

CONTEMPORARY TERRORISM STUDIES

Understanding Deradicalization

Methods, tools and programs for
countering violent extremism

Daniel Koehler



Koehler's book is the most methodologically rigorous, theoretically-informed, and comprehensive on this topic, to date. He brings immense depth of both experience and scholarship to this important volume.

Michael J. Williams, *Georgia State University, USA*

Very few subjects have recently received more attention than the subject of deradicalisation, particularly since the 9/11 attacks on World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. Yet, very few studies have provided either a comprehensively detailed inventory for such programs or even a framework that enables policy-makers and practitioners to design and effectively implement deradicalisation programs in different contexts. *Understanding Deradicalization: Methods, Tools and Programs for Countering Violent Extremism* by Daniel Koehler simply does both in an accessible, entertaining and consistent manner. It is the only book to build what amounts to genuine theory of deradicalisation programs. The book is an essential reading for students of politics, terrorism, security studies, Middle East, European Union and international relations at all levels.

Hamed El-Said, *Manchester Metropolitan University Business School, UK*

Understanding Deradicalization provides the most comprehensive, up-to-date overview of worldwide efforts to bring extremists and those on the path to violent extremism back into mainstream society. As Director of the German Institute on Radicalization and Deradicalization Studies, Daniel Koehler combines practical experience with academic expertise. With this encyclopaedic monograph, he has written a seminal text against which all others in this field will be judged for years to come.

Alex P. Schmid, *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), Netherlands*

This is the single most comprehensive work I have read on de-radicalisation processes and programs. Daniel Koehler has made a valuable contribution to both the literature on terrorism and de-radicalisation. Very highly recommended to anyone interested in understanding the dynamics of transition from armed to unarmed activism.

Omar Ashour, *University of Exeter, UK*

Daniel Koehler is widely recognized as a pioneer in both the practical and theoretical aspects of de-radicalization. In this book he condenses his immense knowledge, making it a must read for anybody interested in extremism and terrorism.

Lorenzo Vidino, *George Washington University, USA*

A pathfinder for practitioners and scholars, Koehler's book is the most comprehensive study on global deradicalization programs.

Rohan Gunaratna, *Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*



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Understanding Deradicalization

This book provides a comprehensive guide to the different aspects of deradicalization theories, programs, and methods.

It analyzes the practical and theoretical aspects of deradicalization programs and the methods being employed to bring extremists and terrorist back to a non-violent life. The book includes in-depth case studies on programs and former extremists, including interviews with former German neo-Nazis and families of jihadists who have received deradicalization counseling. Using a coherent theory of radicalization and deradicalization, it integrates existing programs into a typology and methodology regarding the effects and concepts behind deradicalization. In addition, a current state of the art assessment of deradicalization programs provides a collection of programs and landscapes worldwide. It thereby functions as a unique guide for practitioners and policy makers in need of evaluation or construction of such programs, as well as a resource pool for academics interested in research about deradicalization programs and processes. The major aim of this book is to consolidate the existing scholarship on deradicalization and to move the field forward by proposing a coherent theory of deradicalization, including ways to measure effectiveness, standard methods and procedures, different actors of such programs, and cooperation on a national and international level. In essence, this work enables the reader to identify how, when, and why deradicalization programs work, how they can be built and structured, and to identify their limitations.

This book will be of interest to students of radicalization, counter-terrorism, radical Islam, criminology, security studies, and IR.

Daniel Koehler is Director of the German Institute on Radicalization and Deradicalization Studies (GIRDS), Germany and Fellow at George Washington University's Program on Extremism.

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Foreword

About 20 years ago, I interviewed former and active members of the Irish Republican Army. I wanted to understand the reality of running an underground organization from a financial standpoint, and happened to begin that research at an interesting time. The Irish peace process was in its nascent stages with an uneasy series of ceasefires being observed. Yet, deep within and across the IRA's ranks, all was not well. Uncertainty and disappointment had begun to creep in. Unhappy with the new direction of the movement, many members decided they wanted to get out of the IRA once and for all. Others had a different reaction. So incensed were some by the perceived betrayal of Irish Republican principles by the IRA leadership that they splintered off to create small, deadly factions of their own. From my perspective, a research project that began with a focus on IRA fundraising was slowly turning into a bigger story about betrayal and disillusionment. The years that followed revealed fascinating dynamics. Many who left the IRA retained rigid views about the legitimacy of Irish Republican violence, while others, overwhelmed by new realities, struggled to justify to themselves and others why they had for so long done such terrible things to others in the name of Irish 'freedom.' Disengaging from the IRA did not necessarily mean 'deradicalization' for all, but for some it clearly did. This would be revealed across many other violent extremist movements too. In fact, so frequent were accounts of disengagement that one inevitable consequence of a life in terrorism seems to be that if, in fact, you are a terrorist, sooner or later you will become disillusioned. The critical question is what happens as a result of that. Do you stay or do you go? And in either case, do you retain your core beliefs or do those change too?

Research on disengagement and deradicalization has since flourished. One especially interesting development is how initiatives to facilitate deradicalization have come into being. There are over 40 deradicalization programs currently operating around the world. They are all a little bit different from one another and come in all shapes and sizes. Some are big, some are small. Some enjoy the financial backing of wealthy states, while others remain the peripheral projects of one or two industrious individuals who do it just because they care about making a difference. But what all deradicalization programs, initiatives, or

efforts share is an attempt to rehabilitate and reintegrate those who were once involved in terrorism in order to reduce the risk of those same people one day re-engaging in terrorism. No easy feat!

Radicalization remains, and rightly so, a deeply contested concept. That will not change any time soon, but those who care about the extraordinary social and psychological toll associated with terrorism cannot sit idly by while academics and politicians pontificate on whether we are using appropriate definitions, language, and terminology. Fortunately, the world has people like Daniel Koehler eager to tackle such a challenge. So much of what is typically written about deradicalization is by pundits, scholars, and think-tank analysts who just regurgitate what has been said elsewhere. What is presented in this book is a universe apart from that. If Daniel just provided us with a solid theory of deradicalization, that in itself would be laudable, but instead he has given us something truly valuable and rare—giving equal respect to theory and practice. As I write these words, Daniel is in Minneapolis, Minnesota, at the invitation of a federal judge who has sought his input into the possible creation of a deradicalization initiative there. His experience and expertise on these issues is informed by a long history of challenging interviews with almost 50 former neo-Nazis, over 100 family members of jihadists, and countless consultations with just about everyone involved in the practice of deradicalization around the world. In other words, we should all listen very carefully to what Daniel Koehler has to say about this topic. This book is the first comprehensive attempt to merge theory and practice of deradicalization. It builds on earlier work, critically developing and, in many cases, vastly improving on it. Daniel has set a new benchmark for the entire field of terrorism studies. For those of you reading this right now and wondering what you need to create, evaluate, or improve a deradicalization program—everything you need is right here in these pages.

John Horgan,
Georgia State University

Acknowledgments

This book would not have been possible without the support of a number of people who helped to shape the first ideas, encouraged their implementation, and provided advice.

First and foremost, without the many hours of intense debates and discussions with Tine about theories and practical aspects of deradicalization work, as well as the shared practical experiences, this book would not have advanced beyond a descriptive account. I am deeply in debt for the opportunity to reflect on my thoughts with an exceptionally sharp and critical mind such as hers.

I also owe special thanks to a group of extraordinary scholars, who I was honored to work with in recent years and who have greatly inspired this work, as well as shaped it. First and foremost, John Horgan, who is one of most dedicated advocates for high quality deradicalization programs that I know. Also, Hamed El-Said, Omar Ashour, Rohan Gunaratna, Tore Bjørgo, and many others, who built the foundations for deradicalization research; this field would not exist without them. They have inspired my own research and practical work.

In addition to those academic experts, I can say that I have been fortunate enough to work in recent years with some of the best practitioners in the world in the field of deradicalization. I experienced an exceptionally fulfilling time exchanging thoughts, methods, and experiences with them, and I am happy to call them friends. These experts have spent endless hours helping others to reform their lives with incredible commitment and energy, such as, for example, Morton Hjørnholm in Denmark and Simon Cornwall in England.

Of course, I also want to thank all the families and former extremists who trusted me, my methods, and my philosophy regarding deradicalization and counter-radicalization. I learned more that I could have ever imagined by being allowed to help them.

Of course, this book would also have not been possible without the support from Routledge. Andrew Humphrys' and Hannah Ferguson's dedication and professionalism, in particular, was a steady source of encouragement.

My deepest thanks to you all.

Abbreviations

AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AVE	Against Violent Extremism
BAMF	Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge
BfV	Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz
BIGREX	Beratungs- und Interventionsgruppe gegen Rechtsextremismus
CONTEST	Counter Terrorism Strategy
CPAI	Correctional Program Assessment Inventory
CPC	Correctional Program Checklist
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DDP	Deradicalization and Disengagement Program
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
ENOD	European Network on Deradicalization
ERG	Extremism Risk Guidance
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna
EU	European Union
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia
GCTF	Global Counterterrorism Forum
GIRDS	German Institute on Radicalization and Deradicalization
HATIF	Heraus aus Terrorismus und Islamistischem Fundamentalismus
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
ICCT	International Centre for Counter-Terrorism
IRA	Irish Republican Army
ISD	Institute for Strategic Dialogue
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MAUT	Multi-Attribute Utility Technology
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRM	New Religious Movements
ONUSCA	United Nations Observer Group in Central America
OSINT	Open Source Intelligence
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

RAN	Radicalization Awareness Network
RNR	Risk-Need-Responsivity
RRG	Religious Rehabilitation Group
SAVE	Sisters against Violent Extremism
SIGINT	Signal Intelligence
SMT	Social Movement Theory
TI	Transparency International
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UCLAT	Unité de Coordination de la Lutte Anti-Terroriste
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
VERA	Violent Extremism Risk Assessment
VPD	Victim-Perpetrator Dialogue



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1 Introduction

In January 2014, the European Commission released a revised strategy to combat violent extremist radicalization and recruitment to terrorism, introducing a much stronger focus on intervention and deradicalization policies (Council of the European Union, 2014). Every EU member state was urged to create national disengagement and exit programs. Building on the insights of the Commission's Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN)—a network of practitioners and government officials focusing on different aspects of radicalization and counter-radicalization work initiated in 2011—the strategic value of these programs regarding internal safety and counter-terrorism was recognized and implemented by the EU. On a European level, this newly adapted counter-radicalization strategy is exemplary of a globally increased interest in methods and programs aiming to reduce individual commitment to terrorist groups and their ideologies, as well as counter the attraction of individuals deemed to be 'at risk' from these extremist and violent movements. In 2014, for example, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2178, pointing out the need for effective reintegration and rehabilitation programs for combatants returning from Syria or Iraq to their home countries (United Nations Security Council, 2014). In early 2015, the United States hosted an international high-level "Summit on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)" and started to (carefully) introduce this concept at the US community level. In virtually all current conflict areas and countries affected by so-called 'home-grown radicalization' the debate about counter-radicalization, rehabilitation, or deradicalization programs has found a much broader audience in recent years. New programs, networks, good practice collections, and statements from former extremists become public on a regular basis, even though working with extremist offenders is not a new concept.

Nevertheless, after the 9/11 and subsequent terror attacks, Western and non-Western states alike recognized the need for alternatives to repression and prosecution as a means to fight terrorism, violent radicalization, and extremism on their own turf, realizing that it would be impossible to 'bomb' and 'arrest' one's way out of the terrorist threat. In addition, numerous attacks that followed—for example, in Madrid (March 2004), Amsterdam (November 2004) London (July 2005), Stockholm (December 2010), Brussels (May

2 *Introduction*

2014), and Paris (January and November 2015), as well as various foiled plots—including large numbers of perpetrators being born and raised in the countries they attacked. Thus, they had obviously radicalized ‘at home.’ In consequence, Western governments tried to introduce various CVE strategies designed to combat home-grown radicalization by looking at experiences in their own social and work environments and civil societies, but also drawing on promising and innovative approaches developed in Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian countries. After the 9/11 attacks, many—mostly prison-based programs—were introduced there to deal with a growing amount of inmates swept into the prisons after the US-led ‘War on Terror’ had begun. Theological debates were conducted by religious authorities in their attempts to ‘deradicalize’ prisoners suspected of holding extremist views in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia, among others.

But what exactly is ‘deradicalization,’ how it is achieved, measured, and controlled? There are many different concepts and terms used worldwide—for example, ‘reintegration,’ ‘rehabilitation,’ ‘re-education,’ ‘desistance’ (primary and secondary), ‘disengagement,’ ‘deprogramming,’ ‘disaffiliation,’ ‘debiasing’—to describe, albeit roughly, a similar process of turning from a position of endorsing and using violence to abstinence from violent means and/or attitudes. However, it is much more complicated than that. Leading experts have found the “lack of conceptual clarity in the emerging discourse on deradicalization striking” (Bjørge & Horgan, 2009, p. 3). Seemingly being applied to a wide array of policies and tools with “virtually no conceptual development in the area” (Horgan, 2009a, p. 17) has led to political and practical action executed with largely absent theoretical frameworks or clear-cut concepts. So far, research has only marginally helped to build a comprehensive evidence base to be used. Compared with the abundant body of works concerned with violent radicalization processes or collective routes into terrorist actions “our understanding of the causal processes of disengagement from terrorism remains theoretical or speculative” (Gill, Bouhana, & Morrison, 2015, p. 245) and research on terrorist disengagement “remains conceptually and theoretically underdeveloped,” as well as “devoid of conceptual clarity” (Altier, Thoroughgood, & Horgan, 2014, p. 647). Nevertheless, multiple programs working in this area have been implemented around the world, despite the fact that to this day the academic and expert landscape has not even agreed on the most fundamental aspects of how these programs should be conducted, evaluated, or designed in the first place. Practical and theoretical knowledge from disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs, criminological research about reintegration of multiple offenders, research focusing on joining and leaving cults or youth gangs, and many other fields were more or less randomly integrated into some programs and research without a unifying theory of ‘deradicalization.’

As a concept, the term usually denotes a process of individual or collective cognitive change from criminal, radical, or extremist identities to a non-criminal or moderate psychological state. ‘Deradicalization’ has to be strongly

differentiated from ‘disengagement,’ which denotes the mere behavioral role change (from offending to non-offending), while leaving the ideological or psychological aspect aside (cf. Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009; Dechesne, 2011; Horgan, 2009b; Horgan & Braddock, 2010; Köhler, 2013; Noricks, 2009). A debate around the role and effect of including that ideological change as a premise, success factor, or even goal for these programs has split the expert community, with those on the one side arguing that ‘disengagement’ would be much more feasible, cheaper, and effective (i.e., not including ideological change; e.g., see Horgan, 2009a; Noricks, 2009) and those on the other arguing that the role of ideology or attitude would be so important that leaving them aside might create a higher risk for recidivism (e.g., see Rabasa, Pettyjohn, Ghez, & Boucek, 2010). Nevertheless, some leading researchers have remained sceptical about the true length of ‘deradicalization,’ in terms of leaving the ideology behind as well. Horgan (2009a), for example, has found that looking at the former terrorists he interviewed between 2006 and 2008, who were from various backgrounds, “almost all (...) could be described as disengaged, the vast majority of them could not be said to be ‘deradicalized’” (Horgan, 2009a, p. 27). This observation points to one core problem of ‘deradicalization’ research and practice: individuals can be disengaged (i.e., not engaging in criminal behavior), while still being committed to a radical ideology. On the other hand, it may also occur that individuals remain part of a radical group and commit crimes without adhering to the cause. This, in turn, means that methods designed to counter or intervene in that area are automatically reaching into the grey zone of pre-criminal space. Owing to different political cultures and legal definitions, the question whether it is morally and legally legitimate to attempt to change a person’s political and religious beliefs (or ideology) is consequently very controversial internationally. Nevertheless, many actors involved recognize that there is usually a highly problematic path on the radicalization process before an individual or group acts illegally. Hence, retrospectively looking back after a terrorist attack, the radicalization processes that occur, due to a certain ‘radical’ ideology leading up to it, seem to justify practical approaches to avert such pathways. On the other hand, non-violent and legal activism—from the perspective of civil society and grassroots initiatives, as well as human rights and legal aspects—might be in danger of being targeted through government-led Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), based on state-sanctioned definitions of ‘extreme’ and ‘moderate.’ This ‘streamlining’ might, in fact, criminalize and suppress legitimate forms of social protest, as well as infringe upon the freedom of political opinion. Not without reason, many Western societies have been very careful to include ‘ideological’ elements in their criminal codes, avoiding the creation of ‘political policies’ or law-based political discrimination.

Nevertheless, reintegration programs for former combatants as part of peacekeeping operations have a long tradition, which includes working with former guerrilla fighters and extremists (e.g., FARC, IRA, ETA). These reintegration programs have oftentimes been seen as an important tool to

fight violent resistance, insurgency, and extremism. However, focusing on attitudes and ideological motivations are part of the development that more or less became widely discussed after the 9/11 attacks. Consequently, in 2008, *Time Magazine* voted the idea of “reversing radicalism” to be number four on the list of most important future revolutions (Ripley, 2008).

Mostly, programs focusing on helping individuals and groups to leave violent radicalism behind, exit terrorist groups, and critically reassess the underlying ideology (deradicalization and disengagement programs (DDP)) have been seen as tools for social reintegration and rehabilitation, as well as preventing further involvement within violent movements. But they have also been underestimated in terms of the effects that successful deradicalization programs can have on these radical milieus and groups. However, the academic and practitioner critique of the ‘securitization’ process of social programs expresses the fear that police, intelligence, and even military organizations are slowly annihilating the primary success factors of these programs—their civil society and ‘soft’ approaches—by adopting and utilizing them as tools for a classical repressive mode of operations (e.g., for intelligence gathering, identification of dangerous individuals, and surveillance). However, besides the social and civil society component of deradicalization programs, certain aspects and effects might very well be a valuable part of the programs, in the effort to contain or counter terrorist threats. In addition to this, it has to be noted that the vast majority of these programs around the world are currently conducted by police, intelligence, or military forces anyway. While these effects are highly dependent on many aspects (e.g., actor, target group, definitions, working standards, goals), the international academic and political debate about the nature, scope, and structure of these programs is still highly diversified.

By now, almost all Western countries have had experience with different programs in the field of deradicalization. Particularly since the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2011, the perceived threat stemming from returning foreign fighters has pushed many governments to develop, build, and finance programs dealing with counter-radicalization at an early stage or intervention and deradicalization at a later stage. Returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq have pressured this issue, mostly because of two reasons: first, in many countries a large number of (presumed) ideologically radicalized and brutalized individuals might end up in prison and spread their ideology; and second, many returnees might not be held legally responsible, due to a lack of evidence, and might be let free, thus creating the fear of sleepers or traumatized individuals re-entering their home countries and radicalizing further, as well as conducting attacks. Prevention, early intervention, and deradicalization programs promise to close that gap and ease the workload of authorities and intelligence.

Although these programs can be highly effective in terms of interrupting violent radicalization processes and gaining knowledge about the insights of radical and violent groups, the field is highly under-researched. As mentioned

above, not much is known about individual deradicalization processes and even less is known about the structures and methods behind these vastly different programs around the world claiming to bring individuals and groups back from violent radicalism to peaceful participation in their societies. Some leading and ground-breaking publications in this field (e.g., Bjørge & Horgan, 2009; El-Said, 2015; Horgan, 2009b; Rabasa et al., 2010) have not been successful in motivating a comprehensive field of ‘deradicalization’ studies and remain highly important but isolated insights into some programs and individual biographies of former terrorists and extremists. It can therefore be claimed that the practical elements of deradicalization have highly outpaced the theoretical background. We know that individuals leave violent radical groups every day around the world and that many of these groups cease to exist after a relatively short period of activity. Consequently, there must be a way to structurally foster and support that process. In addition, deradicalization programs are being created and run globally without much theoretical backing behind them, which results in a very urgent necessity to build a basic knowledge and toolkit for deradicalization practitioners and researchers.

Based on the author’s extensive personal practical experience in the field of deradicalization, as well as a large amount of empirical case studies, this book bridges the gap for the first time between academic and practical perspectives on ‘deradicalization.’ In addition, it combines the most important lessons from programs conducted in the West and in the Middle East/Southeast Asia (as well as other regions) and offers a comprehensive theory of ‘deradicalization,’ including highly relevant practical discussions of, for example, evaluation, training, typology of programs, core mechanisms of programs, and quality standards. A survey of the most relevant deradicalization programs around the world will show how different types of programs have developed within the context of their various different political cultures and geographical contexts, being influenced by the nature of the threat identified, political and religious philosophies applied, as well as aspiring different goals. However, many of these programs have studied each other and attempted to implement ‘best practice’ or ‘lessons learned concerning what works.’

After explaining the methods and sources of this study in Chapter 2, an extensive literature review about the current state of the art deradicalization processes and programs introduces those factors and pathways that are widely agreed upon as essential for understanding individual and collective movements out of violence and extremism. Relevant studies from other disciplines, such as criminology, leaving New Religious Movements (NRMs), violent youth gangs, and general role change, are discussed in detail as well.

Chapter 3 provides an in-depth discussion about the theory behind deradicalization and radicalization processes and the role of (radical) ideologies in these processes. It builds up an understanding of the dynamics behind pathways towards violent radicalism and back to non-violent activism. Discussing the state of the art in radicalization research, it is shown that the core mechanism

behind radicalization can be conceptualized as a process of ‘de-pluralization’ of political concepts and values and—combined with a specific ideology—ultimately leads to violence as one valid course of action. On the other hand, the processes leading back from radicalism entail, essentially, a ‘re-pluralization’ of those concepts and values. For both parts, the most important literature and concepts will be discussed to build the necessary knowledge for placing the practical aspects of deradicalization into their most effective setting. Looking at one of the most important and controversial terms behind deradicalization—ideology—this chapter discusses the differentiation between disengagement and deradicalization: the ideological or cognitive change of a person or group. When deradicalization of terrorists is discussed, it is almost impossible to avoid discussing the role of ideology itself. What does ‘ideology’ mean and why is it so important in radicalization or deradicalization processes? Introducing the most important scholarly research relevant for practical deradicalization, this chapter shows the core elements of ideology (problem definition, solution, and future vision) and how they are interwoven with behavior and, more specifically, radicalization. It is also a common misunderstanding that (ideological) deradicalization must include in-depth theological or political debates with the participants in order to convince them of their erroneous understanding of the political or religious framework in question. In fact, it is possible to work with an individual’s or group’s ideology on the level of that ideology’s practical manifestation and without necessarily going into abstract lengthy theoretical debates.

Chapter 4 discusses the specific effects of deradicalization programs in counter-terrorism, such as interrupting group hierarchies, causing internal rifts, as well as learning about recruitment and radicalization processes. Although a ‘securitization’ of deradicalization needs to be prevented, as some essential benefits of these initiatives are rooted in their ability to use ‘soft measures’ and work in the pre-criminal space. However, every deradicalization program by definition is situated at the boundary between risk prevention and intervention and their clientele at least theoretically consists of either active violent extremists or those deemed to be on the pathway to terrorism. Hence, policy makers and program designers need to be aware what specific impacts deradicalization-oriented methods can have on terrorist or extremist milieus. These impacts may not always be beneficial, as is shown. Some extremist groups, for example, might use deradicalization programs to relieve themselves of members without value for the group and a constant rate of turnover might increase the group’s capabilities in recruitment. Nevertheless, a detailed discussion of how deradicalization programs work in relation to counter-terrorism is necessary to plan, execute, and adequately set expectations for the initiative.

Chapter 5 suggests a typology of deradicalization programs with examples from practical experiences around the world. Bringing together the three most important characteristics to understand the practical implications of these programs (i.e., state versus non-state actor, active versus passive approach, the role of ideology), it is shown that a wide range of potential constellations for

building and running such programs exist. However, it is necessary to understand the strengths and weaknesses of these programs in regard to their potential effects.

Chapter 6 focuses on a very recent and a highly specialized type of deradicalization program: family counseling programs. Especially relevant in Europe, these programs aim to work with the social and affective environment of potentially highly radicalized individuals and to induce a deradicalization process. These programs are methodological hybrids, as they can work both in early prevention and later stage intervention. This chapter discusses the most relevant aspects of these family counseling programs and introduces some models for deradicalization-oriented family counseling—for example, in Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, or at an international level.

Chapter 7 discusses the terms “effectiveness” and “success” in regard to deradicalization programs. What constitutes success for such a program and how can it be conceptualized and measured? What kind of effects do these programs want to yield exactly and why? To know precisely what to expect from deradicalization programs, it is essential to build and maintain such an initiative with sustainable outcomes. Ideological or cognitive change is but one effect that could be a priority of these deradicalization and disengagement programs (DDPs), and this chapter shows how the various outcomes match the different types shown in Chapter 5. It is also discussed how program staff can be adequately trained and how the structural integrity of deradicalization programs can be assessed based on experiences in other fields such as criminology.

Chapter 8 discusses the inherent moral problems of DDPs. Even the attempt to change a person’s political or religious opinions is highly controversial in many Western countries and has led to a very sceptical or cautious approach towards deradicalization and CVE. However, most societies recognize that there is a level of danger or destructiveness within a radicalization process before illegal activity occurs. In consequence, to ignore the ideological component in bringing terrorists back to a peaceful life creates other risks as well, such as helping convinced radicals to undermine a particular society. Whatever standpoint is taken in this regard, the question of the moral legitimacy of deradicalization needs to be discussed in depth.

Chapter 9 lists and explains the most important practical methods used by DDPs around the world and how they can be integrated into planning, building, and maintaining a deradicalization program. Global cultural and political differences have shaped the character of the practical tools used. Nevertheless, there is much to learn from different approaches and a comparison shows that a core set of tools are used in practically every deradicalization program, such as mentoring, vocational training, psychological counseling, or educational methods.

Chapter 10 provides an introduction into the global deradicalization and CVE landscape. Showcasing different programs, as well as the state of the national debates and legislation in these fields, the chapter will provide an

opportunity to recognize national similarities as well as differences regarding deradicalization. Discussing those countries which have the most extensive experiences or have recently started with CVE, the chapter proceeds on a continent-based list of countries.

Finally, Chapter 11 collects the lessons learned from the present study, shows future directions for researchers and policy makers, as well as discusses some of the most useful resources regarding the deradicalization field.

This guidebook is a unique and complex work aiming to help practitioners and researchers to understand the field of deradicalization better and to make their work easier. It contains toolkits and advanced theoretical concepts valuable for working in the field. These concepts and methods have been used and tested by the author in various practical settings, both as a case manager and counselor. Although CVE and deradicalization are still very controversial in many countries, trying to bring back individuals and groups from a path of violence not only protects our societies, but strengthens them in terms of their core values and identities. In this way, deradicalization—as an additional tool to fight violence and extremism—helps to safeguard communities, families, and societies. Fears regarding deradicalization are oftentimes based on a lack of conceptual clarity, solid training, structural integrity, and transparency. While these tools are not ‘silver bullets’ against terrorism nor infallible, they still carry significant potential for increasing resilience against terrorism and improving security. It is the goal of this book to make that potential visible and accessible to those academics, practitioners, and policy makers who see a need for it.

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2 Methods, sources, state of the art

This chapter outlines the methods and sources used for the present book, as well as provides an in-depth literature review and state of the art in ‘deradicalization’ research, as well as practice. Examining various related fields and studies, such as criminology, gang research, New Religious Movements (NRMs), classical demobilization programs, and the sociology of role change, it is shown that working with extremist offenders or terrorists in prison is indeed nothing new, but draws on experiences and insights from many different fields and areas of research. Nevertheless, deradicalization and disengagement interventions have become a cornerstone of counter-terrorism policies and strategies looking beyond the muscular approach of arresting or killing against a tactic (i.e., terrorism) employed by various different ideological groups and movements. Deradicalization is not bound to the penal realm, but is also used in a wide array of methods roughly described as countering violent extremism (CVE). Overlapping with tools more concerned with prevention or early intervention, deradicalization has also been applied to work with top-level and hard-core members of radical milieus and groups in the later stages of a violent radicalization process. This lack of conceptual clarity has been criticized many times:

Deradicalization often appears to be understood as any effort aimed at preventing radicalization from taking place. There is also a lack of distinction between the cognitive and behavioural aspects of (de-)radicalization, as if holding radical views necessarily will predict expressions of radical or violent behaviour. It is also often taken for granted that changes in values precede changes in behaviour, and that we therefore first need to address people’s values before we can influence their behaviours.

(Bjørge & Horgan, 2009, p. 3)

Although the theoretical landscape has not dramatically changed since this observation, a number of high quality empirically based studies have been conducted and offer some insights into how and why individuals leave radical groups. In addition, some conceptual and definitional thoughts need to be given here, although the matter will be picked up again in-depth in Chapter 3.

It is important to differentiate between the individual process of disengagement/deradicalization and the programs conducting any kind of support for this process (see Clubb, 2015, p. 262)—a distinction which will be followed in the literature review. This knowledge informs and underlines the consequent structuring and development of programs, their tools, and target groups, as well as evaluation.

Methods and sources

This monograph utilizes a wide array of sources collected around the practical and theoretical topic of deradicalization and disengagement. Building upon the method of triangulation, multiple sources of information were used to cross-check data and develop the conclusions presented in this monograph (Rothbauer, 2008). As most sources about the practical aspects of deradicalization programs are subjective and selective (e.g., press reports, own accounts of programs, statements of successful and failed program graduates) and the access to empirical data is very limited, this present study includes as much information as possible and combines it with the author's own field work experience.

One very important body of information consists of open source press and media reports about specific programs. Given this, two leading press databases (LexisNexis and Factiva) have been searched for large sets of selectors (e.g., 'deradicalization,' 'rehabilitation program,' 're-education,' and so on), which also accounts for a change of terminology and spelling regarding the phenomenon over time. The results were categorized according to quality of the newspaper and relevant information given about the program content, participants, background, or theoretical approach. In many cases, press sources are concerned with showcasing either the success or failure of a given program and interview participants as well as mentors, portraying certain activities (e.g., sports, arts, and religious dialogue sessions). Thereby, they offer partially detailed but highly selective and subjective accounts. Sometimes smaller local newspapers can provide more detailed information regarding a specific program that originated in the area than larger nationwide or international outlets. Press sources have provided very useful additional insights and confirmation about certain aspects of programs and participants, but these have been used with caution. However, some programs (e.g., in Nigeria) have only been observed by the press and media so far and thus the only available information comes from these sources. Whenever possible, press and media information was cross-checked with academic or other accounts. In addition, due to language constraints, only English, German, and French sources were used for this collection, which decision might have created some gaps, as many local community-run programs might actually never have presented themselves to the international or even nationwide audience and therefore are simply unknown to researchers and policy makers. As, so far, no comprehensive and easily accessible database for counter-radicalization and deradicalization

programs exist, the selection for this study has to be seen as selective, albeit very comprehensive compared with other works so far. It has to be taken into account as well that, naturally, this landscape is a rapidly changing one with many programs starting to work and disappearing after a short amount of time, due to lack of funding, program failure, changes in political priorities, or even outbreaks of civil war and terrorist attacks.

In addition to press reports, an extensive literature survey of academic publications regarding deradicalization, disengagement, rehabilitation, disaffiliation, and so on has been conducted. Monographs, peer-reviewed articles of the most relevant journals (e.g., *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, *Behavioural Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, *JD Journal for Deradicalization*) in various fields (e.g., criminology, religious studies, sociology, psychology), and the most relevant databases (e.g., PsycINFO, PUBMED, COCHRANE Library, WEB of SCIENCE, ERIC, SCIENCE DIRECT, the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS, US), and the UK Home Office Research Database) have been examined. Although not part of the core academic literature, a large amount of information about deradicalization programs comes from the so-called 'grey literature' from governments, think tanks, civil society organizations, and other entities. These reports, working papers, case studies, and documents are essential to complement press and academic resources.

A third, very important source of information are self-accounts given by program representatives, staff, mentors, experts, and other employees about the history, structure, success/failure, participants, and methods at international and regional academic and practitioner conferences. Although also highly selective, longer running programs with a certain track record and reputation are usually invited by various organizations to present their experiences. Again, small and local programs are often excluded, either because they are simply unknown or cannot afford to commit resources to send staff to these meetings. As an expert, the author was, and is, regularly invited to many of these conferences as well, during which it was possible to directly interview program representatives, as well as monitor developments and discourses about key topics. Over a period of four years (2012 to 2016), the author participated in more than 150 international and regional conferences and expert meetings, conducted in-depth interviews, as well as collected extensive case studies on the topic. In addition, questionnaires and requests for program self-accounts were sent to over 50 experts and practitioners around the world to gather more information using personal or professional contacts, as well as 'snowball sampling.' Additional primary data used for this work are 50 interviews with former (German) neo-Nazis about their radicalization and deradicalization processes, 150 family counseling case studies in the area of jihadi radicalization and deradicalization in 10 countries (Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Italy, France, United Kingdom, Canada, and United States of America), and autobiographies of former terrorists and extremists.

As a last body of information—although not generally accessible—the author’s own practical experiences in the field of deradicalization was included. Over the past six years, it was possible for the author to gain extensive insights into practical and theoretical aspects of deradicalization, from one-to-one case management, as an expert advisor for governments in building and evaluating deradicalization programs, as a court expert testifying about radicalization processes and deradicalization opportunities for convicted terrorists, as well as a member of advisory boards for various research projects focusing on intervention with violent radicalization processes. In these capacities, the author was fortunate enough to develop and test theories, as well as gain insights into external and internal perspectives on numerous different deradicalization programs worldwide. In this regard, the core arguments and models presented here are the essence of that practical and theoretical work undertaken over the last six years.

State of the art

Individual processes of disengagement and deradicalization

In order to outline the current state of the art in deradicalization research, only academic and grey literature was used. In general, it has been observed that extremist or terrorist offenders seem to have a significantly lower rate of recidivism after release, even though they have not participated in any specific rehabilitation or deradicalization program. Silke (2014b, pp. 111–112) has found that, at least in the United Kingdom, looking at a sample of IRA and al-Qaeda related prisoners, less than 5 percent are reconvicted due to terrorism-related charges without the involvement of any related program—a finding supported by other studies comparing terrorist and ‘normal’ offenders (Bovenkerk, 2011). However, this estimation of a 5 percent reconviction rate for terrorist offenders should be met with caution. First of all, this number could reflect that counter-terrorist operations in many countries might involve relatively widespread or early ‘sweeping’ arrests without actual charges (especially in Middle Eastern and South Asian countries). It was stated, for example, that the US military-led detention system in Iraq after the invasion in 2003 included up to 80 percent of detainees in one particular detention center who were arrested without any intelligence or evidence (Angell & Gunaratna, 2012, p. 78). Although the number of rearrests without a rehabilitation program was significantly higher in Iraq (18 percent before 2007 when the rehabilitation program was introduced and 1 percent after; see Stone, 2015, p. 223), it is still comparatively low. In Western countries, typically acts of support such as spreading propaganda material or financial support might be classified as terrorist-related offenses and result in arrest and incarceration of individuals who actually might have never considered to act out violently or go further in regard to involvement with the terrorist group. In addition, terrorist offenders might leave the countries of their previous

arrest after release in order to join other groups abroad or they might have become more careful not to be detected again. Another question regarding the recidivism rates of terrorist offenders was raised by Pluchinsky (2008), who argued that religiously motivated terrorists are more likely to re-engage in their previous activities for several—albeit only theoretical—reasons and thereby pointed to possible differences in recidivism rates between different groups of terrorists.

It has also been noted on a regular basis that the majority of former high-ranking terrorists and low-level extremists have left their former movements completely on their own and without the help of any program (e.g., see Barrelle, 2015; Horgan, 2009b). On the one hand, this has raised the question whether such programs are indeed necessary and, on the other, if this fact might also explain the many success reports from programs in terms of low rates of recidivism.

Although exit processes in general are still “not well understood” (Barrelle, 2015, p. 129), research has shown that disengagement or deradicalization processes can be categorized roughly in regards to four aspects (e.g., see Ferguson, 2010; Horgan, 2008). First, these processes can be voluntary or involuntary/forced. One of the most effective ways of inducing a disengagement process from violent extremism and terrorism is capture, arrest, or death. In these instances, the person in question is simply blocked from further participation with their respective radical movements, although the problem of prison radicalization and terrorist acts planned and carried out from the inside of detention facilities have been well-known (e.g., see Hamm, 2013). Reasons and mechanisms behind voluntary disengagement/deradicalization will be discussed in-depth below. Additional aspects of these processes include if they involve individuals or groups, physical or psychological removal from the radical milieu (e.g., see Horgan, 2008, 2009a), and if they are permanent or temporary (Ferguson, 2010, p. 112).

As briefly mentioned in the Introduction, the conceptual and terminological ambiguity has led to a wide array of terms and concepts being used to describe either the deradicalization process as such or aspects of it. As the understanding of ‘deradicalization’ is usually connected to the concept of ‘radicalization,’ both of which will be discussed in-depth in Chapter 3, at this point it is sufficient to introduce the most widely used definitions of ‘deradicalization.’ As a very basic definition, Demant et al. (2008, p. 13) have suggested that deradicalization is—as the opposite of radicalization—simply the process of becoming “less radical.” Kurt Braddock (2014, p. 60) described ‘deradicalization’ as a “psychological process through which an individual abandons his extremist ideology and is theoretically rendered a decreased threat for re-engaging in terrorism.” This attitudinal-focused definition is usually contrasted with ‘disengagement’ as a mere role change:

[T]he process whereby an individual experiences a change in role or function that is usually associated with a reduction of violent participation.

It may not necessarily involve leaving the movement, but is most frequently associated with significant temporary or permanent role change.
(Horgan & Braddock, 2010, p. 152)

As this differentiation was seen as potentially misleading, Horgan (2008a, 2009a) suggested the usage of ‘physical’ and ‘psychological’ disengagement instead.

Push and pull factors

A number of studies have pointed out the importance of a special and often even traumatic event to create a cognitive opening and reconsideration of a person’s involvement in a radical or extremist group (e.g., see Fink & Haerne, 2008; Garfinkel, 2007; Rabasa, Pettyjohn, Ghez, & Boucek, 2010). These events can involve experiences of violence or other life-changing situations, such as imprisonment or loss of friends and family members, which severely disturb the person’s current sense of belonging or identity in relation to their membership in the radical group. This disturbance or insecurity may open mental space for reconsideration and prompt some persons to reach out to outsiders or test new-found doubts—for example, in proactively sought conversations or the consummation of previously disregarded or excluded sources of information. On the other hand, many former extremists and terrorists have also described long periods of gradual reconsideration combined with a cognitive process of going back and forth with commitment based on growing doubts and enforcing mechanisms—e.g., education in prison, personal relationships with outsiders conflicting previously held views, or simply a continuous chain of small events and experiences which, in sum, slowly but steadily deteriorate the ideological basis of involvement.

Regarding individual motives for leaving radical or extremist environments, only a very small number of studies based on primary data has been published so far. Dalgaard-Nielsen (2013, p. 101), for example, was able to identify 16 academic articles and books published between 1990 and 2012, based on a total of 216 interviews with former members of various extremist or terrorist groups. This exceptionally small number of primary source based studies has brought significant limitations regarding the effective design of deradicalization and disengagement programs or counter-radicalization policies with it. Still, these publications have helped to establish a widely accepted set of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors involved in explaining why persons leave specific groups and movements. They have also interviewed former neo-Nazis (Bjørge, 2009), former members from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People’s Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC) (Rosenau, Espach, Ortiz, & Herrera, 2014), al-Qaeda (Jacobson, 2010), the Spanish Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) (Alonso, 2011; Reinares, 2011), 17 November (Kassimeris, 2011), Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and Red Hand Commando

(RHC) (Ferguson, Burgess, & Hollywood, 2015), Jemaah Islamiyah (Hwang, 2015), defectors from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant ISIL (Speckhard & Yayla, 2015), as well as various other former terrorists and extremists (Barrelle, 2015; Demant, Sloodman, Buijs, & Tillie, 2008; Horgan, 2009b). In general, it has been noted that individual defectors are mostly not motivated by single factors, but by a highly varied mix (Barrelle, 2015).

'Push' factors are defined as "the negative social incidents and circumstances that make it uncomfortable and unappealing to remain" in the group (Bjørge, 2016, p. 234) and are typically comprised of the group's inner workings, as well as internal psychological processes and reactions to certain conflicts related to the involvement in the group. As one of the most important push factors to leave a terrorist or extremist group, the *negative social sanctions and stigma* attached to membership might eventually convince activists to leave (e.g., Bjørge, 2009). Neo-Nazis in Norway, Sweden, Germany, and Denmark, for example, face serious social repercussions in normal life if they are recognized as right-wing extremists. This might involve loss of job, drivers licence, threats, physical attacks, or general contempt. In addition, *government or military repression*, including the threat of imprisonment or death (e.g., Kassimeris, 2011; Rosenau et al., 2014), might weigh heavily on the membership morale of radical groups and create a *general exhaustion due to the extremist or terrorist lifestyle* (e.g., Bjørge, 2009; Demant et al., 2008; Speckhard & Yayla, 2015), even leading to burnout (Barrelle, 2015).

As equally important, push factor *doubts in the group's ideology* (Bjørge, 2009; Demant et al., 2008; Jacobson, 2010; Reinares, 2011; Rosenau et al., 2014) have been shown to be essential for the decision to leave the group. Although by far not all former terrorists and extremists have renounced the former ideology completely (e.g., see Horgan, 2009a, p. 27), in many cases a gradual uncertainty about the complete truth and efficacy of the group's ideology has prompted the decision to disengage. It needs to be noted, however, that former extremists might be reluctant to openly state their complete deradicalization out of fear of punishment from the former group (Koehler, 2015f; Speckhard & Yayla, 2015).

Closely related to this aspect is the *frustration with the group's hypocrisy and behavior* (Barrelle, 2015; Bjørge, 2009; Horgan, 2009b; Jacobson, 2010; Reinares, 2011; Speckhard & Yayla, 2015). Former German right-wing extremists have reported that beatings and sexual abuse of children in their former groups, latent homosexuality paired with militant homophobe actions of the group, drug abuse, or trade and other behavior tolerated by the groups and directly conflicting with the ideological standpoint appalled the former activists and caused the departure from the group. Similar accounts of gross contrasts between group ideology and behavior have been reported by former al-Qaeda or ETA members, as well as defectors from ISIL. In the latter case, defectors witnessed comrades raping, smoking, selling oil to the Assad regime, and other deeds directly conflicting with the group's ideology (Speckhard & Yayla, 2015, p. 114).