Reintegrating Violent Extremist Offenders

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Rehabilitation and Reintegration: What is the problem?

• More than 100,000 people in prisons worldwide for terrorist-related offences; what happens upon release?

• Prisons as **breeding grounds** for radicalisation:
  - isolation, stigmatisation, intimidation, uncertainty, groups
  - detainees vulnerable to radicalisation either for the first time or repeated

• But prisons also provide unique, controlled environment for intervention > rehabilitation & reintegration programs
Time Well Spent

OR

Wasted Time

What We Need

What They Want
Rehabilitation and Reintegration

• When can detention and rehabilitation of violent extremist offenders be “successful”? 
  – e.g. prevent VE within and beyond prison walls
• Best practices? Aarhus / Hayat / Exit / PREVENT

• Lack of evaluation

• Institutional context – prison setting / risk assessments

• Professional context – relevant actors, reintegration components

• Social and individual context – family, community
VEOs in prison: what are the implications?

- VEOs may cause disturbances while in prison
  - rebellion against prison authorities
  - plotting criminal or terrorist activities

- Effortful recruitment
  - charismatic leaders
  - gang-like groups

- Social influence
  - glorification of ideologues
  - out of willingness or necessity
Recidivism and post-release radicalisation
   - VEOs may return to violent extremist networks

Overlap with criminal and violent extremist networks
   - within and beyond prison walls
   - professionalization of terrorist activities

Poor reintegration
   - high levels of unemployment among ex-offenders
Prisons are central in counter-terrorism

• Prison system connects different CVE-strategies
  - repressive – e.g. punishment and control
  - preventative – e.g. deradicalization and disengagement

• Important to bring the professionals around the table! Different actors; e.g. intelligence, police, probation, civil society

• The challenge:
  • Balance complex and competing goals and objectives
  • Identify barriers and opportunities
  • Formulate creative, realistic, and goal-oriented interventions
Goals of Rehabilitation

• Eliminate ideological legitimacy of violence
  – de-radicalisation and disengagement
  – preventing recidivism

• Focus should be on promoting good citizenship
  – educational, vocational, cognitive and social skills
  – inmates should be prepared for freedom and civil responsibilities

• Only a coherent and comprehensive programme will succeed
Importance of (risk) assessment

- Risk assessment is
  - the process of identifying risks to and from an activity, event, individual or organisation
  - an estimation of the likelihood of an adverse situation occurring

- What should be assessed?
- Who should be assessed?

Risk assessment should be based on
1. the identification of relevant variables/indicators,
   → knowledge of indicators
2. the evaluation of these variables/indicators in relation to the subject,
   → tools to assess indicators
3. the overall estimation of the level of risk posed by the subject
   → professional judgment
What moved me to do what I did was purely my faith. I was motivated by the law that commands me to cut off the head of anyone who insults Allah and his Prophet.

--- Mohammed Bouyeri ---
Why undertake risk assessments?

Two objectives:

1. To determine an individual’s risk (classification)

2. To inform management and appropriate interventions decisions to mitigate risk

To assist (depending on context):

- Classification
- Management
- Programmes/interventions
- Progress
- Post-release decisions
Recap

• More than 100,000 people in prisons worldwide for terrorist-related offences; will be released

• But prisons also provide unique, controlled environment for intervention > rehabilitation & reintegration programs

• Bring together different actors to design and implement R&I program with clear goals tailored to individual’s needs

• Intake and Risk Assessment: important to (re)assess to design individual rehabilitation program for detainees

• What are some practical examples?
Designing Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programs

• Rome Memorandum Good Practice Number 1:  
  *In developing a rehabilitation program, it is important to first clearly define the program’s goals and objectives and identify indicators of success and failure.*

• Clear goals shape the program and lead to differences between the programs across countries.
Programs worldwide: main differences

• The target audience (right wing, post-conflict, religious extremism)
• The phase of imprisonment (pre, during, post)
• Voluntary participation or mandatory
• The actor responsible for implementation
• The different elements of the program (education, vocational, religious)
Target audience

• 1990s: right-wing extremism & post-conflict

• Post-9/11, focus on religious extremism

• Programs focusing on *all* forms of violent extremism

• Mostly in Europe, Middle-East North-Africa and South-East Asia; less in South-America and Central Asia
Five Stages of Intervention

Beyond Criminal Justice Sector

1. Signaling Stage

   Within Criminal Justice Sector

2. (Pre-)Trial/Detention Stage
3. Post-Trial Incarceration Stage
4. Post-Detention/Reintegration Stage

5. Aftercare and monitoring
Phase of imprisonment: criminal justice sector

- Prisons offer controlled environment
- Programs focus mostly on detention phase
- Pre-detention more prevention focused (pre-crime)
- Post-detention focused on aftercare; build on detention programs
Voluntary or mandatory participation

• Voluntary: *Al-Hayat* (Germany), the Netherlands, Nigeria
  - Benefits: person wants to participate
  - Cons: other incentives to participate

• Mandatory: often as part of the prison sentence
  - Benefits: creates opportunity for change
  - Cons: hard process, individual does not want to change

• Incentivized participation: e.g. family visits
Responsible actor

- In prison: warden, guards, social workers?
- Outside of prison: ICRC, NGOs, communities, families, religious leaders
- Multi-actor approach

**Rome Memorandum Good Practice Number 7:**
Rehabilitation programs should incorporate a broad range of cross-disciplinary experts, with close coordination among the relevant departments and personnel involved.
Marrakesh, 25 January 2011

Design program: elements
• Psychological treatment
• Religious interventions
• Education
• Vocational training
• Recreational elements
ASSESSMENT, REHABILITATION PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT and MONITORING DIVISION
Challenges

• What is success?
• Exceptionalisation
• Role of ideology > how to tackle it / who is the legitimate voice?
• Network vs individuals
• What to do with the ‘Naysayers’?
• How to monitor and measure recidivism?
Conclusions

• Disengagement and deradicalisation are linked but loosely linked processes
• Disengagement from participation in violent extremism is more important to achieve than deradicalisation, the latter is a bonus
• Rehab practices that are relevant to all types: psych counseling, coaching
• Difficult groups: socially frustrated & ideological activists
• Importance of societal support
“[N]ot every returning foreign fighter or terrorist dropout can be reintegrated into society, but some can. Even among those who can be prosecuted and convicted, the vast majority will eventually be released. It is therefore neither ‘soft’ nor ‘weak’ to be talking about how to rehabilitate them, especially in the prison context but elsewhere as well.”

– Matthew Levitt (2015)
Thank you!

Questions?

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