Vysotskyi, A. (2026). From radicalization to reintegration: Measuring the efficacy of counter-terrorism policies in post-conflict societies. *Politics & Security, 15*(1), 80-90. https://doi.org/10.54658/ps.28153324.2026.15.1.pp.80-90

FROM RADICALIZATION TO REINTEGRATION: MEASURING THE EFFICACY OF COUNTER-TERRORISM POLICIES IN POST-CONFLICT SOCIETIES

Anton Vysotskyi
Varna Free University
Varna, Bulgaria
https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6041-586X
anton.vysotsky@vfu.bg

Abstract. *The ontological paradox of reintegration is rarely formulated in such a straightforward manner: a society is requested to re-incorporate the same people whose cruelty has ripped its social fabric, and to do so without the wounds being suppurative, the institutional scaffolding half-collapsed, and the political incentives in a sharp mismatch. It is this conflict between the moral necessity to provide means of escape out of extremism on one side and the social unwillingness to forget what extremism has created on the other side that drives the whole post-conflict governance debate but is habitually papered over by programmatic optimism. The international policy framework has also changed to less kinetic Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) approaches rather than paradigms in the last 20 years, a move that was influenced less by ideological belief than by the sheer failure of detention-and-destroy paradigms to capture recruitment spurts. Based on a longitudinal comparative study of the Saudi Arabian theological rehabilitation model, the Danish Aarhus social-welfare experiment, and the fractured implementation environments of Iraq, northeastern Nigeria, and the Western Balkans, this article asks the question whether the conceptual machinery of the modern deradicalization programmes can survive exposure to post-conflict environments marked by institutional weakness, ethno-sectarian distrust, and the This data suggests a sobering conclusion that, where it happens, reintegration is not a restorative goal but a managed failure, a politically negotiated stalemate in which recidivism is contained and not solved, the stigma is redistributed and not removed, and measures of success are pegged not to human security results but to funding needs of donor states and implementation agencies.*

Keywords: Deradicalization, P/CVE, Social Cohesion, Disengagement, Post-Conflict Governance, Human Security.

1. INTRODUCTION

The reintegration industry, which now is quite literally an industry, with its own consultancies, its conferences of donors, its acronym-heavy monitoring systems and its new cast of senior advisors, is based on an assumption so fundamental that its advocates seldom see the need to justify it. The hypothesis will go as follows: the society that has been formed on the background of armed conflict can be deemed as something resembling a blank slate, a space of mutual readiness into which, with the help of the appropriate combination of occupational training, psychosocial care, and theological cure, the previously radicalised individuals can be introduced.

The fact, of course, is more stubborn. The world of post-conflict societies is not a tabula rasa. They are palimpsests, stratified, marked, overwritten yet never erased, with the intimations of massacres and betrayals that are inscrutable on any DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration) protocol. The neighbours remember. The widows remember. The child who had observed her school turned into a weapons depot recalls, and her recollection is not subject to programmatic modification. To utter the term reintegration in such circumstances is already to commit some sort of euphemistic violence, to sneak a clinical proceduralism into the realm of grief and paranoia and the entirely understandable wish to avenge.

And still the programmes go on. Since the early 2000s and with growing momentum since the territorial defeat of the Islamic State in 20172019, governments and multilateral institutions have been

ISSN 2815-3324 Online, ISSN 2535-0358 Print

investing billions in P/CVE structures that aim to intercept the radicalisation process, divert those at an early stage and rehabilitate those that have gone through the crucible of extremist violence (Holmer, 2013). The Global Counter-Terrorism Forum has issued more than twenty-five good-practice documents, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism has a sprawling portfolio of capacity-building projects in forty-plus countries, and the European Union Radicalisation Awareness Network was holding practitioners' biannual plenaries that over the years have taken on the self-referential air of a professional subculture (Renard, 2017). Something is being done. It is a different matter whether what is underway has any stable correlation to what is actually the case: in the provisional IDP camps of Borno State, in the overcrowded prisons of northeast Syria, in the dystopian suburban apartments of Molenbeek.

This should be clarified first, since the terminology of the field in itself is a contested area. The concept of deradicalization and disengagement are not synonyms, but they are still constantly mixed up in policy papers written by individuals who ought to be better informed. Deradicalization is a mental process: the discarding of an extremist ideology, the rejection of a worldview that justifies an act of violence as a means of political or theological action (Horgan, 2009). It is, should one take it seriously, an immensely daring enterprise--to ask a person not only to cease fighting but also to cease believing that he was justified in fighting. By contrast, disengagement is behavioural: a person has stopped engaging in violence without always having to change the ideological pledges that authorised it (Bjorgo and Horgan, 2009). The difference is of the essence, since the great majority of programmes which purport to deradicalize are actually bringing about disengagement at best, a suspension of hostile action which can be instrumental, coerced, or even tactical in nature, and not the result of a real epistemic revision.

Kruglanski et al. (2014) have theorised this gap by theorising the gap through the signification quest theory that radicalisation is motivated by a personal meaning that is momentarily fulfilled by violence and deradicalization is achieved by offering alternative means of seeking meaning. It is a beautiful model, yet it carries a disturbing implication: when the post-conflict environment does not provide those alternative avenues, when the economy is stripped away, when the institutions are corrupt and the social networks are torn asunder, then the motivational vacuum which initially facilitated the radicalisation process remains, and the result is a deradicalized person simply waiting to be re-activated.

This article presents the thesis that successful reintegration is not a clinical procedure that can be subjected to the standardised toolkits and logframe matrices. It is a very political and societal bargaining that will never work when ordered down security concerns trumps disordered up social complaints in a systematic, regular, and usually disastrous manner (Della Porta, 2013). The securitised framing of the majority of national P/CVE strategies makes the radical a pathological figure to be cured, extracting the political economy of exclusion that created both the grievance and the movement that cashed in on it. This is not an oversight. It is a formal aspect of a policy architecture which cannot risk incriminating the complicity of the state in the creation of the conditions of radicalisation, since the state is also the main financier and executor of the solution.

What ensues is arranged in four movements of analysis. The former traces the architecture of current models of deradicalization, pitting theology-intensive and welfare-intensive paradigms against each other and challenging their applicability to fragile states. The second studies the empirical history of policy failure and specifically how the metrics problem, the stigmatisation trap and the gender and age aspects which mainstream programming systematically overlooks are important. The third maneuvers through the legal and ethical minefields that come with reintegration the justice-versus-peace dilemma, the civil liberties expenses of non-terminal surveillance, and the juridical ambiguity of suspect citizenship. The fourth puts forward a communitarian resilience model based on local agency, credible messengership, and trauma-informed care and warns against the assumption that any model, however sound in theory, can solve the tensions it is addressing.

2. THE ARCHITECTURE OF DE-RADICALIZATION.

2.1 Global Models in Comparative Perspective.

The modern deradicalization environment can be characterized by two rather distinguishable paradigms that are based on the political culture and threat environment of their country of origin. They are didactic in their respective logics, neither the one a replicable template, but the difference between them discloses the conceptual incoherence which pervades the field.

Saudi Arabian is theology-centric, with the model being inaugurated in 2004 the auspices of the Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Interior and then institutionalised by the Mohammed bin Nayef Centre of Counseling and Care (El-Said, 2015). The key idea behind its functioning is that the root of jihadist violence lies in a perverse interpretation of the Islamic jurisprudence and that the answer to it is found in months-long arduous clerical work that aims to show the invalidity of takfiri logic, would reposition jihad within the classical parameters of legitimate authority and proportional force, and would restore the individual to the family and tribal obligations systems that override the temptation Material inducements include in addition to the programme housing, vehicles, employment assistance and assistance in arranging marriages and this has been described by critics as a model of a golden cage whereby compliance is rewarded with high levels of material inducement that would make defection economically illogical.

According to the reports provided by the Saudi government, the outcomes are quite impressive: recidivism rates are always mentioned below twelve percent, and some official documents indicate only three to five percent. But these statistics are to be questioned. Extremely limited is independent verification, which is limited by the secrecy of the Saudi security apparatus (Boucek, 2008). The denominator, who is a graduate and who is either quietly reclassified or indefinitely jailed without joining the statistical universe of the programme, is entirely at the mercy of the state. Recidivism has occasionally been omitted in calculations of domestic recidivism by former detainees who re-offended abroad, such as in the war theatre of Yemen by a number of them. And the theological assumption of the programme carries with it a certain political theology: the delegitimation of violence against the Saudi state, not delegitimation of violence. The model is not radicalised selectively de-radicalising any threat to the ruling order, but leaving behind a conservative Salafi worldview that would be considered by other governments to be radicalising itself (Hegghammer, 2010).

In its turn, the Danish Aarhus model is based on a social-democratic welfare tradition according to which radicalisation is viewed as a symptom of social exclusion (Bertelsen, 2015). The Aarhus approach was implemented in 2007 and is based on the concept of treating people at risk or having returned to violent extremism as clients of the municipal welfare system, but not security subjects. Case managers are the ones who arrange packages of support; housing, education, employment, psychological counselling, mentorship based on the idea that reintegration is a social process that needs the same infrastructural attention as any marginalised population needs. The programme is categorically non-forceful: it is voluntary, there is a restricted level of intelligence sharing with security services, and the focus is placed on the establishment of trust rather than the derivation of compliance.

Aarhus has enjoyed a highly acclaimed reputation within the European community of P/CVE, and its multi-agency and municipality-level approach has been reproduced in cities at Vilvoorde, Gothenburg, and elsewhere (van de Donk et al., 2022). However, the reputation is stronger than the evidence base. The number of people who returned to Syria and Iraq as refugees in Denmark was in the low dozens, which allowed conducting intensive individualised casework that could not be done when the number of cohort is measured in the thousands. This means that the model is almost definitionally non-transferable to situations where the institutions of a strong welfare state are absent or destroyed due to the lack of strong welfare state infrastructure. And the voluntary participation model provides a bias in itself and inflates the apparent success: those who consent to participate are, by definition, already predisposed to disengagement, and the hardcore cases do it on their own (Christensen, 2019).

ISSN 2815-3324 Online, ISSN 2535-0358 Print

2.2 The Post-Conflict Variable

The Saudi and the Danish models were developed to address stable states that faced a discrete threat population. As soon as their logics are implanted into the disrupted governance situations of post-conflict societies, the outcomes are either disillusioning or even detrimental in this case.

The most graphic example is in Iraq. This post-2017 deradicalization initiative has been defined by systemic underinvestment, institutional disarray, and the sheer size of the task: tens of thousands of people are in detention under suspicion of being affiliated to ISIS, many of whom have been imprisoned without trial over years in institutions that human rights organisations have called radicalisation factories (Revkin, 2020). This has been reported as the governmental rehabilitation programme, at the Hut Camp complex in Anbar Province, giving cursory ideological counselling sessions to cohorts of several hundred, delivered by imams with no specialised training, in a system of detention infrastructure where trust-building is not permitted (Khalil & Zeuthen, 2016). The data on recidivism is not gathered in a systematic manner; programme "graduation" is more associated with the management of carceral capacity than with any of the cognitive or behavioural changes that are measured.

The acute issue of community rejection has been facing the Operation Safe Corridor programme, which was created in 2016 to process Boko Haram defectors deemed as low-risk in northeastern Nigeria (Inks et al., 2017). Alumni of the programme, several of whom have been involved in assaults on the same communities in which they are repatriated, are met with hostility that goes all the way to social ostracism, as well as violent retaliation. Fatima Akilu has reported instances where returnees were killed by the community members within weeks of reintegrating into it, a form of extrajudicial accountability, which the formal programme architecture does not foresee or can deal with (Akilu, 2017). Vocational training will never replace the communal readiness to accept the returnee, and this readiness cannot be programmed out of thin air.

The Western Balkans present a different but equally instructive configuration. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and North Macedonia confronted a wave of returnees from Syria and Iraq that, while numerically modest, arrived into polities still processing the traumas of the 1990s conflicts. The radicalisation of young Balkan Muslims in the 2012–2016 period was itself partly a product of post-conflict dysfunction—frozen ethno-political structures, youth unemployment exceeding forty percent, a pervasive sense of European rejection—and reintegration programmes that failed to address these structural drivers were, in effect, asking returnees to re-enter the same vacuum that had expelled them (Azinovic & Jusic, 2015).

2.3 Cognitive Openings and Push-Pull Dynamics

The most widely used theoretical framework in deradicalization mechanisms is the so-called cognitive opening concept first introduced by Wiktorowicz (2005) and later modified by Horgan (2009), Altier et al. (2014), and Koehler (2017). A cognitive opening is a psychological receptivity occasion in which the conviction of an individual in the extremist world-view is vulnerable, brought about by disillusionment, personal crisis, or the very weariness of functioning life. Theoretically, programme design is concerned with finding and capitalizing on such gaps: timing interventions to be vulnerable, credible interlocutors, and material and relational options that can make an exit possible (Altier et al., 2014).

The push-pull model groups those factors which push people out of extremist groups (push factors: internal disillusionment, leadership disputes, moral revulsion) and those which draw people to mainstream society (pull factors: family ties, economic opportunity, amnesty guarantees). In practice, the push factors are usually more salient those ones individuals leave extremist movements more frequently due to internal malfunction than because the alternative is attractive, which has uncomfortable consequences regarding the programme design, as it implies that the state may be structurally incapable of pulling people out (Bjorgo and Horgan, 2009; Clubb, 2016).

The emotional aspect is regularly under theorised. Radicalisation cannot be considered solely as a cognitive act of embracing aberrant beliefs; it is a lived, interrelational sense of belonging. The group offers identity, meaning, brotherhood or sisterhood, an account of cosmic importance where the individual plays a heroic role (Sageman, 2004). Social rejection of the mainstream society and shaping strong affective

bonds within the extremist environment develops a dual form of attachment that is exceptionally resistant to programmatic intervention. The tactical use of counter-narratives to undermine the narrative (also referred to as narrative subversion) is now a cottage industry in P/CVE, yet its effectiveness is limited specifically due to its misdiagnosis of the problem: radicalisation is maintained not because of the logical persuasiveness of the narrative, but the emotional and social roles that it plays (Schmid, 2013; Ferguson, 2016).

3. THE POLICY-PRACTICE GAP: EMPIRICAL FAILURES

3.1 Stigmatisation is a barrier to the process of re-integration

The stigmatisation that comes with identifying, formally or informally, accurately or falsely, former extremists is one of the most intractable and least recognised contributors to reintegration failure. The security-first paradigm views the returnee as a subject of surveillance, a risk, a potential threat whose each social encounter is readable as a potential sign of re- engagement. This framing is a dynamic obstacle to social reconnection (Marsden, 2017).

The process of labelling has been well-documented in criminological literature. The original research of Becker (1963) on deviance proved that the use of a stigmatising label alters the self concept of the labelled and the reaction of the social environment to the labelled, forming a feedback loop that ends up reinforcing the very behaviour the label was supposed to be preventing. This mechanism in the counter-terrorism context works especially well in a virulent manner. A person after a deradicalization programme has a formal or informal security label which accompanies them throughout all further interactions with the state apparatus: applications to work are marked, movements are limited, receipt of social welfare is conditional on compliance, and the social network of the person is secondarily surveilled which isolates possible supporters (Silke & Veldhuis, 2017).

Fieldwork that has been conducted in various settings; Tunisia, France, Indonesia, Kenya, has reported instances in which people who had formally disengaged had been re-radicalised by the experience of state surveillance and social disownment that followed their own formal reintegration (Cherney, 2020). It is a sadistically circular mechanism in that the security response of the state to the perceived recidivism threat ends up being a driver of recidivism, creating the effect it was meant to avert. It is not an incidental finding but a structural characteristic of a system that is simply incapable of treating a person as a security threat and as a citizen in good standing at the same time.

3.2 The Success Metric Problem

What is the success of a deradicalization programme? Recidivism is the default measure or the rate of programme graduates returning to violent extremism. This has the attraction of seeming objectivity: either the person re-offends or not. However, as a matter of fact, recidivism rates are among the most manipulable statistics in the whole security-policy arena (Porges, 2010).

The definition of re-offending will differ dramatically across jurisdictions: is it expression of extremist sympathies but in an inactive form? Affiliation to banned organisations? On suspicion only or conviction only? The denominator is also elastic: is it all who signed the programme, or just some who have been through the programme? There are strong institutional motivations in governments to understate the recidivism rates. Programme budgets are pegged on proven outcomes; political careers are based on the credentials of tough-on-terror that are not substantiated by high failure rates; and international donors need positive reviews that will justify further funding (Horgan and Braddock, 2010).

Researchers have criticized the three-five percent recidivism rate in Saudi Arabia by pointing out that it excluded those who returned to the Kingdom after engaging in other activities, those who returned to being detained without re-processing, and those whose restrictions were so extensive that it was virtually impossible to overcome the recidivism ideology (Boucek, 2008; El-Said, 2015). According to the post-LTTE rehabilitation programme in Sri Lanka, the rate of recidivism was effectively zero, which is only

possible with a narrow definition of recidivism that excludes the continuation of political surveillance, limited movement, and social marginalisation (Hettiarachchi, 2018).

The more fundamental issue lies in the fact that even recidivism as honestly recorded misses the most extreme failure. A person who never goes back to violence, but is socially isolated, economically marginal, psychologically traumatised and politically disenfranchised has not been successfully reintegrated under a real meaning of human security. The existing metrics system encourages the manufacture of complacent bodies as opposed to functional citizens, which is of immense importance to long-term stability but can not be reflected in programme assessments because of the structural constraints of their conventional three-to-five-year timeframes (Marsden, 2017; Webber et al., 2018).

3.3 Gender and Age: The Neglected Dimensions

Women and child reintegration of extremist groups is a separate analytical and programmatic problem which mainstream P/CVE models have treated, where they have treated it, with a mixture of conceptual confusion and program improvisation.

Female members of organizations such as the Islamic State are placed somewhere between the agency and victimization spectrum, which is baffling to the dualist categories most of the legal and programmatic responses are based on (Pearson, 2018). Did they become brides or ideological volunteers by coercion? Active propagandists or passive dependents? Victims of trafficking or perpetrators of enslavement? In most instances, the reply is: each of them, one after another, or all at once, in a manner that can not be easily classified. This confusion has been manifested in the response of the international community. The policy of repatriation has been wildly inconsistent: on the one hand, there have been mass-scale repatriations in some states (Kazakhstan, Russia, Kosovo); on the other, the citizenship has been taken away or the right to consular access denied, effectively outsourcing the issue to the Kurdish government that is already overwhelmed in northeast Syria (Cook and Vale, 2019).

In the case of women who are repatriated, there is a tendency to swing between two insufficient poles, which are security framework and victimhood framework, both of which deprive them of agency. Neither results in coherent reintegration. The former creates stigmatisation processes; the latter does not respond to ideological matters that some women actually believe in, which creates a therapeutic fiction that can not stand the test of existence (Speckhard & Ellenberg, 2020).

The case of minors is more critical. The children born or brought up in the extremist groups are a developmental problem of monumental complexity. Others have been exposed to a high level of violence, ideological indoctrinations at critical stages of their development, deprived of primary caregivers and have not received formal education. Their reentry needs specialised expertise in child-protection, long-term psychosocial assistance, and secure placement in a familial or foster-care setting, which post-conflict settings are the least qualified to offer (Bloom and Horgan, 2019). Young children as young as nine have been tried in counter-terrorism laws in Iraq; minors in the al-Hol camp of Syria served indefinite imprisonment. A generation of uneducated, traumatised, stateless youth, whose developmental experience was shaped by exposure to extremist violence, is the only one long-term security threat that the post-ISIS environment poses (van der Heide & Geenen, 2017).

4. LEGAL AND ETHICAL QUAGMIRES

4.1 Justice vs. Peace: The Irreconcilable Tension

The correlation between transitional justice and reintegration belongs to the category of veritable, perhaps insurmountable, tension. The post-conflict societies face a dilemma that has no clean solution: the accountability craving is combined with the practical understanding that it is neither possible nor stabilising to prosecute masses (Sriram, 2007). In a situation where the population of perpetrators is in the thousands, such as in post-ISIS Iraq or post-conflict Colombia, full judicial processing would strain court resources, take decades, and may even stoke instead of resolving communal tensions.

Amnesty arrangements, truth commissions and plea-bargaining deals are practical compromises but at a price. Amnesty is a second violation of victims and their communities; victims are erased by the state in the name of a peace that they do not agree to and may not even enjoy (Mani, 2002). Though complex, the Colombian peace process has brought bitter feelings to the rural communities who see the re-integration of the FARC as an injustice and aggravation to the already displaced: the guerillas who killed and displaced are being given land, stipends, and political representation, meanwhile the displaced people continue to remain in urban fringe (Theidon, 2009). It is not a design issue that can be fixed by superior programming. Any structural tension in any process that tries to provide justice and stability at the same time is inherent.

4.2 Architecture of Suspicion and Human Rights Compliance

The civil liberties issue brought about by the post-reintegration monitoring regimes that the majority of states have imposed on former extremists is an issue that the P/CVE field has been exceptionally hesitant to tackle. Many jurisdictions place various types of surveillance and restriction on reintegrated individuals that constitute a permanent loss of citizenship: reporting, movement, digital surveillance, association and employment restrictions, and welfare benefits contingent on security compliance (Muller, 2021).

These restrictions have different legal grounds. In other jurisdictions they are established by formal court order over a specified length of time; in other they are bureaucratic in that they are implemented by administrative means that are not subject to judicial review and that their parameters are more or less whatever the security services feel like (de Londras, 2018). Its long-term impact is the establishment of a permanent underclass of the so-called suspect citizens, those who belong to the polity but never fully enjoy its benefits. This position is self-authorizing: the limitations create social marginality, which is then interpreted as indicative of further risk and leads to its repetition in a vicious cycle without any principled ending point.

The international human rights law offers certain limitations, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights specifies that limitations on liberty must be both necessary and proportionate, but since 2001 the counter-terrorism exception has grown so enormously that said limitations have become little more than a formality. The rights implications of P/CVE programming have been identified by the UN Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights on many occasions, but such interventions have had little effect on state practice (Scheinin, 2010). It is something corrosive in the very nature of a system that offers a promise of reintegration but only offers a permanent suspicion- that gives out the possibility of social restoration as a reward of programme attendance and makes sure that structural arrangements will never lead to full restoration. This amounts to violation of the social contract (implied) upon which the participation in voluntary programmes relies.

5. MOVING TO A COMMUNITARIAN FRAMEWORK

5.1 State Surveillance to Community Resilience

The above failures are united by a common structural source: the concentration of the power of reintegration in security-state structures whose organisational logics are quite incompatible with the relational and trust-based processes upon which authentic social reintegration is built. The second is not the removal of a role by the state-level, but the radical change of the seat of agency towards decentralised security apparatuses to local communities, civil-society organisations, and individuals themselves (Ris & Ernstorfer, 2017). The concept of community-based conflict resolution and reintegration is not new: the Gacaca courts in post-genocide Rwanda, the community reconciliation process in East Timor, the local peace committees in the Northern part of Kenya and eastern DRC (Clark, 2010). The common denominator of these approaches is that they understand reintegration is essentially a local process: it will be successful or not successful on the level of the neighbourhood, of the village, of the extended family, of the mosque, of the marketplace-spaces which are basically invisible to the national programme architectures and which the international donors can not enter.

5.2 Evidence-Based Recommendations

Vocational training and economic integration are inseparable not in that they deal with the ideological aspects of the radicalisation - they do not - but in that they deal with the material conditions without which no kind of social reintegration can be maintained. A person who lacks an income, has no productive role in society, who has no purpose that can be read by his or her community as a sign of reformation, is a person whose functional advantages of belonging to a group, who has a point, who has an identity, who has material support, are still effective. The DDR programming evidence on various conflict settings is consistent, that is, economic reintegration is not adequate in preventing re-recruitment, yet it is almost imperative (Muggah, 2009).

Trauma-informed care cannot be achieved by simply mentioning it as a buzzword in programme documents. Complex PTSD, moral injury, dissociation, and a disruption in attachment are prevalent among those who have experienced or witnessed extremist violence, and these issues are well-known clinically but poorly represented in the design of programmes (Weine et al., 2017). The rationale is that most deradicalization programmes do involve some form of psychosocial support, but the latter is usually merely group guidance which is administered by untrained personnel in institutions that continue to traumatise. One would need a serious commitment to trauma-informed care, which would entail clinical evaluation, individualised treatment planning, long-term therapeutic interaction, and integrating mental health care into community-based support systems that persist beyond formal programme completion.

Probably the most consistently effective component of the deradicalization evidence base is credible messengers - former radicals who have truly disengaged, and who can address the realities of the extremist life in a credibility that no external professional can possibly emulate. German (EXIT-Deutschland), Scandinavian, Colombian, and Indonesian programmes have shown that the word of a former inmate has persuasive power, which cannot be matched by ideological counter-narratives (Koehler, 2017; Horgan, 2009). There is no lack of danger in the model, the credibility is tied to the authenticity of disengagement, and instrumentalisation has ethical issues, yet it considers affective and experiential aspects which are systematically overlooked by purely cognitive approaches.

The position of religious and traditional leaders should be finely tuned. When radicalisation includes a theological aspect, the involvement of plausible religious figures may offer a doctrinal re-framing through which ideological reworking can be achieved without losing faith which is psychologically important and which is often habitually neglected by designers of secular programmes (El-Said, 2015). Nevertheless, the risks associated with the state co-optation of religious authorities to counter-terrorism are as follows: this will lead to the delegitimization of the very people whose authority relies on their perceived independence and the reduction of complex theological traditions to state security policy tools, which will backlash among the communities that see such an arrangement as manipulative (Schmid, 2013).

6. CONCLUSION: THE PERPETUAL VIGIL

The materials here collected are not inclined to optimistic synthesis. In its various forms and spread across geographic territories, deradicalization programming has yielded the occasional success, systemic failure, and a great grey zone of ambiguous results that the current metrics infrastructure can not truthfully quantify. The Saudi model is successful in Saudi Arabia since Saudi Arabia is the country with the authoritarian capacity, the resource base, and the theological monopoly to maintain it; it cannot be exported. The Aarhus model is effective in Aarhus since it is a small, successful, well-managed city with a strong welfare state; it is not scalable. And the ad hoc programmes running in Iraq, in Nigeria, in the Sahel, in the Syrian camps are, in most cases, barely functional, their existence maintained less by the sign of impact than by the institutional inertia of a counter-terrorism architecture that must have them there in order to claim its own.

Honest reintegration is not a programme result but a process of generation, a non-linear process, a process of intergenerational negotiation, a process between individuals, communities, and states, which is sluggish and has no clean edges and which takes decades to complete. The person who ceases violence at 25 might not attain real social reintegration, the rebuilding of trust, the regaining of functional

relationships, the rebuilding of liveable identity, forty or fifty, perhaps never. It can take the community that accepts a returnee a generation to entirely work through the implications of that acceptance. The state implementing a reintegration programme might not be the same state at the time when the long-term consequences of the programme can be evaluated.

None of this relieves policy-makers of the need to take action. The opposite of imperfect programming is no programming but rather giving in, giving up, giving up returnees in camps, giving up communities that have no means, giving up children who have no futures, and these results are unambiguously worse. However, the move should be guided by a humility that the P/CVE community has been hesitant to adopt: the acknowledgment that reintegration is at best a containment of failure, as a reduction of damage, as opposed to a removal of risk.

The greatest difficulty is not operational but philosophical. Deradicalization challenges us to believe in the malleability of human belief, in the possibility that a person who has made a killing in the name of an absolute truth can be worked to question that truth, and build a life on the precarious basis of his non-belief. Sometimes this happens. Often it does not. And the policy structure which balances these possibilities must be strong enough to sustain the former without being torn apart by the latter--a calibration, which the literature only hints at, though a calibration that the practice, with its funding schedules, and its political imperative and its insistent demand of demonstrable outcomes, makes nearly impossible to maintain. The vigil is in any event eternal. It has no discharge, and has no final report.

REFERENCES

Akilu, F. (2017). Countering violent extremism in Nigeria: A community-based approach. In S. Romaniuk, F. Grice, D. Irrera, & S. Webb (Eds.), The Palgrave handbook of global counterterrorism policy (pp. 919–935). Palgrave Macmillan.

Altier, M. B., Boyle, E. L., & Horgan, J. G. (2014). Returning to the fight: An empirical analysis of terrorist reengagement and recidivism. Terrorism and Political Violence, 26(2), 305–326.

Azinovic, V., & Jusic, M. (2015). The lure of the Syrian war: The foreign fighters Bosnian contingent. Atlantic Initiative.

Becker, H. S. (1963). Outsiders: Studies in the sociology of deviance. Free Press.

Bertelsen, P. (2015). Danish preventive measures and de-radicalization strategies: The Aarhus model. In Panorama: Insights into Asian and European affairs (pp. 241–253). Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

Bjorgo, T., & Horgan, J. (Eds.). (2009). Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement. Routledge.

Bloom, M., & Horgan, J. (2019). Small arms: Children and terrorism. Cornell University Press.

Boucek, C. (2008). Saudi Arabia's "soft" counterterrorism strategy: Prevention, rehabilitation, and aftercare. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Middle East Program, No. 97.

Cherney, A. (2020). Evaluating interventions to disengage extremist offenders: A study of the proactive integrated support model (PRISM). Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression, 12(1), 17–36.

Christensen, T. W. (2019). Former extremists as mentors in exit programmes: A qualitative study of the Aarhus mentorship model. In S. J. Hansen & S. Lid (Eds.), Routledge handbook of deradicalisation and disengagement (pp. 219–232). Routledge.

Clark, P. (2010). The Gacaca courts, post-genocide justice and reconciliation in Rwanda. Cambridge University Press.

Clubb, G. (2016). The role of former members in countering violent extremism: Critical insights from the IRA. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 39(10), 842–861.

Cook, J., & Vale, G. (2019). From Daesh to diaspora: Tracing the women and minors of Islamic State. International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, King's College London.

de Londras, F. (2018). Counter-terrorist detention and international human rights law. In B. Saul (Ed.), Research handbook on international law and terrorism (2nd ed., pp. 366–382). Edward Elgar.

Della Porta, D. (2013). Clandestine political violence. Cambridge University Press.

El-Said, H. (2015). New approaches to countering terrorism: Designing and evaluating counter radicalization and de-radicalization programs. Palgrave Macmillan.

Ferguson, N. (2016). Disengaging from terrorism: A Northern Irish experience. Journal for Deradicalization, (6), 1–29.

Hegghammer, T. (2010). Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and pan-Islamism since 1979. Cambridge University Press.

Hettiarachchi, M. (2018). Sri Lanka's rehabilitation programme: A new frontier in counter terrorism and counter insurgency. Prism, 7(2), 105–121.

Holmer, G. (2013). Countering violent extremism: A peacebuilding perspective. Special Report No. 336, United States Institute of Peace.

Horgan, J. (2009). Walking away from terrorism: Accounts of disengagement from radical and extremist movements. Routledge.

Horgan, J., & Braddock, K. (2010). Rehabilitating the terrorists? Challenges in assessing the effectiveness of de-radicalization programs. Terrorism and Political Violence, 22(2), 267–291.

Inks, L., Lichtenheld, A., & Maza, K. (2017). Considering the effects of stigma on acceptability of reintegration programming in northeast Nigeria. Mercy Corps.

Khalil, J., & Zeuthen, M. (2016). Countering violent extremism and risk reduction: A guide to programme design and evaluation. RUSI Occasional Paper, Royal United Services Institute.

Koehler, D. (2017). Understanding deradicalization: Methods, tools and programs for countering violent extremism. Routledge.

Kruglanski, A. W., Gelfand, M. J., Bélanger, J. J., Sheveland, A., Hetiarachchi, M., & Gunaratna, R. (2014). The psychology of radicalization and deradicalization: How significance quest impacts violent extremism. Political Psychology, 35(S1), 69–93.

Mani, R. (2002). Beyond retribution: Seeking justice in the shadows of war. Polity Press.

Marsden, S. V. (2017). Reintegrating extremists: Deradicalisation and desistance. Palgrave Macmillan.

Muggah, R. (2009). Security and post-conflict reconstruction: Dealing with fighters in the aftermath of war. Routledge.

Muller, M. (2021). Suspect citizens: The politics of monitoring and control in post-reintegration settings. Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism, 16(3), 221–239.

Neumann, P. R. (2010). Prisons and terrorism: Radicalisation and de-radicalisation in 15 countries. International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, King's College London.

Pearson, E. (2018). Wilayat al-Nisa: Gendering ISIS and evaluating gendered counter-measures. The RUSI Journal, 163(3), 60–74.

Porges, M. L. (2010). The Saudi deradicalization experiment. Council on Foreign Relations.

Rabasa, A., Pettyjohn, S. L., Ghez, J. J., & Boucek, C. (2010). Deradicalizing Islamist extremists. RAND Corporation.

Renard, T. (2017). Overblown: Exploring the gap between the fear of terrorist recidivism and the evidence. CTC Sentinel, 10(4), 19–25.

Revkin, M. R. (2020). After the Islamic State: Balancing accountability and reconciliation in Iraq. United Nations University Centre for Policy Research.

Ris, L., & Ernstorfer, A. (2017). Borrowing a wheel: Applying existing design, monitoring, and evaluation strategies to emerging programming on preventing/countering violent extremism. Peacebuilding Evaluation Consortium.

Sageman, M. (2004). Understanding terror networks. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Scheinin, M. (2010). Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism (A/HRC/16/51). United Nations Human Rights Council.

Schmid, A. P. (2013). Radicalisation, de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation: A conceptual discussion and literature review. ICCT Research Paper, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague.

Silke, A., & Veldhuis, T. (2017). Countering terrorism and violent extremism: The research. In G. LaFree & J. D. Freilich (Eds.), The handbook of the criminology of terrorism (pp. 538–555). Wiley.

Speckhard, A., & Ellenberg, M. (2020). ISIS in their own words: Recruitment history, motivations for joining, travel, experiences and pressing concerns. Journal of Strategic Security, 13(1), 82–127.

Sriram, C. L. (2007). Justice as peace? Liberal peacebuilding and strategies of transitional justice. Global Society, 21(4), 579–591.

Theidon, K. (2009). Reconstructing masculinities: The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants in Colombia. Human Rights Quarterly, 31(1), 1–34.

van de Donk, M.,"; Feddes, A. R., & Doosje, B. (2022). A meta-analytic review of the effectiveness of CVE programs. Journal of Experimental Criminology, 18, 605–629.

van der Heide, L., & Geenen, J. (2017). The foreign fighters from the Western Balkans. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague.

Webber, D., Babush, M., Schori-Eyal, N., Vazeou-Nieuwenhuis, A., Hettiarachchi, M., Bélanger, J. J., ... & Kruglanski, A. W. (2018). The road to extremism: Field and experimental evidence that significance loss-induced need for closure fosters radicalization. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 114(2), 270–285.

Weine, S., Eisenman, D. P., Kinsler, J., Glik, D. C., & Polutnik, C. (2017). Addressing violent extremism as public health policy and practice. Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression, 9(3), 208–221.

Wiktorowicz, Q. (2005). Radical Islam rising: Muslim extremism in the West. Rowman & Littlefield.