probability of cooperation among states. The complex interdependence framework can be seen as an attempt to synthesize elements of realist and liberal thought. (Beavis 2016)

Due to the transnational nature of the current terrorism threat, national boundaries are becoming less defined and even causing friction, as jihadis travel through multi-national borders and abuse gaps in the security apparatus and protocols. Dynamic international coordination is required to mitigate the current threat activity. The UN Secretary General's "Report of the Secretary-General on the Threat Posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to International Peace and Security and the Range of United Nations Efforts in Support of Member States in Countering the Threat", expresses that finding clearly: "In view of the increased gravity of the threat posed by ISIL, the United Nations and other international organizations must adopt a more comprehensive, concerted and coordinated approach" (UN 2016b, 13). This is not an Iraq problem, a Turkey problem or a Sunni problem. Transnational terrorism is now



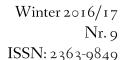
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everyone's problem and every state plays a part politically, financially, in bolstering security and acknowledging the fact its citizens are swept up into this phenomenon.

The critical theoretical starting point, is general agreement on the triggers for deradicalization— what makes a person leave extremist organizations in the first place. The compiled findings of researchers who conducted field work which analyzed the triggers for jihadis to part ways with terrorist organizations, presented three consistently reoccurring trigger themes: 1) disillusionment with the terror group practices and ideology, 2) inability to tolerate the brutality and pressure, and 3) desire for normalcy (Speckhard and Yayla 2016; Stern 2010; Horgan 2003; Manning and La Rue 2016). Recent notable work by Speckhard and Yayla (2016), who conducted interviews in Turkey with Syrian ISIL defectors, found the Syrian defectors were disillusioned emotionally and ideologically and disgusted by ISIL practices, which matched the earlier findings from interviews in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Pakistan (Speckhard and Yayla 2016; Stern 2010; Horgan 2003). Their research stresses the importance of understanding the emotional, psychological factors involved across the entire arc of radicalization to deradicalization, and how psychology must play a critical part in understanding the jihadist and developing programs. This concurs with RAND Corporation findings from 2010, as well as several other international studies to include the Netherlands' Scientific Approach to Finding Indicators of and Responses to Radicalization (SAFIRE) Group (Wijn 2013).

Speckhard and Yayla (2012, 2016), Stern (2010), Horgan (2003) and Duchesne (2011) concur that psychological testing of jihadis shows that the average jihadi has a "normal" psychological functioning and does not the fit psychopathic personality typology. The generalizability of these triggers has gained broad agreement, and are used here as the baseline for a program framework that would best facilitate the deradicalization process. Salient life events such as exposure to brutality, and loss of basic needs have shown to have a typical effect on the psychology of jihadis (Speckhard and Yayla 2016; Stern 2010; Horgan 2003). Additionally, psychological studies reinforce that it is possible for the normal mind to move from radicalization to deradicalization (Lewis 2015).

The author's perspective as a counterterrorism practitioner is important to note. The research was conducted from a legal, security focused perspective—concepts are framed within the context of what will help achieve best outcomes for national security purposes. Practitioners are faced with a lack of options and lost opportunities in the current US CVE





framework. Furthermore, the growing necessity of multi-national joint counterterrorism operations and investigations is creating an opportunity for transnational guidance.

This context is another opportunity to enhance national security by aggressively investing in critical relationships, particularly with our own marginalized citizens. The US counterintelligence perspective carries the theoretical assumption that human beings can be assessed for personality traits and motivations, and can build relationships on mutual beneficence. The assessment of individuals for trigger events and the acknowledgment of the importance of trigger events in the development of psychology and behavior is a baseline practice in counterterrorism (Lewis 2015).

The complexity of the deradicalization topic, requires discussion on international and terrorism law, transitional justice, and cultural idiosyncrasies— the details of which are outside the scope of this paper. There are also a variety of disciplines with diverse proposed methodologies on how to reverse, or deprogram individuals of undesirable behavioral and psychological states-such as sexual offenders, violent criminals and gang members—which may have some relevant approaches and methodologies for this context (Vidino 2011). However, this paper is confined to a review of deradicalization programs and their associated components, largely due to the characteristics of the transnational conflict and the associated political and ideological attributes which are regularly present. Additionally, because current criteria for success are not clearly defined, and detailed information on the current status of program beneficiaries is not openly available, this paper is limited to publicly available information on deradicalization program successes.

Program Components Analysis

A content analysis was conducted, and the collected data was coded and refined to include only the most dominant national deradicalization program cases which emerged. The resulting program cases were selected using saturation methodology. Eleven program component variables were extracted by coding, and entered into a theme matrix (See Appendix A, Table 1)

The matrix was used with an empirical approach to determine frequencies as well as themes. The variables with the highest frequency across the most successful programs, and the variables which were unrepresented across the least successful programs were noted as





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themes. The variables lacking in the least successful programs were compared with internal program structure and performance, to determine if a pattern of correlation between lack of variable and program performance existed, and whether the variables had criticality for inclusion in future program recommendation. Finally, the resulting themes were compared against the independent variable—the three known deradicalization triggers— in an effort to annotate which themes most closely complemented the triggers.

Use of the theme matrix showed Ideological Focus and Psychological Treatment were the two most consistently used variables among the ones consistently presented in programs. This reinforced the personal narratives of Former's who unilaterally stated an ideological and counseling component was critical to the deradicalization process (Manning and La Bau 2015; CCTV America 2015). Ideological focus and psychological treatment are critical components which address the known triggers of disillusionment, trauma and identity issues. However, the matrix also depicted that those two variables used alone with no supporting variables may not be effective, and may have participated in the poor overall performance of programs which only used those two components. The most successful programs included five or more of the eleven variables whereas the least successful programs which were struggling or fell apart, used only between one and three of the variables. What can be derived from this comparison, is that regardless of culture or national conditions, a low diversity of program components may lead to a weak outcome. This reinforces the hypothesis that a comprehensive program component structure, such as what is seen in the Saudi Arabia and European Exit Program's—both of which use nine of the selected variables, may be a critical element of their success.

The matrix also depicted government inconsistency in handling Amnesty and Monitoring. Half the government programs used some type of amnesty incentive with varied scopes and durations of monitoring. What was consistent across the case studies of government programs was a discomfort in addressing the topic, and a lack of specifics or guidelines regarding a best approach. However, the programs which were considered the strongest, had very open attitudes about their use of amnesty and a strong theoretical adherence to it (Chowdhury Fink and El-Said 2011). The UN is supportive of this and is advocating for alternative methodologies:

(a) The employment of rigid prosecution policies and practices against [returning] foreign terrorist fighters can be counterproductive to the



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implementation of comprehensive strategies to combat their activities and to combat the violent extremism that can lead to terrorism. Member States should also consider alternatives to incarceration, as well as reintegration and possible rehabilitation of ISIL returnees, prisoners and detainees;

(b) I urge Member States to ensure that their competent authorities apply a case-by-case approach to ISIL returnees, based on risk assessment, the availability of evidence and related factors and to develop and implement strategies to address specific categories of returnees, in particular minors, women, family members and other potentially vulnerable individuals; providers of medical services and other humanitarian needs; and disillusioned returnees who have committed less serious offences. (UN 2016b, 21)

The UN, should deliver detailed formal guidance on alternative methodologies and the use of amnesty and monitoring, to provide oversight and legal protocols for the majority of countries— such as the US, which is not particularly comfortable with the concepts and has a conflicted social perception of these tools. As an international institution dealing with the problem of transnational terrorism activity, issuing guidance regarding the implementation of alternative methodologies in manners which satisfy critical institutional norms and laws is important. Although the UN and its task force have developed into a massive network of 38 international organizational entities, working on eleven counterterrorism themes, across a broad spectrum of member states, which spend billions of dollars a year (UN CTITF 2016)—the researcher found no documentation which outlined plans for rehabilitation programs in any of the UN member states programs and detailed guidance for these programs did not appear to be in any of the UN funded initiatives.

It should be noted that the lack of an amnesty program, is likely a contributing factor for the consistent population of US citizens who have remained in ISIL territories, and have not returned or defected. Defectors claim ISIL destroys foreign fighter passports, and threatens their execution if they attempt to depart (Speckhard and Yayla 2016). Americans currently in ISIL territory, who may experience the triggers for deradicalization, have virtually no reasonable way to defect due to the arduous and complex nature of trying to find their way back into the US—particularly due to the lack of reliable US allies in the region. Americans in ISIL territory are likely trapped. Furthermore, it is reasonable to imagine, the fear of returning to detention, interrogation or worse, is likely a deterrent. Having international agreement and oversight on published standards, could provide cover for all effected states to manage the returning of their citizens and bring their people home. This



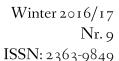
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would facilitate a consistent and controlled use of this pull factor, and help dismantle support for the organization. UN oversight of counterterrorism amnesty strategies may alleviate perceptions of bias, subjectivity, harsh and/or special treatment during the deradicalization process.

An additional theme suggested NGO's did not have the capability or means to run full programs, and governments lacked the capability to run a program which wouldn't marginalize them from the population (Manning and La Bau 2015; Koumpilova 2016; Chowdhury Fink and El-Said 2011; Speckhard 2012). NGO's complained of being restrained by challenges in lack of funding, lack of security apparatus, lack of legal backing. The government programs had issues with forging genuine relationships, social credibility and gaining trust from deradicalizing personnel. This emerged as an area where a unique partnership between government and NGO's could be beneficial to outcomes. Government programs which used NGO's as part of the execution of the social care framework were the most successful in addressing the known triggers. Of particular success across the NGO's was the use of credible Islamic mentors. Using mentors based at NGO's helped increase the level of credibility, and relationship development by being one-step removed from the government. This allowed key mentors from local Islamic communities to be viewed as keeping their integrity (Manning and La Bau 2015; Life After Hate 2016; Ramalingam and Tuck 2014).

An interesting hurdle in the government application of the programs, is the government's perception of cultural complexities. The government sponsored programs reviewed, recognized cultural relevancy was important, but it is perhaps being overemphasized and causing stagnation in the application of services to address known triggers, which are bound to human psychology and not rooted to specific cultural norms. The triggers were found cross-culturally and the matrix depicted that highly opposite cultures and governments (i.e. Saudi Arabia and Norway) had similar successes and similar failures. Cultural relevancy should not be a hindrance, and this hurdle provides another basis for the UN to establish certain supra-national, transnational structural norms, which can be flexed to address universal triggers with the use of NGO's at the field level.

Pairing these findings with the known US jihadi population is key. The US jihadi population, is largely US born, has westernized education and vocational skills, but lacks community integration and a means to resolve identity and ideological conflict (Vidino 2015; US Government 2015). Additionally, the ISIL defector reporting of "big blonde guys", seen





in Syria, strays from the perception that US jihadis are tied to a specific Middle Eastern ethnicity or purely Islamic religious group. (Speckhard and Yayla 2016, 123). The recent ISIL publication, *Dabiq 15*, was clearly targeting Western Christians, encouraging conversion and boasting of high levels of Christian converts within its foreign fighter population. To effectively address these issues and security gaps, the US would benefit from a program structure consisting of the following components:

- UN developed framework
- Partnership with NGO's at the field level
- Ideological and Psychological Support, including use of jihadi mentors
- Amnesty incentives
- Community integration components tailored to American, lower to middle class personnel, twenty to thirty years of age
- Diversity of care

Conclusion

Although the US is leading the fight against transnational terrorism, and the UN has published strong encouragement for an interdependent and alternative approach—no clear guidance on a US deradicalization program has been produced. The UN, is discussing its continued role in destroying terrorism and supporting the rehabilitation of affected persons; it is critical they lean forward with specific guidance for an international framework. At the current time, there is no formal published research on best models for US specific programs, which is the subject of this research question. Key Middle Eastern stakeholders and Western states must cooperatively develop best methodologies to tackle this transnational phenomenon, by leveraging each other's competencies and capabilities. Understanding the current US jihadi population and which deradicalization program components and relationships are achieving results, will add to the collective effort in establishing a US program.

This research reviewed the most current data on the US jihadi population, most current data on the triggers for deradicalization, and the best practices from international programs. This data was incorporated with current known gaps in the US CVE program implemented in



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2011, and the current UN counter-ISIL and counterterrorism guidance. The CVE program was intended as a preventative measure and does not outline post-radicalization tasks, or post-detention models. UN guidance, although supporting alternative methodologies does not provide guidance on methodologies, strategies or provide funding for such programs.

The current research gaps leave much room for further exploratory and predictive research to assist in the development of a US model. Research developing assessment tools, criteria for success, program evaluations, and the relationship between amnesty incentives and organizational roles are known urgent gaps which must be addressed. Although the research depicts amnesty incentives are a useful tool in rehabilitative methodology, it is noted that the most hardened violent jihadis may not be a suitable population for this approach, and further research into the most effective strategies for violent criminals is still necessary to fully develop safe and effective program frameworks.



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Table 1

Program Components	Europe Exit	Algeria	Bangla- desh	Egypt	Indo- nesia	Jordan	Malaysia	Morocco	Saudi Arabia	Yemen	Singa- pore	Iraq	Colombia
Government	Y	Y	Y	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Y	Y	Y	Y		Υ
Non-Government	Y	Y	Y		Υ							<u>.</u>	Υ
Ideology	Y		Υ	Υ	Υ	Y	Y		Υ	Υ	Y	Υ	Υ
Psychology	Υ					Y	Y	Y	Υ		Y	Υ	
Islamic Mentoring	Y		7		Y				Y	Y			
Amnesty Incentives		Y		Y	Y			Y	Y	Y			Y
Monitoring*	Υ		-	Υ					Y		Y		
Family Support	Y				Y		Y		Y		Y		
Vocational/ Educational Support	Y	Y			Y		Y		Y	Y		Υ	Y
Financial Assistance			Y		Y				Y		Υ		Υ
Long Term	Y						Υ				Υ		
Voluntary	Υ											2	
Most Successful	Υ								Υ		Υ		
Failed**		1					1	Y		Υ	Sr.	Υ	

⁻Green highlights dominant components, and programs reported as most successful.

^{*}Reporting available on specific practices was minimal.

^{**}Failed programs were annotated as such due to reports stating the programs were discontinued, unable to maintain critical structural components which resulted in a diminished or ineffective impact, or the programs were currently in minimal use due to factors such as resistance from the participants, current conflict and political crisis (Speckhard 2016, email to author; Speckhard 2010; Stern 2010; Chowdhury Fink and El-Said 2011; Ramalingham and Tuck 2014; Horgan and Braddock 2009).