



Assessing the Effectiveness of Current De-Radicalization Initiatives and Identifying Implications for the Development of U.S.-Based Initiatives in Multiple Settings

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About This Report

This report is part of a series sponsored by the Human Factors/Behavioral Sciences Division in support of the Counter-IED Prevent/Deter program. The goal of this program is to sponsor research that will aid the intelligence and law enforcement communities in identifying potential terrorist threats and support policymakers in developing prevention efforts.

This project officially terminated on June 30th, 2009. The research was carried out by two researchers from the Pennsylvania State University, Dr. John Horgan, the Principal Investigator, and Mr. Kurt Braddock, Research Assistant. Biographical notes on the researchers is contained in Appendix A. This report represents the principal delivery of the findings of the research. A further report on the research findings will be published in an academic journal, to be submitted for review in early-Fall 2009. This project was conducted over twelve months, and is the result of an analysis of open source, secondarily obtained material. As such, and because neither data collection nor data analysis was part of this effort, this report takes the form of a position paper.

It should be stressed that this report is the result of independent research. The research that led to this report was supported with financial assistance from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), at the University of Maryland. This study was not a government research project: it is the work of an independent team of academics and has not been conducted to support or refute any particular policy objective. This material is based upon work supported by the Science and Technology directorate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security under Grant Award Number 2008-ST-061-ST0004, made to the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START, www.start.umd.edu). The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as necessarily representing the official policies, either expressed or implied, of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, START, or Pennsylvania State University.

About START

The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) is supported in part by the Science and Technology Directorate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through a Center of Excellence program based at the University of Maryland. START uses state-of-the-art theories, methods and data from the social and behavioral sciences to improve understanding of the origins, dynamics and social and psychological impacts of terrorism. For more information, contact START at infostart@start.umd.edu or visit www.start.umd.edu.

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Executive Summary

In recent years, substantial attention has been paid to how and why terrorism ends. The welcome development of an increase in research on a hitherto neglected area has occurred in parallel with the increasing prevalence of a series of innovative, ambitious yet under-examined approaches to counterterrorism. These are collectively referred to as 'de-radicalization programs'. However, and despite the popular media coverage of these programs, basic information surrounding even the most basic of facts pertaining to these programs remains limited.

This report presents the results of a one-year study of select de-radicalization programs and investigates a series of critical issues surrounding assessment of the effectiveness and outcomes of these programs.

Five open-source case studies of country-specific programs (Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Northern Ireland, Colombia and Indonesia) illustrate not only the unique, context-specific circumstances in which these programs originated and developed, but also reveal the challenges inherent in attempts at generalization from one or more programs, including, but not exclusive to, efforts to assess the success of these initiatives.

While the overarching purpose of this project was to identify policy-relevant issues relevant to assessing the effectiveness of these programs, the report seeks to identify which assessment issues are: a) specific to individual countries or cases; b) generalizable to other cases c) in order to identify those lessons that will help provide a foundation of policy-relevant knowledge from which similar local initiatives might develop, and not be limited to any one context both for de-radicalization and anti-radicalization strategies.

The principal conclusions of this research are:

- Programs collectively referred to as de-radicalization programs are, in practice, rarely focused on achieving 'de-radicalization' as a requisite or even desired outcome; instead they are more commonly focused primarily on reducing the risk of re-engagement in terrorism and other illicit activity;
- For this reason, we suggest that these initiatives be collectively characterized not as 'de-radicalization' programs, but as 'risk reduction' efforts; closely related to this,
- These risk reduction efforts are sometimes expressed through formal programs of activity, but it appears that the use of the term 'program' refers to a variety of formal and informal initiatives; for this reason, we suggest the further collective characterization of these efforts as "risk reduction initiatives;"
- These risk reduction initiatives do not represent a 'silver bullet' for counterterrorism efforts, rather they should be viewed as one of several possible tools for aspiring to successfully achieving a series of diverse objectives, characterized primarily through efforts to reduce the risk for engagement (and/or re-engagement) in terrorism and illicit activity;
- With respect to existing initiatives, including those examined more closely in this report, there remains intense secrecy surrounding all but the most superficial of details; despite, in some cases, highly publicized claims for success, there is no evidence of transparent or valid internal or external evaluation of the claimed success of

these programs; furthermore, none of the programs under examination displayed any clear criteria for establishing effective measurement of success or otherwise;

- Looking beyond individual initiatives, there has been no attempt to arrive at a collective evaluative framework for determining what constitutes effectiveness or success – in other words, what a successful risk reduction initiative in general might look like and how it might be assessed;
- While much groundwork research has been done on the areas of disengagement from terrorism, significant gaps remain on the issues of *recidivism* and *risk assessment* in the context of terrorism;
- Some current work on de-radicalization suggests that any initiative aimed at promoting effective desistance from terrorism requires a change in attitudes to precede a change in behavior; we *refute* this belief and describe a mechanism from behavioral psychology (based on the work of Bryan Roche and others) as a means of working towards achieving de-radicalization in the laboratory as a first step towards greater conceptual development on this issue on the one hand, and significantly greater operational capabilities on the other.

Note on Report

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Introduction

In a 2009 report, Kohlmann¹ reported that in February 2009, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) issued a highly publicized roster of terrorists wanted in connection with violent threats made against the Kingdom. That announcement was the fourth in a series of releases issued since 2004. Following a series of high profile and audacious attacks by Al Qaeda against KSA, Saudi security forces have been vigilant in their operations against suspected terrorists - most of those named on the earlier lists since 2004 had either been captured or killed within Saudi Arabia or in surrounding regions. The most recent Saudi list from 2009 featured 83 Saudi nationals and 2 Yemenis, all of whom were described as suspected terrorists operating outside Saudi borders. Furthermore, the 85 individuals included several former detainees from the detention center at the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba - one of these individuals was Salih al-Qarawi.² Following his transfer from the United States to Saudi authorities, al-Qarawi underwent religious and psychological counseling within the Kingdom and several months later was deemed fit for release back into society. Al-Qarawi subsequently went on to become the leader of al-Qaida in Yemen.

Al-Qarawi's case, though dramatic, is not unusual. Several 'returnees' from Guantanamo Bay continue to espouse a virulent hatred of the United States and Western society in general. Hayes and Joscelyn³ detail the cases of three Yemeni detainees who exclaimed upon their release - "all Americans are infidels, and they will go to hell;" "if another call for jihad were issued, he would comply even if it meant killing Americans;" "the September 11 attacks were very small in scale;" and that "when a non-Islamic country falls, its inhabitants will have three choices: pay a tax for their infidel beliefs, leave the country, or convert to radical Islam."

Any issues surrounding the decision to release imprisoned terrorists back into society raises extraordinary and challenging questions - where will they go? Who will monitor them? Will they re-offend? Can they be 'turned' away from terrorism while in prison? In addition to the plethora of security challenges raised by such issues, strong feelings of resentment and injustice among victims of terrorist attacks typically accompany even the most preliminary discussions about the release of convicted terrorists. In recent years, however, an apparently growing number of states have come to accept the view, implicitly or otherwise, that their respective national security interests may be served by exploring how to facilitate and manage the reintegration of convicted terrorists back into society.

In particular, a widespread perception has now taken root in the counterterrorism community that such efforts might

1 Kohlmann, E. F. (2009, February). The eleven: Saudi Guantanamo veterans returning to the fight. *The NEFA Foundation-Special Reports*. Retrieved March 6, 2009 from <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefagitmoreturnees0209-1.pdf>.

2 E.g., see *The Middle East Times*. (2009, February 17). The battle with Al-Qaida in Saudi Arabia is not over. *The Middle East Times*. Retrieved March 12, 2009 from http://metimes.com/International/2009/02/17/the_battle_with_al-qaida_in_saudi_arabia_is_not_over/3838/.

3 Ibid.

be expressed through attempts to rehabilitate, reintegrate, or otherwise ‘deprogram’ those that have been detained as a result of their engagement in terrorist operations. In some situations, these perceptions have materialized into fully-fledged programs. Where such programs exist, they frequently have specific titles, and may typically employ equally specific terminology. They may also work in very different and varied ways, and operate according to highly context-specific expectations around what constitutes “success”. But despite this characteristic heterogeneity, at the cornerstone of each of these programs is the idea that terrorists can be “rehabilitated” such that there is a significantly reduced risk of re-engagement in terrorism upon release.

To date, however, there is no consensus regarding what constitutes success in reforming a terrorist, let alone how it might be done in a transparent and replicable way. There is, in addition, confusion surrounding whether reform is equivalent to another popular idea today – that of ‘de-radicalization’ (itself a term which has not been adequately conceptualized, let alone defined). To further complicate matters, there is not even consensus on whether former terrorists need to be necessarily “reformed” (in an attitudinal sense) in order to reduce the risk of re-engagement in terrorism.

Given the importance of these issues, brought to light perhaps most dramatically since the controversy surrounding Guantanamo Bay and those verified cases of recidivism, it might appear surprising that there is such diverse opinion and lack of consensus regarding issues of terrorist rehabilitation. Despite the variety of methods by which ‘de-radicalization’ has been both conceptualized and implemented, and despite the often audacious claims for success associated with some of these programs, it remains unclear as to what, exactly, these initiatives (individually and collectively) are designed to accomplish. Some claim that their programs are designed to “fix minds”⁴ or to “deprogram terrorists”⁵. Such variation has led to concomitant variation in the expectations of such programs - one official claimed that through his program, terrorists can be “brought back” from their extremism⁶, not unlike how the notion of ‘deprogramming’ has emerged from the challenges associated with reforming members of religious cults. But recent research has revealed that many of those who disengage (or desist) from terrorist activity are not necessarily “de-radicalized”, and that such de-radicalization is not necessarily a requisite for a low risk of recidivism.⁷

We should acknowledge that it is easy to be critical: on the surface, the notion of de-radicalization appears a noble goal. Unfortunately, thus far it has been impossible to understand what is implied by or expected from programs that claim to be able to de-radicalize terrorists. No program, including those under examination here, has formally expressed or

4 Fleishman, J. (2007, December 21). Saudi Arabia tries to rehab radical minds. *The Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved June 21 from <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/dec/21/world/fg-rehab21>.

5 Martin, D. (2007, September 20). Bali bomber now campaigns to stop terrorism. *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved January 26, 2009, from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/09/20/2039099.htm>.

6 Henry, T. (2007). Get out of jihad free. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved July 1, 2009, from <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200706/saudi-jihad>.

7 E.g., Horgan, J. (2009). *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements*. London: Routledge.

even attempted to systematically identify valid and reliable indicators of successful de-radicalization, whether couched in cultural, psychological or other terms. Consequently, any attempt to objectively evaluate the effectiveness any such program is beset with difficulties.

That is not to say that there have not been continued regular claims of success by officials associated with these initiatives. For the most part, officials associated with programs have made claims of startling success. Yet, such claims are based primarily on what would appear to be suspiciously low recidivism rates. Relying on recidivism rates as a measure of success is fraught with difficulty as recidivism itself (at least in the context of political violence) has not been adequately conceptualized. Given that these initiatives are most often established and run by government agencies, interpretation of what constitutes recidivism is frequently influenced by social political and cultural concerns. For these and other reasons, it can be challenging to ascertain whether or not a program is 'successful', and if so, why. In the absence of any clear framework for evaluation, some programs have received vocal criticism – for example, Saad al-Faqih, a representative of a London-based Saudi opposition movement has argued that "there is no way you can have a scientific study of how successful [the Saudi] programme is".⁸

To begin this report by highlighting such issues is not meant to devalue or invalidate the concerns behind such initiatives. The prospect of effective treatment and management of terrorists, in whatever way, is undeniably intriguing. However, in attempting to identify lessons learned from existing programs, we should not uncritically accept claims for success before encouraging the future development of such programs elsewhere. As such, and given the issues highlighted earlier, there is an urgent need to systematically and objectively evaluate the effectiveness of such programs, and in doing so identify clear and explicit criteria for establishing their success. The research presented in this report seeks to provide a beginning to this process by offering concrete, policy-relevant recommendations for moving forward.

This Report

This report offers a discussion on a potentially useful framework that may assist in the evaluation of de-radicalization initiatives. To begin, we present overviews of five initiatives in five different countries. These case studies illustrate the multi-faceted and describe the respective approaches taken to 'de-radicalization' in each context. Each case study describes the origins and development of the respective initiative, identifying critical issues relevant to both the reactions to that initiative as well as how successful or otherwise the initiative was deemed. The cases also illustrate the heterogeneity and context-specificity of these initiatives.

A Note on the Case Studies

It must be noted that the information comprising the 'data' for these case studies comes exclusively from open sources.

⁸ Gardner, F. (2008, January 31). 'Saudi jails aim to tackle terror'. BBC News Online. Retrieved July 24, 2009, from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7220797.stm.

There was no primary source data sought or obtained during the course of this research. The primary character of this research is, therefore, discursive, and the positions that emerge from the detailed discussion to follow reflect that. The selection of the specific cases was not difficult. These initiatives have been highly publicized and it was relatively straightforward to obtain open source material on a host of issues related to ascertaining the success or otherwise of these initiatives. In some cases, there are explicit claims for success or failure – according to Mustafa Alani, director of security at the Gulf Research Center, approximately 70% of those participants in the Yemeni program have been re-arrested for terrorist offences, while, he claims, only 5-7% of participants in the Saudi program have been re-arrested.⁹ Yet, some of the more dramatic accounts associated with these programs (e.g., the case described in the opening section, and the case of Abdulaziz Al-Muqrin, released from Saudi prison in 2004 only to become the leader of Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia) complicate a more meaningful and objective assessment of the effectiveness of such programs.

In particular, the selection of the Northern Irish initiative is welcome given that this is one of the few regions from which we have any data on recidivism. As we shall see in later sections, the lack of consensus (let alone data) on what constitutes recidivism to terrorism is illustrative of a major gap in the literature on terrorism. This is especially problematic given the need to arrive at a measure of effectiveness of rehabilitative programs.

9 see Gardner, 2008

Case Study: Northern Ireland's Early Release Scheme

Introduction

From the beginning of the most recent phase of conflict between Republicans and Loyalists in 1969 through the establishment of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, over 3,600 individuals were killed in the Northern Irish "Troubles". More than half the victims were civilians.¹⁰ By the late 1990s, several attempts to broker a peace deal in Ireland had been made. Mansergh¹¹ catalogued several of these optimistic, albeit mostly failed attempts, prior to the establishment of an agreement that seemed to offer residents of Northern Ireland a hope of a lasting peace.

In the early days of the Troubles, the Sunningdale agreement failed to diminish the violent actions of the Republicans and Loyalists. However, it did lay the groundwork for a series of talks that took place between 1975 and 1980 with the goal of internal settlement among political parties within Ireland and Northern Ireland. These bore no tangible results. After 1980, the British and Irish governments sponsored talks intended to bring about a lasting political solution to end the conflicts. From 1993-1994, however, a renewed series of negotiations took place that would change the political scene in Northern Ireland. Republicans felt the need to be at the bargaining table so as to have a stake in the future of Ireland while Loyalists were tentative to negotiate while violence was still occurring (158 people were killed in those two years alone¹²). Although declarations of ceasefire from the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and various Loyalist groups offered hope for the end of conflict in the region, wide-ranging acceptance of a peace agreement did not occur until 1998 in the form of the Good Friday Agreement, otherwise known as the Belfast Agreement.

The Agreement provides the basis for intergovernmental collaboration, security cooperation, and power sharing among the unionists and nationalists (the broader umbrella constituents from which Loyalists and Republican terrorists – known locally as the "paramilitaries" – respectively emerged).¹³ Relative to the Sunningdale Agreement, the Good Friday Agreement was more widely accepted, as evidenced most obviously by the greater range of political parties that took part in its negotiation and signing. Governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, as well as the various Northern Irish parties – the Ulster Unionist Party, the Ulster Democratic Party, the Progressive Unionist Party, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, the Labour Party, the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, Sinn Féin, and the Social Democratic and Labour Party – all became signatories to the Belfast Agreement, thus agreeing in principle to the stipulations contained therein.¹⁴

10 Smyth, M. (2000). The human consequences of armed conflict: Constructing 'victimhood' in the context of Northern Ireland's Troubles. In M. Cox, A. Guelke, & F. Stephen (Eds.), *A farewell to arms? From 'long war' to long peace in Northern Ireland*, (pp. 118-135). Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

11 Mansergh, M. (2000). The background to the Irish peace process. In M. Cox, A. Guelke, & F. Stephen (Eds.), *A farewell to arms? From 'long war' to long peace in Northern Ireland*, (pp. 8-23). Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

12 Smyth, M. (2000). The human consequences of armed conflict: Constructing 'victimhood' in the context of Northern Ireland's Troubles. In M. Cox, A. Guelke, & F. Stephen (Eds.), *A farewell to arms? From 'long war' to long peace in Northern Ireland*, (pp. 118-135). Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

13 O'Leary, B. (2001). The character of the 1998 agreement: Results and prospects. In R. Wilford (Ed.), *Aspects of the Belfast Agreement*, (pp. 49-83). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

14 Wolff, S. (2001). Context and content: Sunningdale and Belfast compared. In R. Wilford (Ed.), *Aspects of the Belfast Agree-*

Among the conditions included in the Belfast Agreement was the planned provision of a number of initiatives intended to build confidence among the warring factions. One of these conditions centered around proposals for the early release of up to 500 “politically motivated” violent offenders from prisons across the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Northern Ireland – in other words, convicted terrorists that belonged to paramilitary movements that had representation through one of the political parties.¹⁵ More formally, the genesis of the planned scheme, which was to become known as the “Early Release Scheme” can be traced to the publication of The Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act 1998. This Act allowed for the institution of the Sentence Review Commission, an independent committee, to review prisoners on a case-by-case basis to determine if he/she qualified for release.¹⁶

Because the Belfast Agreement included a clause that allowed violent offenders to go free without proper punishment (i.e. completion of their sentences) in the eyes of victims, it encountered significant and vocal opposition from the public. Even a decade after the original Agreement, some government officials began to openly reject the perceived benefits of releasing terrorists from prison. In March of 2008, Strangford Assemblyman Simon Hamilton said that dubbing the Early Release Scheme as a success “ignore[d] the very many people in Northern Ireland who consider it an appalling abomination”.¹⁷

Still, the Early Release Scheme was privately deemed vital to prolonged peace in Northern Ireland. A British government official conceded that the release of convicted terrorists, albeit “hard to swallow”, would keep the peace process moving forward.¹⁸ The truth of this issue was that in offering release to political prisoners, the Belfast Agreement effectively provided a strong incentive for non-signatories to decommission and work towards a peaceful resolution to the Troubles. In late 1998 and early 1999, the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) – both notorious splinter groups in the region - sought to take advantage of the Early Release Scheme by announcing ceasefires.¹⁹ Despite the eventual breakdown of LVF and INLA ceasefires, the standing down and subsequent partial decommissioning of these two paramilitary groups illustrated that the early release stipulation of the Belfast Agreement had the potential to entice previously violent groups (even the hardcore splinter factions) to disengage from armed action.

Although the Early Release Scheme provided significant benefits for those groups that chose to adhere to the protocols set forth by the Good Friday Agreement, release from prison was not equated with outright amnesty. Should an individual violate the conditions of release or the group to which he/she was affiliated break the ceasefire, the member would have been expected to serve out their sentence in addition to any new sentence imposed upon them.²⁰ In addition, groups that did not respect the Good Friday Agreement and its conditions of ceasefire were not eligible to have their members released from prison. *The Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act 1998 specifies such groups, and as of late ment*, (pp. 11-27). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

15 von Tangen Page, M. (2000). A ‘most difficult and unpalatable’ part: The release of politically motivated violent offenders. In M. Cox, A. Guelke, & F. Stephen (Eds.), *A farewell to arms? From ‘long war’ to long peace in Northern Ireland*, (pp. 93-103). Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

16 Belfast Agreement, Prisoners, paragraph 3

17 Keenan, D. (2008, March 1). Ex-prisoners ‘helped resolve conflict.’ *The Irish Times*. Ireland, in the North, 10.

18 von Tangen Page, M. (2000). A ‘most difficult and unpalatable’ part: The release of politically motivated violent offenders. In M. Cox, A. Guelke, & F. Stephen (Eds.), *A farewell to arms? From ‘long war’ to long peace in Northern Ireland*, (pp. 93-103). Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

19 Ibid.

20 Belfast Agreement, Prisoners, paragraph 2.

2008, six groups (including the “Real” IRA and the Orange Volunteers) were identified as being ineligible for the Early Release Scheme.²¹

Although most of the content included in the ‘Prisoners’ section of the Good Friday Agreement is concerned with the conditions under which an individual may be released from prison early (e.g., group to which he/she is affiliated declares ceasefire, approved by the Sentence Review Commission, etc.), paragraph five refers to the difficulty some prisoners may have in returning to a world in which the Troubles are over and they have no enemy to fight. As stated in the Agreement, the Irish, Northern Irish, and British Governments recognize the significance of prisoners’ peaceful reintegration into their respective communities. As such, paragraph five²² stipulates that prisoners must be provided with training, education, and employment opportunities upon their release for the sake of smooth transition from incarceration to productivity as a private citizen.

Critical Issues: Training and Reintegration as a Means of Risk Reduction

Upon their release from prisons across the United Kingdom and Ireland, both Loyalist and Republican ex-prisoners found themselves in a position of relative powerlessness and inactivity. In 2000, the Irish Times reported the widely accepted view that ex-paramilitaries experienced difficulties finding work or securing a travel visas. In addition, they were regularly subjected to police suspicions across Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and the United Kingdom.²³ Furthermore, the British and Irish governments were fully aware of the problems that ex-prisoners may experience upon leaving prison, as evidenced by a joint letter developed by British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern. In the letter of May 2000, the prime ministers publicly pledged to take measures that “facilitate the reintegration of prisoners into the community, and to address related issues”.²⁴ The aid afforded to Loyalist and Republican ex-prisoners primarily took the form of monetary assistance and facilitation of work procurement.

Because of the stigma associated with participating in armed conflict during the Troubles and the threat of recidivism out of lack of opportunity, job training and education was provided to ex-prisoners to help make them more viable candidates for everyday work. O’Connor²⁵ details several government-sponsored plans that were established to assist ex-prisoners in acquiring a range of vocational skills. Additionally, and to circumvent the disrepute associated with being an ex-terrorist, the Irish and Northern Irish governments worked to find employers that were willing to hire former paramilitaries.

Although governmental support of ex-prisoners was initiated as part of the Early Release Scheme, several parties expressed dissatisfaction with the extent to which those being released were assisted in reestablishing themselves in communities. Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Féin and member of British Parliament, claimed that the British government “failed to facilitate the reintegration of prisoners into the community by providing support.” Adams went on to

21 Article 2, Northern Ireland [Sentences] Act 1998, Specified Organisations Order 2008, 2008.

22 Belfast Agreement, Prisoners, paragraph 5.

23 Ingle, R. (2000). Paramilitary ex-prisoners struggle to find employment and a normal life. *The Irish Times*. News Features, 8. Also see Wallace, A. (2003, July 8). Driving license victory for freed inmate. *Belfast Telegraph*.

24 Melaugh, M. (2009). Letter from British and Irish governments to political parties in Northern Ireland on (the morning of) Saturday 6 May 2000. *CAIN Web Service*. Retrieved July 28, 2009, from <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/bi060500.htm>.

25 O’Connor, F. (1999, August 28). No one wants the peace jeopardized. *The Independent (London)*, NEWS (p. 4).

claim that the British government was, in fact, preserving legislation that victimized former prisoners in such a way as to keep them as lesser citizens in “all aspects of social and economic life.”²⁶ Independent researchers also found that the circumstances surrounding the efforts of the Northern Irish and British governments were less than exemplary. Schulze²⁷ documented serious doubts on both sides regarding the fairness of reintegration efforts. Republicans suspected that government officials were excluding them from negotiations surrounding the terms of the Belfast Agreement and their subsequent enforcement. On the other hand, Unionists saw the Early Release Scheme as a form of appeasement for Republicans. Suspicions were exacerbated by a widely perceived “lack of an immediate and fully fledged process of civilianization and reintegration of ex-combatants” (p. 269). Whatever the public discourse, there was a widespread perception that reintegration efforts, while aimed in the right direction, fell significantly short in their execution.

Some entities aside from the British government attempted to facilitate the reintegration process for released politically-motivated violent offenders. The European Union took steps to assist community projects that were established to help with the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-prisoners. Prisoner welfare organizations (often staffed by former terrorists) began to conduct their own analyses of the types of skills and training prisoners needed.²⁸ Their findings included the identification of the need for training courses in “pre-employment, business planning, and social skills development”. Pearson²⁹ described how such courses were further developed and implemented by professional training organizations within the Maze prison. The Maze held most of the paramilitary prisoners in Northern Ireland. In addition to occupational and skill-based assistance, financial assistance was afforded by the Northern Irish government as well. Pearson³⁰ claimed that upon release in 1999, prisoners could receive up to £103.81 (\$144.68 2009 USD) per week.

In addition, several ex-prisoners themselves have initiated independent projects to help those that are having trouble reintegrating into the community after their incarceration.³¹

Other more formal organizations within the United Kingdom have been active in assisting with the reintegration of ex-prisoners. An example of one such organization is the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO). Since its inception in 1971, NIACRO has been dedicated to “work for the welfare of the offenders” in Ireland and Northern Ireland.³² With a focus on education and vocational training of offenders, NIACRO provides a means by which ex-prisoners (not just terrorist offenders) can reasonably reintegrate into Northern Irish society.

In 1996, an all-Ireland charitable trust (dubbed the Educational Trust) was established to “support political ex-prisoners and their families in accessing education/training as part of a resettlement agenda.”³³ Although the Trust was originally developed to directly support political ex-prisoners (and that support still continues), there has been an increased

26 Adams, G. (2001, January 17). Equality cannot be an illusion: It must be a fact. *Belfast Telegraph*, Opinion.

27 Schulze, K. E., & Smith, M. L. R. (1999). Arms issue plagues Ulster peace deal. *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 11, 18-22.

28 Pearson, (2004, December 15). Statement on “Early Release Prisoners.” *Publications and Records*. Retrieved January 12, 2009 from <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200405/cmhansrd/vo041215/text/41215w34.htm>.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ingle, R. (2000). Paramilitary ex-prisoners struggle to find employment and a normal life. *The Irish Times*. News Features, 8.

32 NIACRO. (2009). About NIACRO. Retrieved March 1, 2009 from <http://www.niacro.co.uk/about-niacro>.

33 (Heather Reid, Service Manager for Offenders in the Community/Training Services, E-mail correspondence, January 21, 2009)

emphasis on the families of ex-offenders. Children of offenders often experience discrimination and social barriers to mainstream services analogous to those experienced by their parents.³⁴ As such, these individuals, like the offenders themselves, need support to get access to gainful employment and conventional services within Northern Ireland. According to the Educational Trust's evaluation of the Difference and Sameness project, 308 individuals were assisted in getting vocational and educational support through the Trust³⁵, with over one-third of these participants being children of ex-offenders. Clearly, NIACRO has recognized the need for training and support for not only prisoners, but for those with direct and indirect ties to the ex-offenders as well.

Critical Issues: Restorative Justice for Victims

Aside from the successes and failures of the Good Friday Agreement in terms of societal reintegration, several have noted that the release of those that participated in terrorist activity against civilians may be a difficult prospect for victims of the violence. In an open letter to victims of the violence perpetrated by those that would be released, Minister for Victims Adam Ingram recognized that the "period [of prisoner release] is one of the most difficult for the relatives of those killed during 30 years of the Troubles and for those still suffering the pain of injury or the trauma of being a witness to some terrible atrocity".³⁶ Smyth's³⁷ extensive research on the Troubles revealed that British government officials, spearheaded by then Northern Irish Secretary of State Mo Mowlam, anticipated from an early stage the likely backlash from the victims of violence against the Early Release Scheme before it was announced. Even before the Belfast Agreement was signed, the Social Services Inspectorate of the United Kingdom had already received instructions to begin preparations for how to deal with the expected expressions of victims' psychological burden.³⁸

To address victims' concerns about the release of terrorist offenders, the Agreement contained a number of stipulations intended to protect victims' rights. First, victims were afforded the opportunity to request information regarding a prisoner's release. Second, all releases were provided under license. Re-involvement in political violence would cause that offender to return to prison where he/she would continue serving the sentence for which he/she was originally incarcerated.³⁹ Despite these safeguards against outright amnesty for ex-prisoners, public perception of the Good Friday Agreement faltered.⁴⁰

Several have argued that despite victims' reservations against releasing prisoners associated with the Troubles, a lasting

34 (Reid, E-mail correspondence, January 21, 2009)

35 Educational Trust. (n.d.) *Difference and sameness: Final evaluation report* (Project No: 033820X). Belfast, Northern Ireland.

36 Ingram, A. (1998, September 23). I welcome the chance to make a difference. *Belfast News Letter*. News, 14.

37 Smyth, M. (2000). The human consequences of armed conflict: Constructing 'victimhood' in the context of Northern Ireland's Troubles. In M. Cox, A. Guelke, & F. Stephen (Eds.), *A farewell to arms? From 'long war' to long peace in Northern Ireland*, (pp. 118-135). Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

38 Social Services Inspectorate, Department of Health and Social Services. (1998). *Living with the trauma of the Troubles: A report on a developmental project to examine and promote the further development of services to meet the social and psychological needs of individuals affected by civil unrest in Northern Ireland*. Belfast, Northern Ireland: The Stationery Office.

39 von Tangen Page, M. (2000). A 'most difficult and unpalatable' part: The release of politically motivated violent offenders. In M. Cox, A. Guelke, & F. Stephen (Eds.), *A farewell to arms? From 'long war' to long peace in Northern Ireland*, (pp. 93-103). Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

40 No author. (1999, September 7). Hardening views on prisoner releases. *Belfast Telegraph*, Opinion; See also Schulze, K. E., & Smith, M. L. R. (1999). Arms issue plagues Ulster peace deal. *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 11, 18-22.

peace can only be established if political prisoners are set free. Paul Butler, a Republican prisoner who was jailed for the murder of a policeman, claimed that it was “justifiable” for victims of the violence to be hurt at the prospect of their attackers being released from prison, but argued “to move out of the conflict situation, the only way to move forward is prisoner releases.”⁴¹

Since the inception of the Early Release Scheme, several organizations have spoken out on behalf of the victims of violence. Eileen Bell, President of the Alliance Party and Spokesperson on Victims claimed that paramilitaries guilty of offenses prior to the Agreement were given outright amnesty and in so doing denied victims “any recognition that those who inflicted suffering on them were wrong.”⁴² And while some groups spoke out on behalf of victims, some individuals took action in response to the release of prisoners convicted of crimes that harmed them. Michelle Williamson, whose parents were killed in an IRA bombing in 1993, sought to keep the bomber (Sean Kelly) in prison despite his scheduled release later in the year⁴³ through a lawsuit taken to the Belfast High Court. Williamson’s motion was struck down, and Kelly was released from prison in July of 2000.⁴⁴

Whether through an organizational channel (e.g., Families Achieving Change Together, a self-help group dedicated to the psychological well being of the victims of the Troubles) or through the publication of statements by anguished persons affected by terrorism in the region⁴⁵ it is clear that the Early Release Scheme, despite its utility in attracting multiple paramilitary groups to accept the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, carried with it substantial social and political cost. This was perhaps most obviously expressed through the vocal opposition from the multiple victims and survivors of violence associated with the Troubles. Although relative peace may have been achieved through the application of the release scheme, it is to this date viewed as having largely ignored the psychological trauma felt by a large contingent of those for whom the Agreement was intended to benefit.

Critical Issues: Recidivism

In May of 2003, the British and Irish governments released a statement calling for the establishment of the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC). To assist in maintaining relative peace, the IMC to this day supervises and reports on the actions of paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. In so doing, the IMC is able to (a) confirm that the signatories of the Good Friday Agreement are honoring their commitments to abandon violence and (b) verify that security measures in Northern Ireland are being normalized.⁴⁶

The IMC is comprised of former Assembly Speaker Lord John Alderice, former Deputy Director of the United States’ Central Intelligence Agency Dick Kerr, former Secretary General of the Department of Justice in Dublin Joseph Brosnan,

41 Rowan, B., & Jess, M. (1998, May 12). Key elements to the early release of prisoners. *BBC Online*. Retrieved January 11, 2009 from http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/events/northern_ireland/the_referendum/91631.stm.

42 Bell, E. (2001, August 16). Terrorist amnesty is the wrong way for reconciliation. *Belfast News Letter*. Features, 12.

43 No author. (1999, October 25). Terrorist victim set for legal challenge. *Belfast News Letter*. News, 2.

44 No author. (1999, November 19). IRA ceasefire challenge rejected. *BBC Online*. Retrieved January 16, 2009 from http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/527104.stm.

45 No author. (1999, January 8). Multiple murderer set free. *Belfast News Letter*. News, 7.

46 Independent Monitoring Commission. (n.d.). *What we are here for*. Retrieved January 21, 2009 from <http://independent-monitoringcommission.org/herefor.cfm>.

and former Deputy Assistant Commissioner in the Metropolitan police John Grieve. In their 2008 report on political violence in Northern Ireland, Lord Alderdice and his colleagues reported all incidents of politically-motivated violence from March, 2003 through August, 2008. Of all the groups whose violent activity was documented by the IMC, none were signatories of the Good Friday Agreement. They essentially continued to remain members of dissident groups such as the Real IRA. On the surface, this would suggest that recidivism rates of those that were released from Northern Irish prisons were low. The core assumption surrounding assurances of non-recidivism rested on the belief that if the movement was on ceasefire, the leadership would exercise extreme authoritative control over its members to adhere to the conditions of the Belfast Agreement. Because eligibility for the Early Release Scheme was contingent on one's party adhering to the Belfast agreement and decommissioning, it is not a surprise that those groups that the IMC tracked between 2003 and 2008 were non-signatories of the Agreement (e.g., Real Irish Republican Army, Irish National Liberation Army, Ulster Defense Association, and Ulster Volunteer Force). In total, these groups committed 24 murders since March 1, 2003.⁴⁷

Still, the IMC reported that politically-motivated shootings and assaults were still occurring as of August 2008. Although the IMC detailed which specific political groups were responsible for murders between 2003 and 2008, they neglected to report group identification for incidents where casualties result from shootings or assaults.⁴⁸ Because the number of shooting and assault casualties far outnumber the number of murders in the time frame specified by the IMC, it is likely that some shootings and assaults (that did not result in the victim's death) were carried about by proxy – i.e. by members of groups that were meant to adhere to the Belfast Agreement. Because the data provided by the IMC focused primarily on murders, shootings, and assaults, other terrorist-related activity may not have been illustrated by their findings.

McEvoy reported that of the 450 prisoners released early under order of the Belfast Agreement, 20 have had their release licenses revoked. Of these 20, 16 (3.5%) were re-arrested for participating in terrorist-related activity.⁴⁹ McEvoy went on to claim that this was roughly *one-fifteenth* the recidivism rate for 'ordinary prisoners' in Northern Ireland. The aforementioned Sean Kelly, architect of the Shankill Road bombing, was one of these 16 after Secretary Peter Hain expressed his certainty that Kelly became "reinvolved in terrorism and is a danger to others and while he is at liberty, is likely to commit further offenses".⁵⁰

Conclusions

Generally, it is understood that the Early Release Scheme, despite some setbacks, played a pivotal and successful in bringing peace to Northern Ireland. Former Northern Irish Secretary of State Peter Mandelson conceded that some ex-prisoners would be guilty of wrongdoing, but defended the Early Release Scheme against being represented as a failure on the basis of recidivism. He claimed that ex-prisoners were generally supportive of the peace process and have

47 Alderdice, J., Kerr, D., Brosnan, J., & Grieve, J. (2008). *Twentieth report of the Independent Monitoring Commission*. Retrieved January 21, 2009 from the Independent Monitoring Commission Web site: <http://www.independentmonitoringcommission.org>.

48 Ibid.

49 Keenan, D. (2008, March 1). Ex-prisoners 'helped resolve conflict.' *The Irish Times*. Ireland, in the North, 10.

50 McGinn, D. (2005, June 19). Nationalists demand answers over arrest of Shankill bomber. *Press Association*. Home News.

“overwhelmingly” avoided re-offending.⁵¹ This claim was reiterated,⁵² and the argument followed that a) recidivism among released terrorists had been particularly low, and b) that among those that have benefited from the Good Friday Agreement, recidivism was virtually “negligible.”

51 Summers, D. (2000). Loyalist feud flares as man is killed in house: Paramilitary Adair to mount legal challenge against return to prison. *The Herald (UK)*. 2.

52 Flanagan. (1999). British-Irish Agreement (Amendment) Bill, 1999: Second stage. *Proceedings of the Parliament, Ireland*, 506, 22 June, 1999.

Case Study: Colombia's Disengagement and Reincorporation Program

Introduction

For more than half a century, Colombian civilians have been caught in the middle of an ongoing intra-nation conflict. Persistent contention between liberals and conservatives within the Colombian government erupted in open warfare between the parties from 1946 to 1958.⁵³ This conflict gave rise to radical left-wing guerrilla groups such as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). In response to the emergence of left-wing guerrilla warfare against landowners throughout Colombia, right-wing paramilitaries including the Muerte a Secuestradores (MAS)⁵⁴ and the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) developed.⁵⁵ Beginning in the 1970s, smaller extremist groups developed in the form of the populist-socialist 19th of April Movement (responsible for an attack on the Palace of Justice in Bogotá that left over 100 dead)⁵⁶, the indigenous Quintín Lame, and the Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL). From the beginning of *La Violencia* in 1946 through the present day, Colombia has confronted with a wide range of politically-motivated terrorist entities within its borders.

Like the case of Northern Ireland, there have been tireless efforts to bring peace to Colombia. After the initial phase of violence between 1946 and 1953, the government attempted to broker a wide-ranging demobilization among armed parties. However, the government neglected to develop a comprehensive plan for reincorporating ex-fighters back into mainstream Colombian society: long-time Colombia expert Ribetti⁵⁷ quoted an unnamed senior source as saying that the one-time leader of FARC, Manuel Marulanda, claimed that the failure of the government to provide identification documents (as had been agreed upon as part of the amnesty plan) made any prospect of societal reintegration impossible from their point of view.

Because of resistance to state-sponsored opposition among rebel leadership and peasants living in guerrilla-controlled areas as well as the growing threat of communism, the government increasingly turned to repressive and punishing tactics. In 1964, after years of being ignored by the Colombian government, communist pockets around Bogotá were seen as threats and subsequently attacked by the Colombian National Army⁵⁸. After the attacks, the remaining communists reorganized and became the modern-day FARC.

One year earlier, in 1963, the Colombian government developed what was then considered a "rehabilitation" program. The term was somewhat misleading: the principal objective of the program was essentially to provide socioeconomic

53 Rochlin, J. (2003). *Vanguard revolutionaries in Latin America: Peru, Colombia, Mexico*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

54 Romero, M. (1999). Elités regionales, identidades, y paramilitares en el Sinú. In J. Guerrero and R. Peñaranda (Eds.), *De las armas a la política*. TM Editores.

55 For a detailed account, see Ribetti, M. (2009). Disengagement and beyond: A case study of demobilization in Colombia. In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 152-169). New York: Routledge.

56 Library of Congress, Federal Research Division. (n.d.) *Colombia: The 19th of April movement*. Retrieved January 28, 2009, from <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-3127.html>.

57 Ribetti, M. (2009). Disengagement and beyond: A case study of demobilization in Colombia. In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 152-169). New York: Routledge.

58 Osterling, J. P., & Sanin, X. (1989). *Democracy in Colombia: Clientelist politics and guerrilla warfare*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

benefits for peasants in an attempt to prevent them from joining the guerrilla movements.⁵⁹ Though originally well-intentioned, the peace plan of 1963 moved the country further from peace than it had been before the so-called rehabilitation program had been able to develop.

Since then, many revolutionary and paramilitary groups have operated within Colombia's borders. The most notable example is the emergence of M-19⁶⁰ following the heavily disputed elections of 1970. Aggressive and sometimes violent protest erupted as a result of substantial political controversy surrounding the elections.⁶¹ Since then, Colombia has never enjoyed a lasting peace, the sporadic cessation of hostilities paused only by an inevitable return to conflict.⁶² Amid the ongoing hostilities, however, recent years have seen the implementation of several disengagement initiatives. Many of these initiatives have been executed at the group level: they were designed to facilitate the 'demobilization' of entire terrorist movements from armed conflict rather than enticing one individual at a time. Modest success is usually associated with these initiatives, with some notable and dramatic examples: as of July 31, 2005, twelve paramilitary blocks, including the Cacique Nutibara Block and the Ortega Self-Defense Forces, have demobilized.⁶³

This is not to suggest that what the Colombian authorities characterize as demobilization has not occurred at the individual level. Ribetti⁶⁴ found that individuals do leave terrorist movements and paramilitaries in Colombia on their own, albeit for different, largely idiosyncratic reasons. Collective disengagements, like those of the aforementioned paramilitary blocks and the AUC, are typically executed as a result of calculated strategy on the part of the group's leadership.⁶⁵ Fighters involved in a collective disengagement have no alternative but to return to society on orders from their superiors, sometimes still ideologically adherent to their former group's objectives – put crudely, while they may be disengaged, they are not necessarily 'de-radicalized'. In contrast, individual FARC members who decided to leave the movement typically tend to do so because of personal motivations: fear of excessive punishment, disillusionment with the group's leadership, or recognition of the impossibility of achieving the group's goals.⁶⁶

Demobilization at both the individual- and group-level in Colombia has been greatly facilitated by the application of Law 418 (1997) and its amendment, Law 782 (2002) through Decrees 128 (2003), 3360 (2003), and 2767 (2004).⁶⁷ Gener-

59 Rempe, D. (1995). Guerrillas, bandits, and independent republics: U.S. counter-insurgency efforts in Colombia 1959-1965. *Small Wars*, 6(3). Retrieved January 28, 2009, from <http://www.icdc.com/~paulwolf/colombia/smallwars.htm>; Also see Ribetti, M. (2009). Disengagement and beyond: A case study of demobilization in Colombia. In In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 152-169). New York: Routledge.

60 Perdomo, M. E. (2005). *My life as a Colombian revolutionary: Reflections of a former guerrilla*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

61 Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2009). Colombia. Retrieved January 30, 2009, from http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/COLOMBIA_1970_E.pdf.

62 Yarbro, S. (1990, March 9, PM Cycle). Guerrilla group lays down weapons, but other rebels refuse to disarm. *Associated Press Release*. International News.

63 Human Rights Watch. (2005). Smoke and mirrors: Colombia's demobilization of paramilitary groups. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/07/31/smoke-and-mirrors?print>.

64 Ribetti, M. (2007). The unveiled motivations of Colombian guerrillas. *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 18(4), 2007.

65 Ribetti, M. (2009). Disengagement and beyond: A case study of demobilization in Colombia. In In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 152-169). New York: Routledge.

66 For more details, see Ribetti (2009) and Horgan (2009).

67 Human Rights Watch. (2005). Smoke and mirrors: Colombia's demobilization of paramilitary groups. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/07/31/smoke-and-mirrors?print>.

ally, these laws assert that individuals who were involved with armed groups may be eligible to receive amnesty for their “political crimes”. Colombian National Law 418 states, however, that those who partake in “atrocious acts of ferocity or barbarity, terrorism, kidnapping, genocide, homicide committed outside of combat or putting the victim in a state of defenselessness” are not eligible to receive a pardon. If deemed eligible for government-sponsored demobilization and reintegration, former fighters are provided with health, economic, and educational benefits as specified by Colombian Decree 128.⁶⁸

According to the Colombian government⁶⁹, as of March 31, 2008, twice as many fighters have been demobilized and enrolled in the High Council’s reintegration process as a function of collective disengagement (31,196) relative to individual disengagement (15,242). Upon initial consideration of such figures, it would appear that the Colombian government is more effective in persuading the leadership of guerrilla groups to disengage relative to their ability to promote and facilitate disengagement at the level of individual members. The collective process appears to be characterized by a multifaceted strategy, encompassing several steps required of those wishing to disengage.

The Colombian initiative is formally known as the Reincorporation Program. High Commissioner for Peace Luis Carlos Restrepo, described the process: the first step involves paramilitary commanders supplying the Office of the High Commissioner with a list of names of those wish to demobilize.⁷⁰ The Office of the High Commissioner then verifies the number of names on the list with the Ministry of Defense to ensure that the Ministry’s estimate of the number of fighters is comparable to the number of those requesting to demobilize. Those on the list are then moved to a geographic location chosen by the government where they are questioned and registered with Colombia’s Technical Investigative Body. The government registrar supplies them with identification classifying them as “demobilized individuals” to ensure their receipt of government benefits as specified by Decree 128. Afterward, each demobilized guerrilla surrenders his or her weapon to government representatives during a demobilization ceremony.⁷¹ The Organization of American States (OAS) verifies the transfer of weaponry.⁷²

Following a demobilization ceremony, the now ex-fighters are allowed to return to a place of their choice. Once at their destination, they are required to frequently check in with a government “reference center”: in 2003, the then Director of the Reincorporation Program claimed that there were eight such centers in Colombia.⁷³ By June of 2008, more than

68 Ibid.

69 No author. (2008). Colombia: Datos básicos. Retrieved January 30, 2009, from <http://www.reintegracion.gov.co/App/Reintegraci%C3%B3nColombia/ColombiaylaReintegraci%C3%B3n/tabid/122/Default.aspx>.

70 L. C. Restrepo, interview with Human Rights Watch, March 14, 2005; see Human Rights Watch. (2005). Smoke and mirrors: Colombia’s demobilization of paramilitary groups. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/07/31/smoke-and-mirrors?print>.

71 Brodzinsky, S. (2004, December 11). Colombian fighters lay down arms. *The Guardian* (London). Guardian Foreign Pages, 19; Joynes, K. (2004, February 18). OAS begins to verify Colombian paramilitary demobilisation. *World Markets Research Center*. In brief.

72 Human Rights Watch. (2005). Smoke and mirrors: Colombia’s demobilization of paramilitary groups. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/07/31/smoke-and-mirrors?print>.

73 J. D. Angel, interview with Human Rights Watch, March 14, 2005; see Human Rights Watch. (2005). Smoke and mirrors: Colombia’s demobilization of paramilitary groups. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/07/31/smoke-and-mirrors?print>.

twenty two more appeared.⁷⁴ Once formally associated with one of these centers, former paramilitaries can receive health care, shelter, clothing, educational or occupational training, and vocational support.⁷⁵ Third parties that include the OAS, European Union, and Microsoft Corporation underwrite the provision of such benefits.

Prosecutor Ramiro Marn, associated with the Attorney General's Office, said that those that have disengaged from violence are then asked to give private statements about their involvement in illegal activity.⁷⁶ Provided the individual has not taken part in any of the activities detailed in Colombian National Law 418, he/she is granted an official pardon. Vieira⁷⁷ reported that by August, 2006, 28,000 former paramilitaries had received legal benefits or pardons.

In the past, the plan broadly outlined above was essentially utilized as an "umbrella" initiative, the main focus of which involved the provision of benefits as a means of sustaining involvement in socially productive activity. In recent years, however, the nature of the Reincorporation Program has begun to change. The government has taken a more person-centered approach to dealing with former paramilitaries, and now, government-employed social workers have been introduced to help facilitate a "changing of ... violent ways".⁷⁸ This change of focus, however, remains in its infancy⁷⁹, but for now, ex-paramilitaries are put through individualized workshops, training seminars, and therapy sessions. This evolution of the original program is built on the assumption that individuals who once belonged to a paramilitary group or organization tend to lose their individuality⁸⁰, and thus, have difficulty making decisions or evaluations independent of the group's normative influence. The Reincorporation Program as it is currently executed is intended to assist former guerrillas in making independent choices and to assist in social re-orientation away from violence.

Whether through the proliferation of individual or collective disengagement, it is clear that in recent years, the Colombian government has taken positive steps toward ending the violent conflicts within its borders. That said, as with the Northern Irish Early Release Scheme, there have been persistent disputes about the legitimacy of a program that, in the eyes of many, allows for the release of terrorist offenders.

Critical Issues: Victims Rights and the Management of Critique

Four years after the first contemporary demobilization processes began, Secretary General of the OAS, José Miguel Insulza, released a statement calling on Colombia to "strengthen its programs to reintegrate demobilized members of

74 No author. (2008). Colombia: Datos básicos. Retrieved January 30, 2009, from <http://www.reintegracion.gov.co/App/Reintegraci%C3%B3nColombia/ColombiaylaReintegraci%C3%B3n/tabid/122/Default.aspx>.

75 Robberson, T. (2003, August 27). Colombian guerrillas demobilizing in return for housing, jobs. *The Dallas Morning News*. International News.

76 R. Marn, interview with Human Rights Watch, April 6, 2005; see Human Rights Watch. (2005). Smoke and mirrors: Colombia's demobilization of paramilitary groups. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/07/31/smoke-and-mirrors?print>.

77 Vieira, C. (2006, August 18). Colombia: Uribe orders paramilitaries to turn themselves in. *The Online Pioneer and Ideals World News*. Retrieved January 30, 2009, from <http://ins.onlinedemocracy.ca/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=7226>.

78 Martinez, M. (2003, December 6). Ex-members of Colombian group rehabilitate. *Associated Press Online*. International News.

79 Ribetti, M. (2009). Disengagement and beyond: A case study of demobilization in Colombia. In In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 152-169). New York: Routledge.

80 Terry, D. J., Hogg, M. A., & White, K. M. (1999). The theory of planned behavior: Self-identity, social identity and group norms. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 38, 225-244.

the AUC into society.⁸¹ In this statement, the Secretary General also highlighted problems associated with any initiative in which former fighters are allowed to regain their freedom on order of the government. Similar to the Northern Irish Early Release Scheme, one of the central issues identified by Insulza was that of victims' rights and compensation.

Colombian officials have long stated that the demobilized fighters themselves may compensate victims' families⁸², but Ribetti⁸³ points out that paramilitaries have generally avoided paying reparation. The BBC⁸⁴ reported that the Colombian government has also been slow to deliver compensation to the victims of the fighting. Although President Uribe pledged to designate 200,000 hectares (772 square miles) to victims as part of a compensation initiative, as of June 2006, only 5,000 hectares (19.3 square miles) were awarded. A Senior Vice President of the International Crisis Group summed up the situation in a statement to the Western Hemisphere subcommittee of the U.S. Committee on House Foreign Affairs, claiming that "concerns persist regarding actual guarantees of the rights of victims to truth, justice, and reparation, the cumulative nature of penalties, and the determination of an alternative penalty" and that "effective implementation of the law would require greater resources and mechanisms that guaranteed the rights of victims".⁸⁵

Still, some claim that the Reincorporation Program is successful in its compensation of those victimized by years of violence in Colombia. Ribetti⁸⁶ claimed that Colombia's Justice and Peace law has been systematically and effectively employed in Colombia, as evidenced by the large numbers of victims that have requested to be part of the process (under the Justice and Peace Law, victims have the right to meet ex-combatants face-to-face). Further, the Attorney General's office has persistently kept Colombian citizens informed on the status of the program.

Aside from the debate regarding victims' rights under the reintegration program, there have been several logistic critiques of the initiative. Through a series of interviews with Colombian government officials, Human Rights Watch⁸⁷ identified shortcomings in how collective demobilization has been implemented. First, the government has failed to request aliases, often necessary to conduct comprehensive criminal investigations on former fighters. Second, the government has not kept accurate records of weapon transfers. Because weapons can be traced to specific acts and fighters, failure to maintain a record of arms possession can significantly hamper criminal investigations. Third, human rights officials are not included in prosecution teams that question former paramilitaries. Fourth, demobilized fighters are actually not required to answer any questions about their former crimes. As a consequence, an individual that took part in or witnessed atrocities could garner benefits for which he would be ineligible as outlined by Law 418 if responsibility for such crimes had already been verified independently. Fifth, ex-combatants' backgrounds are not comprehensively

81 OAS Press Release. (2007, February 21). OAS calls for strengthening programs to reintegrate combatants in Colombia to prevent rearmament. *Website for the Organization of American States*. Retrieved January 31, 2009, from http://www.oas.org/oas-page/press_releases/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-051/07.

82 Adams, D. (2003, July 20). Colombia walks hesitantly on road to peace. *St. Petersburg Times* (Florida). National, 13A.

83 Ribetti, M. (2009). Disengagement and beyond: A case study of demobilization in Colombia. In In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 152-169). New York: Routledge.

84 BBC World Wide Monitoring. (2006, June 5). New Colombian government faces ten major tasks – weekly. *BBC Monitoring Latin America*. Political.

85 *U.S. Colombia Relations*, 110th Cong., 1st Sess. (testimony of Mark Schneider). (2007, April 24).

86 Ribetti, M. (2009). Disengagement and beyond: A case study of demobilization in Colombia. In In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 152-169). New York: Routledge.

87 Human Rights Watch. (2005). Smoke and mirrors: Colombia's demobilization of paramilitary groups. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/07/31/smoke-and-mirrors?print>.

checked. Sixth, information regarding the demobilization of paramilitaries and guerrillas in Colombia is not shared with local authorities. Local officials that should be in touch with specific demobilized fighters have been reported as unable to do so because, as one director of a reference center put it, “municipal and departmental authorities do not receive lists [of demobilized paramilitaries]”.⁸⁸ Seventh, the monitoring system in place to keep track of demobilized combatants fails to provide information regarding his/her potential rejoining of a guerrilla movement or paramilitary. Finally, the demobilization program, while potentially beneficial in getting combatants to turn in their weapons, actually does nothing to stop guerrilla and paramilitary group leaders from recruiting individuals to replace those that leave the group individually. These shortcomings find consensus in the more recent analysis by Ribetti.⁸⁹

As a consequence, there is strenuous debate concerning the perceived success of the Reincorporation Program. Although compensation to victims appears to be occurring at a slower rate than had been promised, some researchers found that Colombian civilians are generally “satisfied” with how the demobilization of guerrilla groups and paramilitaries is progressing. Despite the institutional nature of the Program, Human Rights Watch and other independent monitoring agencies and NGOs have observed substantial logistic shortcomings inherent in the program. As with any initiative concerning demobilization, one obvious measure of success is the rate at which former fighters keep from returning to violent activities.

Critical Issues: Recidivism

Violent crimes associated with Colombian terrorist groups and paramilitaries have undoubtedly decreased since the early 2000s: government officials claimed that since 2002, murder rates have been cut by half and kidnappings have decreased by 87%.⁹⁰ Citing the Investigative Institute of Co-existence and Citizen Security, McDermott⁹¹ reported that for the first time in many years, the murder rate in Colombia dipped below that of Venezuela. Even the U.S. General Accounting Office recognized that Colombian security has been better in recent years, citing fewer kidnappings and murders per capita.⁹² Colombia National Police Commander, General Jorge Castro, suggested that the drop in violence was a result of President Uribe’s National Security Plan⁹³, of which the Reincorporation Program is part.⁹⁴

Despite the drastic drop in murder rates and kidnappings, there is, unsurprisingly, still evidence to suggest that many ex-combatants participate in violent movements after their demobilization. Citing the Reincorporation Program’s

88 Moiss Gnora, director of the Cali center, interview with Human Rights Watch, March 9, 2005; see Human Rights Watch. (2005). *Smoke and mirrors: Colombia’s demobilization of paramilitary groups*. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/07/31/smoke-and-mirrors?print>.

89 Ribetti, M. (2009). *Disengagement and beyond: A case study of demobilization in Colombia*. In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 152-169). New York: Routledge.

90 No author. (2008, December 10). Colombia says it is cracking down on paramilitaries. *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*. Politics.

91 McDermott, J. (2008, October 12). Venezuela’s murder rates surpass Colombia’s under Hugo Chavez. *Telegraph Online* (United Kingdom). Retrieved January 31, 2009, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/venezuela/3184293/Venezuelas-murder-rates-surpass-Colombias-under-Hugo-Chavez.html>.

92 Bajak, F. (2008, November 6). GAO report: Plan Colombia success limited. *Associated Press Online*. International News.

93 No author. (2007, January 3). En el 2006 Colombia tuvo la tasa mas baja de homicidios. *Emisora del Ejército de Colombia*. Retrieved January 31, 2009, from <http://www.emisoraejercito.mil.co/index.php?idcategoria=443>.

94 Ribetti, M. (2009). *Disengagement and beyond: A case study of demobilization in Colombia*. In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 152-169). New York: Routledge.

Control and Monitoring Report, Ribetti⁹⁵ claimed that nearly 17% of gang members captured between 2006 and 2007 were formerly demobilized combatants. In a related investigation, the International Crisis Group⁹⁶ claimed that obvious warnings about the potential for demobilized individuals to fall back into crime went completely heeded. The ICG asserted that the Reincorporation Program faced a major shortcoming due to a perceived lack of structural support for cooperation between law enforcement agencies (successful cooperation, it was argued, would potentially limit opportunities for demobilized individuals chances to re-engage in illicit activity). The Sixth Report of the OAS illustrated similar concerns, claiming that demobilized combatants were regrouping into criminal gangs such that they were beginning to exercise significant control over the communities in which they operate.⁹⁷

Conclusions

Although the threat of demobilized fighters returning to Colombia's guerrilla terrorist groups and paramilitaries seems small due to the large number of collective disengagements, the above mentioned statistics suggest that there is a considerable likelihood of demobilized individuals joining the ranks of local gangs and criminals. As of July, 2007, nearly 1 in 20 demobilized individuals had fallen into recidivism - this rate varies across Colombia, as some pockets have proven to be relatively effective in limiting recidivism and advocating constructive productivity in the form of employment.⁹⁸

95 Ibid.

96 International Crisis Group. (2007). Colombia's new armed groups. *Latin America Report N°20*. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4824&1=1>.

97 Misión de Apoyo al Proceso de Paz en Colombia, Organización de los Estados Americanos. (2006). Sixth quarterly report of the Secretary General to the Permanent Council on the mission to support the peace process in Colombia.

98 See Ribetti, M. (2009). Disengagement and beyond: A case study of demobilization in Colombia. In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 152-169). New York: Routledge for an example involving the AUC.

Case Study: Indonesian's Disengagement Program

Introduction

In the late hours of October 12, 2002, dozens of vacationers were relaxing in Paddy's Bar in Bali, Indonesia. At 11:05PM, an electronically-triggered blast tore the bar apart, sending scores of panicked and hurt customers fleeing into the night.⁹⁹ As survivors attempted to escape the carnage, another bomb detonated in a Mitsubishi minivan parked outside the Sari nightclub located across the street. The destruction caused by the two explosions was immense, and the attacks were among the deadliest to affect the region. The number of victims as well as the sheer amount of casualties overwhelmed hospital officials – a total of 202 civilians, mostly Western tourists on holiday, were killed. Shortly after the attacks Abu Bakr Bashir, spiritual leader of the Indonesia-based Islamist movement, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) was arrested and charged with ordering the bombing.¹⁰⁰

Even during trials for those accused of perpetrating the Bali bombings, the capital city of Jakarta was attacked. On August 5, 2003, the J. W. Marriott Hotel was struck by a car bomb, killing twelve and injuring more than one hundred people.¹⁰¹ In a report on the state of Southeast Asia in its struggle against terrorism (specifically, JI), Sheldon Simon, professor of political science at Arizona State University, claimed that because the Marriott was one of the most secure hotels in Jakarta, the attack signaled that JI had become increasingly bold: furthermore, he suggested that because JI was able to carry out this operation on such a highly-guarded target they were easily capable of further audacious attacks elsewhere in Southeast Asia.¹⁰² The suspicions were well founded. On September 9, 2004, a 200-kilogram truck bomb exploded outside the Australian embassy in Jakarta,¹⁰³ killing ten and injuring hundreds more.

Wise¹⁰⁴ describes in detail how the terrorist attacks were interpreted by the Indonesian government as a “declaration of war” (p. 1) – as a consequence, the government immediately sprung into action. In the immediate aftermath of the 2002 bombing, the government created a special counter-terrorist unit, known as Detachment-88.¹⁰⁵ Since its official deployment in 2003, Detachment-88 has been responsible for several major victories against JI, including the capture of al-Qaeda liaison Abu Dujana¹⁰⁶ and the killing of the principal bomb-maker behind the Bali attacks, Azahari Husin.¹⁰⁷

99 Wise, W. M. (2005). *Indonesia's War on Terror*. Washington, DC: United States—Indonesia Society.

100 Australian Federal Police. (2008). Bali bombings 2002. In *Previous operations*. Retrieved January 22, 2009, from http://afp.gov.au/international/operations/previous_operations/bali_bombings_2002.

101 Murphy, D. (2003, August 6). Indonesia car bomb echoes Bali. *Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved January 22, 2009, from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0806/p01s01-woap.html>.

102 Simon, S. W. (2003, October 1). *Terrorism perpetrated and terrorists apprehended*. Retrieved January 22, 2009, from http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/0303qus_seasia.pdf.

103 No author. (2005, September 9). Jakarta victims remember embassy blast. *The Age*. Retrieved January 22, 2009, from <http://www.theage.com.au/news/National/Jakarta-victims-remember-embassy-blast/2005/09/09/1125772688276.html>.

104 Wise, W. M. (2005). *Indonesia's War on Terror*. Washington, DC: United States—Indonesia Society.

105 McDonald, H. (2008, May 31). Fighting terrorism with smart weaponry. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved January 24, 2009, from <http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/fighting-terrorism-with-smart-weaponry/2008/5/30/1211654312137.html>.

106 Gelling, P. (2007, June 14). Southeast Asian terrorist leader is under arrest. *The New York Times*. Retrieved January 24, 2009, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/14/world/asia/14indo.html?ref=asia>.

107 No author. (2005, November 10). 'Bali bomb maker' believed dead. *BBC Online*. Retrieved January 24, 2009, from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4421300.stm>.

Still, JI's militants continued to remain active in Indonesia, as evidenced by the attacks that have taken place since the beginning of Indonesian hard-line counter-terror strategies in 2003, and culminating most recently in two coordinated suicide attacks against western hotels in July 2009.¹⁰⁸

In addition to the traditional military counter-terrorism strategies employed by the Indonesian authorities, the government has been quietly promoting an ad hoc disengagement initiative. Since his disillusionment with and subsequent disengagement from JI¹⁰⁹, former commander Mohammed Nasir Bin Abbas has been one half of the public cornerstone of the Indonesian authorities' efforts both to prevent radicalization of Indonesian youth as well as to facilitate the disengagement of existing JI members.¹¹⁰ In addition to providing investigators with detailed information about JI after his arrest, Bin Abbas has become a figurehead to rival even Abu Bakr Bashir. Bin Abbas is seemingly dedicated to arguing against the interpretation of Islam offered by Bashir. To those still loyal to Bashir, Bin Abbas is a hate figure. He regularly gives interviews to researchers and media figures. In an interview with Mick Keelty, Bin Abbas claimed that to re-educate captured prisoners, Bin Abbas explains to them how they have "misunderstood" the "Islamic struggle" and "the meaning of Jihad".¹¹¹ Bin Abbas reiterated this claim in a widely publicized interview with the BBC's Peter Taylor¹¹². Taylor said that Bin Abbas was actively urging (both in public and in private) JI members to "return to the right path of Islamic teaching". Furthermore, it appeared that Bin Abbas assisted Indonesian police forces in their searches for his former comrades, even accompanying police on raids and being present in negotiations to offer a 'reassuring' face to his former comrades who may be contemplating confessing to the police. Bin Abbas is repeatedly reported as claiming he felt no guilt in assisting police to this end.

It is surprising to many that Bin Abbas has essentially become a 'one-man' disengagement initiative. Though this characterization is an over-simplification, there is no evidence that Indonesia has anything resembling a formal program. The range of activities that Bin Abbas engages in, though now with others, essentially constitutes Indonesia's "program". Yet, despite the regular threat of violence from JI, even as early as 1995¹¹³, and recognition of the benefit offered by talking with captured members of JI (as anecdotal evidence from Bin Abbas and the police would suggest), Indonesia has not sought to resource or institutionalize its efforts. This is also despite the recent development of highly publicized nearby

108 Saputra, A., & Leitsinger, M. (2009, July 17). Deadly blasts hit Jakarta hotels. *CNN Online*. Retrieved July 26, 2009, from <http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/07/16/indonesia.hotel.explosion/index.html?iref=newssearch>.

109 Nakashima, E. (2004, March 25). Indonesian militants 'keep regenerating': Jemaah Islamiyah defied international efforts to quash it. *The Washington Post*, A17.

110 Karniol, R. (2008, March 31). De-radicalisation strategies worldwide. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved January 24, 2009, from http://counterideology.multiply.com/journal/item/171/Just_sharing_-_De-radicalisation_strategies_worldwide_The_Straits_Times_Singapore_31_Mar_2008; See also O'Brien, N. (2007, October 22). Terrorists who say no to terror. *The Australian*. Features, 15.

111 Cave, P. (2006, March 10). Former JI commander used to 're-educate' prisoners. *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved January 24, 2009, from <http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2006/s1588419.htm>.

112 Taylor, P. (2006, September 13). The jihadi who turned 'supergrass.' *BBC Online*. Retrieved July 22, 2009, from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/5334594.stm>.

113 Council on Foreign Relations. (2007). What prior attacks has Jemaah Islamiyah been linked to? In *Jemaah Islamiyah (a.k.a. Jemaah Islamiyah)*. Retrieved January 22, 2009, from <http://www.cfr.org/publication/8948>.

similar programs in Malaysia and Singapore.¹¹⁴ Like the program implemented in Yemen¹¹⁵, the cornerstone of the Indonesian initiative is respectful dialogue between program officials and prisoners. The approach publicly described by Bin Abbas has become part of Detachment 88's efforts to promote exit for JI members.

Another prominent figure has been Ali Imron, who is in Indonesian prison for his part in the 2002 Bali attack. Spared the death penalty for expressing remorse for his role in the bombing, Ali Imron provided police with extensive logistic and tactical information about JI's terrorist activities such that the vast majority of what is known about JI essentially derives from Ali Imron and Nasir Bin Abbas. In a 2007 interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation¹¹⁶, Ali Imron revealed the extent to which he cooperated with Indonesian officials. He claimed to be of help because he "know[s] how they will try to get their weapons and explosives...what kind of place they will target for what kind of action and I know how they would carry that out."¹¹⁷ Ali Imron claimed to be cognizant of the effect of radicalizing messages. He claimed that he "know[s] how the terrorists recruit new members and who is most vulnerable to the radical message." To counter the radical messages disseminated by his former group, Ali Imron wrote a book, produced cassette tapes, and publicly described how he would tell family and friends about the mistakes he made as a holy warrior among the ranks of JI. In addition, and within the confines of his detainment, Ali Imron has been working in coordination with Detachment-88 in an effort to "deprogram other jailed terrorists," and feels that the rehabilitative efforts of the Indonesian government represent an "effective approach" to stopping terrorism.¹¹⁸

Select Detachment-88 personnel, while operating chiefly in their role as an elite counter-terrorism team associated with the Indonesian National Police¹¹⁹, has also been involved in the attempted de-radicalization of those it captures. JI expert Zachary Abuza¹²⁰ attributed much of Detachment-88's success to the religiosity of its leadership. Brigadier General Surya Dharma, head of Detachment-88, has organized prayer sessions among captured JI members. Such demonstrations of adherence to Islam and mutual respect have surprised some prisoners - as evidenced by the operations of Ali Imron and his work with Detachment-88, Indonesian officials believe that the success of their program (particularly within prison walls) is contingent on the involvement of former members of JI.¹²¹ In addition to assisting Indonesian police with their investigations¹²², Bin Abbas has also been involved in the "re-education" of arrested JI operatives. In

114 Abuza, Z. (2009). The rehabilitation of Jemaah Islamiyah detainees in South East Asia: A preliminary assessment. In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 193-211). New York: Routledge; See also Neighbor, S. (2007, November 9). Over their dead bodies. *The Australian*. Features, 13.

115 Boucek, C., Beg, S., & Horgan, J. (2009). Opening up the jihadi debate: Yemen's Committee for Dialogue. In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp.181-192). New York: Routledge.

116 Martin, D. (2007, September 20). Bali bomber now campaigns to stop terrorism. *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved January 26, 2009, from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/09/20/2039099.htm>.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

119 See Guerin, B. (2007, June 16). Another success for Detachment 88. *Asia Times Online*. Retrieved January 26, 2009, from http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/IF16Ae01.html for an example of Detachment-88's traditional efforts.

120 Abuza, Z. (2009). The rehabilitation of Jemaah Islamiyah detainees in South East Asia: A preliminary assessment. In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 193-211). New York: Routledge.

121 O'Brien, N. (2007, October 22). Terrorists who say no to terror. *The Australian*. Features, 15.

122 Jenkins, P. (Producer). (2006). *Al-Qaeda: Turning the terrorists* [Television broadcast]. Retrieved January 26, 2009, from <http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=turning+the+terrorists&emb=0&aq=f&ap=f#>. London, UK: British Broadcasting Corporation.

an interview with Tony Jones of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Australian Federal Police Commissioner Keelty claimed that Bin Abbas's former position in JI (operational commander of JI's "Mantiqi 3" and administrator of the *Hudaibiyah* JI training facility) yields respect from those that have been captured.¹²³ Keelty argued that Bin Abbas is someone who would have been admired by captured JI members, and that such respect can be utilized to "convert the others."¹²⁴ Tito Karnavian, Senior Head of Intelligence for Detachment-88, echoed Keelty's claim, stating that ex-leaders of JI are extremely useful in helping to "de-radicalize" captured members of the extremist group.¹²⁵ The assertions of Keelty and Karnavian that Bin Abbas's former role in JI commands respect from current members are not unfounded. While giving testimony against one of the architects of the second Bali bombing, the defendant smiled and shook the hand of Bin Abbas as a sign of respect.¹²⁶

The respect commanded by Bin Abbas provides him with the unique opportunity to play a central role in the de-radicalization efforts of the Indonesian government. Because he was a former commander, Bin Abbas is personally familiar with several of those that have been captured by Indonesian authorities. Bell¹²⁷ reported that once JI members are arrested, Bin Abbas holds talks with them. Unusually, Bin Abbas can spend up to a week with captured JI members before Indonesian police get significant access to them.¹²⁸ During that time, Bin Abbas attempts to invalidate detainees' Islamic justifications for armed action against civilians – when Indonesian officials speak about 'de-radicalization', this is essentially what is being referred to.¹²⁹ In addition, Bin Abbas tries to get detainees to cooperate with police investigations.¹³⁰

The authorities openly recognize the importance of altering both attitude and behavior through prisoner discussions with Bin Abbas. AFP Commissioner Keelty confirmed that Bin Abbas was "used to both assist in the Indonesian National Police and their investigations and to speak to people who were taken into custody to try and change their behaviors and beliefs."¹³¹

Although discussions with Bin Abbas and revelations of good treatment on the part of police can prove helpful in changing the belief structures of captured JI members, some Indonesian officials have also provided logistic and finan-

123 O'Brien, N. (2007, October 22). Terrorists who say no to terror. *The Australian*. Features, 15.

124 Jones, T. (2006, March 8). Keelty discusses reprogramming terrorists [Interview]. *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved January 26, 2009, from http://www.abc.net.au/reslib/200603/r75311_212476.aspx.

125 Abbugao, M. (2007). Indonesia shifts battles against extremists. Quoted in Z. Abuza (2009), The rehabilitation of Jemaah Islamiyah detainees in Southeast Asia: A preliminary assessment. In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 193-211). New York: Routledge.

126 Jenkins, P. (Producer). (2006). *Al-Qaeda: Turning the terrorists* [Television broadcast]. Retrieved January 26, 2009, from <http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=turning+the+terrorists&emb=0&aq=f&ap=#>. London, UK: British Broadcasting Corporation.

127 Bell, S. (2006, February 25). Reason to live: In Southeast Asia, fighting terror includes fighting for the minds of suicide bombers. *National Post (Canada)*. News, A1.

128 Abuza, Z. (2009). The rehabilitation of Jemaah Islamiyah detainees in South East Asia: A preliminary assessment. In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 193-211). New York: Routledge.

129 Abbugao, M. (2007). Indonesia shifts battles against extremists. Quoted in Z. Abuza (2009), The rehabilitation of Jemaah Islamiyah detainees in Southeast Asia: A preliminary assessment. In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 193-211). New York: Routledge.

130 Bell, S. (2006, February 25). Reason to live: In Southeast Asia, fighting terror includes fighting for the minds of suicide bombers. *National Post (Canada)*. News, A1.

131 Kearney, S. (2006, June 5). Islamic leaders to help rehabilitate terrorists. *The Australian*. Local, 5.

cial support to prisoners in exchange for their cooperation. In a detailed report on the state of de-radicalization and the Indonesian prison system, the International Crisis Group¹³² claimed that some Indonesian police had been giving economic and social support to the families of JI detainees. Police had covered travel expenses for the families of those seeking to visit the incarcerated and provided accommodations upon their arrival, allowed for extra meals, financed weddings for detainees, arranged for access to long-distance learning programs, and provided top-notch medical treatment. Although treatment availability is variable across prisons in Indonesia, officials recognized the benefits associated with handling detainees in a supportive and respectful manner. In a Crisis Group interview, a senior official noted that when given the choice between religious and socio-economic tactics to what locally constitutes de-radicalization, the latter is preferable as it is viewed as a successful approach to primarily gain the confidence of the detainees.¹³³

Taken together, it is clear that the Indonesian disengagement initiative is not easy to characterize. It is perhaps best considered a loosely-knit array of different soft-line approaches, the various features of which are relevant and potent at particular phases and for particular people. However, Abuza¹³⁴ appropriately describes the Indonesian program as “underfinanced, understaffed, and not terribly institutionalized” (p. 198). In many ways, Bin Abbas has come to epitomize a ‘one-man’ approach to these issues, though this popular representation of him is an oversimplification. Further, Abuza suggests revealed that police are being forced to take on roles for which they are not properly trained, becoming “de facto psychologists, social workers, etc.” (p. 199). That said, the Indonesian initiative is unique in its utilization of ex-terrorists as central to the disengagement process. To this day, authorities firmly believe that the involvement of Ali Imron and Nasir Bin Abbas effectively serves to build a mutual respect between detainees and their captors. This respect, they argue can in turn be used to challenge and undermine radical belief structures.

Critical Issues: Criticism and Recidivism

By late 2007, more than 300 individuals were arrested for terrorism-related activities in Indonesia.¹³⁵ Although there are conflicting reports on the number of detainees that underwent treatment through the disengagement initiative (Abuza reported twenty in 2009; Karniol reported “about two dozen” in 2008), it is clear that the number of detainees voluntarily choosing to take part in the process is low. Short prison sentences and general amnesties may provide disincentive for prisoners to undergo talks to steer them away from their core beliefs.¹³⁶

In Indonesia, prisoners remain eligible for early release as a result of (a) participating in the disengagement program

132 International Crisis Group. (2007). “Deradicalisation” and Indonesian prisons. *Asia Report N°142*. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5170&1=1>.

133 Ibid.

134 Abuza, Z. (2009). The rehabilitation of Jemaah Islamiyah detainees in South East Asia: A preliminary assessment. In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 193-211). New York: Routledge.

135 Karniol, R. (2008, March 31). De-radicalisation strategies worldwide. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved January 24, 2009, from http://counterideology.multiply.com/journal/item/171/Just_sharing_-_De-radicalisation_strategies_worldwide_The_Straits_Times_Singapore_31_Mar_2008; See also O'Brien, N. (2007, October 22). Terrorists who say no to terror. *The Australian*. Features, 15.

136 International Crisis Group. (2007). “Deradicalisation” and Indonesian prisons. *Asia Report N°142*. Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5170&1=1>; See also Pluchinsky, D. A. (2008). Global jihadist recidivism: A red flag. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 31(3), 182-200.

and being deemed “successfully” de-radicalized or (b) receiving substantial sentence remissions.¹³⁷ The unofficial nature of the de-radicalization program makes it difficult to discern exactly why individuals are freed from prison, let alone how de-radicalization is ascertained and validated, as well as how this is linked to judgments about the prospects of returning to violence or subversion of any kind. Moreover, Abuza noted that there is actually no evidence to suggest that those who have been released due to sentence remissions or amnesties were in reality exposed to any kind of de-radicalization efforts of the Indonesian government. Further, Woods¹³⁸ claimed that the decision to renounce extremist views is largely a result of monetary incentive rather than de-radicalized attitudes or cognitions, suggesting that most of those that do leave prison do so with their extremist views intact.

Yet, many officials assert that the Indonesian efforts are “successful”. Foreign Affairs Minister Hassan Wirajuda claimed that captured and rehabilitated terrorists can serve as “allies in neutralizing terrorist propaganda”.¹³⁹ In his discussion with Southeast Asian security personnel, Oorthijam¹⁴⁰ reported that only two or three (0.4%-0.7%) of the 458 arrested on terrorism charges in Southeast Asia have fallen back into terrorism. Although these unusual figures sound promising, it remains unclear what Indonesian officials mean both by “de-radicalization” and recidivism, and the lack of transparency surrounding official statistics must call this into question.¹⁴¹

Conclusions

The Indonesian initiative is not so much a singular program, but rather a series of smaller, unofficial initiatives developed by Indonesian police forces and supported in critical areas by the involvement of former JI members. Although the initiatives are largely non-institutionalized, the involvement of former JI operatives in the disengagement process affords officials a level of insight they would probably not have been able to obtain or effectively cultivate otherwise. Further, due to the perceived credibility and respect commanded by Ali Imron and Nasir Bin Abbas, what is clear is that they have been in a strategically effective position to encourage captives to fully disengage from their movements. It is probably inaccurate, however, and certainly premature to consider this true ‘de-radicalization’. Infrastructural problems with the prison system have limited the scale of the efforts, while short prison terms and remissions negate the incentive to partake in a rehabilitation program that rewards detainees with shorter sentences.

137 For example, see Wockner, C. (2007, October 2). Bali bombers’ sentences likely cut for Ramadan. *www.news.com.au*. Retrieved January 27, 2009, from <http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,22514834-401,00.html>.

138 Woods, A. (2008, July 3). Good Muslim, good citizen. *Slate Magazine*. Faith-Based section.

139 Teo, L. (2007, March 7). Winning hearts, minds next step in combating terror: Governments agree to promote dialogues within and across different religions. *The Business Times Singapore*. Indonesia section.

140 Oorjitham, S. (2008, October 5). Persuading terrorists to ‘disengage.’ *New Straits Times (Malaysia)*. Local, 20.

141 Abuza, Z. (2009). The rehabilitation of Jemaah Islamiyah detainees in South East Asia: A preliminary assessment. In T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 193-211). New York: Routledge.

Case Study: Yemen's Religious Dialogue Committee

Introduction

On October 12, 2000, Ibrahim al-Thawar and Hassan al-Khamri directed a 35-foot motorboat packed with TNT into the portside of the USS Cole while it was refueling in the Harbor of Aden in Yemen.¹⁴² The resulting blast ripped a 32-foot by 36-foot hole in the side of the destroyer and killed 17 American sailors. Al-Qaeda Persian Gulf Operations Chief Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, of Yemeni descent, was found to be the operational commander and primary facilitator in the attack on the Cole.¹⁴³

Although the attack on the Cole did not directly represent an assault on Yemeni interests, per se, al-Qaeda aggression against American interests in Yemen presented a unique challenge to the Yemeni government. In addition, the naming of al-Nashiri as the mastermind behind the attack on the Cole made it clear that Yemeni nationals were among the ranks of al-Qaeda leadership.

The events of 9/11 prompted the American government to take aim at al-Qaeda at their base in Afghanistan. As part of this campaign, the Bush administration determined that both al-Qaeda and its national host, the Taliban, should be destroyed. The war in Afghanistan began on October 7, 2001, almost exactly a year after the attack on the Cole in Yemen. In Yemen, President Saleh publicly voiced his support for the American-led "War on Terror".¹⁴⁴ If the attack on the Cole heightened Yemeni officials' attention about terrorists operating within Yemen, the attacks in the U.S. on September 11th 2001 appear to have further prompted President Saleh and his advisors to act.

As American intentions regarding al-Qaeda and its allies became clear, President Saleh determined that action must be taken against domestic terrorists within Yemen's borders. Yemeni security forces cracked down on suspected militants, arresting hundreds in 2001 and 2002.¹⁴⁵ Still, al-Qaeda proved resilient, and a further major attack exposed the gaping vulnerabilities in Yemen's security.

That second attack took place on October 6, 2002. The MV Limburg, a French 150,000-ton crude oil tanker was floating off the coast of Yemen, when, in an attack comparable to that against USS Cole, a small boat rammed the side of the ship. The attack killed a Bulgarian crewman and caused substantial damage to the tanker. Once again, al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attack, and once again, the operation was organized primarily by al-Nashiri.¹⁴⁶

The Limburg attack was doubly significant in that it (a) served as a message to the Yemeni government that al-Qaeda was still capable of functioning despite government crackdowns and (b) represented the first successful attack on an

142 Lumpkin, J. (2006a). USS Cole bombing. Retrieved June 15, 2008, from http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/uss_cole_bombing.htm.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.

145 Johnsen, G. D. (2004a). Terrorists in rehab. *Worldview Magazine*, 17(3). Retrieved June 13, 2008, from <http://www.worldviewmagazine.com/issues/article.cfm?id=139&issue=34>.

146 Lumpkin, J. (2006b). Limburg oil tanker attacked. Retrieved June 15, 2008, from http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/limburg_oil_tanker_attacked.htm.

oil target.¹⁴⁷ Despite his attempts to arrest and punish militants in Yemen, President Saleh was widely seen as failing to quell terrorism-related violence through arrests and government crackdowns alone. Around this time, it became clear that an alternative method to approaching terrorism was necessary if he was to suppress the abilities of al-Qaeda within Yemen's borders.¹⁴⁸

To this end, the Yemeni Committee for Dialogue program, once known as the Yemen "re-education program" was developed. The foundations of this prison-based initiative rest on three primary pillars of Islamic belief: the Qur'an, the sunna (traditions thought to date to the Prophet Muhammed), and *hadiths* (the sayings attributed to the Prophet). Through what he called re-education, Saleh hoped to find ways to change the beliefs of those individuals who assert that defense of Islam requires physical attacks against non-believers (Johnsen, 2004b). Five religious scholars were selected to form what would become, formally, Yemen's *Religious Dialogue Committee* (RDC). As the head of the five-man committee, Saleh appointed Hamoud al-Hitar, a widely-respected Yemeni judge.

Saleh's approach was important in that if the threat of terrorism was not subdued within Yemen, the threat of the United States government taking matters into its own hands to protect its interests as it had done in Afghanistan was a real possibility, and it was certainly perceived so in the streets of Yemen. Unorthodox and untested, the RDC would serve as the primary supplement to Yemen's traditional methods of government suppression of anti-Yemen militants within its borders.

The basis of the RDC rests on the idea that because the political killing of civilians has "faulty intellectual foundations"¹⁴⁹, the core tenets of terrorism can be disputed, thus weakening or reversing attitudes that support terrorist activity.¹⁵⁰ To achieve attitude change, al-Hitar and the rest of the RDC (consisting primarily of other religious scholars) employ open debate with those that have been captured. That is, al-Hitar utilizes dialogue to as a way to understand and ultimately change how captured militants perceive their actions. Al-Hitar claims that many of the captured militants have several parts of the Qur'an memorized as justification for their support of and participation in terrorism.¹⁵¹ Because many militants turn to the Qur'an as justification or explanation of their actions, al-Hitar and other members of the RDC tend to challenge militants not on the content but on their *understanding* of the verses and *hadiths*. In a published statement explaining the philosophy and operations of the RDC (copy in authors' possession), al-Hitar (nd) quotes several verses in the Qur'an that describe the place of dialogue in Islam and how the Qur'an admonishes the application of terroristic methods. Specifically, al-Hitar (nd) explains that some of the subjects that he and the other religious scholars invite the participants to talk about include the place of jihad (struggle) in Islam and its justifications, the relations of the Muslims and others, and the general concept of the state, government, and ruler rights within Islam. In a sense, the RDC

147 Ibid.

148 Johnsen, G. D. (2004a). Terrorists in rehab. *Worldview Magazine*, 17(3). Retrieved June 13, 2008, from <http://www.worldviewmagazine.com/issues/article.cfm?id=139&issue=34>.

149 Johnsen, G. D. (2004a). Terrorists in rehab. *Worldview Magazine*, 17(3). Retrieved June 13, 2008, from <http://www.worldviewmagazine.com/issues/article.cfm?id=139&issue=34>.

150 Al-Hitar, H. A. (nd). Dialogue and its effects on countering terrorism: The Yemeni experience. 1-18.

151 Brandon, J. (2005, February 4). Koranic duels ease terror. *Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved June 8, 2008, from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0204/p01s04-wome.html>; See also Johnsen, G. D. (2004b, January 20). In Yemen, a benevolent alternative to Osama bin Laden. *New America Media*. Retrieved June 4, 2008, from http://news.ncmonline.com/news/view_article.html?article_id=be013890b8c48cf458e54f95b8708629.

attempts to stamp out faulty Qur'anic arguments with the Qur'an itself. The idea is that if militants have put so much stock in their actions via the Qur'an, then those actions and corresponding attitudes can be changed using the same types of justifications.

In fact, Brandon¹⁵² claims that al-Hitar invites the captured militants to use the Qur'an to justify attacks on civilians. When they struggle with this, al-Hitar exposes the militants to the passages within the Qur'an that renounce the use of violence against civilians and espouse respect for other religions.

The basis for the debates, al-Hitar argues, is mutual respect.¹⁵³ Whereas many in the Muslim world perceive punishment by the United States or Yemeni governments as mere suppression with a general lack of respect for Islam, al-Hitar attempted to engage captured militants in "dialogue at eye level".¹⁵⁴ The meetings between al-Hitar and captured suspects are small and intimate- no more than five to seven militants gather at any one time. During the course of these meetings, al-Hitar and other religious scholars engage the suspected militants in topics of conversation including the Qur'an, and non-believers living in an Islamic world.¹⁵⁵ Once meetings are concluded, all participants must document and sign off on what they have discussed and what they have learned. After weeks of debate, if the prisoners renounce violence and (if applicable) the terrorist groups of which they were a part, they are released and offered some vocational training courses and help to find legal employment.

Although the tangible rewards offered at the conclusion of the program (i.e., vocational training courses and help in securing legal employment) provide some of the basis for the program's claimed success, it is clear that al-Hitar and the rest of the RDC believe that the rehabilitation of captured terrorists lies in challenging intellectual and theological arguments for the use of terrorism with intellectual and theological arguments against the use of terrorism; al-Hitar (nd) himself claimed that argument-based dialogue "has become an essential element of the Republic of Yemen's policy to countering extremism and terrorism" (p. 2). Al-Hitar feels that most militants are ordinary people who were led astray (they have been called "the deceived"¹⁵⁶), and that they can be led back to a non-violent existence if only approached with respect.¹⁵⁷ Some Yemeni officials share al-Hitar's sentiment- Faris Sanabani, former advisor to President Saleh, said that "it is only logical to tackle these people through their brains and heart... if you beat these people up, they become more stubborn... they will enjoy the pain and find something good in it - it is a part of their ideology" - this, of course,

152 Brandon, J. (2005, February 4). Koranic duels ease terror. *Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved June 8, 2008, from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0204/p01s04-wome.html>.

153 Al-Hitar, H. A. (nd). Dialogue and its effects on countering terrorism: The Yemeni experience. 1-18; See also Helberg, K. (2005). The Yemeni Dialogue Committee: Judge fights terror through force of conviction. *Qantara*. Retrieved June 10, 2008, from http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/ c-476/ nr-339/i.html?PHPSESSID=4c72d66e722dd3efc7c3ca4eb117566c.

154 Helberg, K. (2005). The Yemeni Dialogue Committee: Judge fights terror through force of conviction. *Qantara*. Retrieved June 10, 2008, from http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/ c-476/ nr-339/i.html?PHPSESSID=4c72d66e722dd3efc7c3ca4eb117566c.

155 Johnsen, G. D. (2004b, January 20). In Yemen, a benevolent alternative to Osama bin Laden. *New America Media*. Retrieved June 4, 2008, from http://news.ncmonline.com/news/view_article.html?article_id=be013890b8c48cf458e54f95b8708629.

156 Oudah, A. (2008, June 4). Judge Hamoud al-Hitar, Minister of Islamic Affairs, talks about using dialogue to confront extremists. *Yemen Observer*. Retrieved June 9, 2008, from <http://www.yobserver.com/reports/10014374.html>.

157 Brandon, J. (2005, February 4). Koranic duels ease terror. *Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved June 8, 2008, from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0204/p01s04-wome.html>.

is not unlike the Indonesian approach.¹⁵⁸ Although initial reports on the program claimed great success (Willems¹⁵⁹ reported that al-Hitar even traveled to England and Egypt to share his program with interested British and Egyptian governments), recent years have seen the RDC's achievements called into question.¹⁶⁰

Critical Issues: Reactions, Claimed Successes and Recidivism

Successful participation in dialogue through the RDC basically qualifies suspected militants for release. As one might expect, the nature of how individuals are released from captivity is a point of contention for those nations that have been victimized by those militants being released. For example, five militants who were involved with the bombing of the USS Cole were released in 2004¹⁶¹ to the public disapproval of the United States government.¹⁶² Although the Yemeni government claims that no militants who have actually taken part in attacks are released, the fact that anyone involved in an attack on U.S. interests in any capacity proved an enormously sensitive issue for American-Yemeni relations. Some officials tout al-Hitar as a brave man who has made Yemen a valuable player in the region, while to others, he is viewed as nothing more than naïve at best and an apologist at worst. An unnamed European diplomat has described Yemen as having “gone from being a potential enemy to becoming an indispensable ally in fighting terrorism”;¹⁶³ while others are not so sure. Abdullah al-Faqih, professor of political science at Sana’a University concedes that despite the program’s perceived success, it is extremely difficult to change one’s beliefs, and to ascertain the extent of that change, through talking alone.¹⁶⁴ Al-Faqih’s concerns reflect the primary basic concern of U.S. officials: How can we know that those militants who denounce violence are doing so because they are fundamentally changed and not because they are simply trying to get free?

Because the RDC operated under the auspices of the Yemeni government, and as mentioned above, the Yemeni government has a vested interest in appearing to curb terrorism inside its borders, success and recidivism rates associated with the RDC are extremely difficult to interpret. Most, if not all claims of success come directly from the RDC, usually al-Hitar himself. In an interview with James Brandon of the Christian Science Monitor¹⁶⁵, al-Hitar claimed that 364 suspected militants had been released since the inception of the dialogue program in late 2002 through 2005. Al-Hitar (nd) claimed that among these 364, 104 individuals took part in the dialogue program between May and November of 2002 and that upon their collective release supervision of these individuals was “encouraging” (p. 16). Al-Hitar (nd) also

158 Ibid.

159 Willems, P. (2004, December 16-19). Judge Hamoud al-Hitar praised: The Dialogue Committee is known internationally. *Yemen Times*. Retrieved June 9, 2008, from <http://yementimes.com/article.shtml?i=799&p=community&a=2>.

160 Schanzer, J. (2003, November 28). Yemen’s Al-Qaeda amnesty. *Frontpage Magazine*. Retrieved June 23, 2008, from <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/Read.aspx?GUID=108E44B8-BC3F-4F85-BABF-8ADBBA5F214E>.

161 Willems, P. (2004, December 16-19). Judge Hamoud al-Hitar praised: The Dialogue Committee is known internationally. *Yemen Times*. Retrieved June 9, 2008, from <http://yementimes.com/article.shtml?i=799&p=community&a=2>.

162 Whitlock, C. (2008, May 4). Probe of U.S.S. Cole bombing unravels. *Washington Post*. Retrieved June 13, 2008, from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/03/AR2008050302047.html>

163 Brandon, J. (2005, February 4). Koranic duels ease terror. *Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved June 8, 2008, from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0204/p01s04-wome.html>.

164 Willems, P. (2004, December 16-19). Judge Hamoud al-Hitar praised: The Dialogue Committee is known internationally. *Yemen Times*. Retrieved June 9, 2008, from <http://yementimes.com/article.shtml?i=799&p=community&a=2>.

165 Brandon, J. (2005, February 4). Koranic duels ease terror. *Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved June 8, 2008, from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0204/p01s04-wome.html>.

claimed that between August and September of 2003, 120 individuals took part in the dialogue program. The results of these series of talks were simply described by al-Hitar as “positive” (p. 16). Al-Hitar also stated that between June and October of 2004, 112 individuals who were influenced by al-Qaeda were “commit[ed] to the result of the dialogue (al-Hitar, nd). Additionally, 176 members of Believing Youth, a militant organization dedicated to fighting Yemeni security forces, were expected to be released sometime in 2004 or 2005. In an interview with Abdul-Aziz Oudah¹⁶⁶, al-Hitar claimed “50 percent of al-Huthi followers (Believing Youth) were quite convinced with the talks, however there are other factors that made them relapse into violence actions again” and that “those influenced by al-Qaeda were persuaded at a 98 percent rate” (p.2). Although the number of suspected militants released is verifiable, the number that returned to fight is not. And it seems that *where* precisely they returned to fight – whether inside or outside Yemen – has proven to be a further complicating factor.

Most skepticism with regard to the RDC is a result of (a) suspicious reports of extremely high rates of success, (b) the release of prisoners involved in major attacks (i.e., the Cole bombing), (c) the fact that al-Hitar and the RDC seem to base their reports of success rates on their own definitions of what constitutes “legitimate” and “illegitimate” use of force, (d) actual rates of recidivism and (e) wildly differing views about what constitutes terrorism as opposed to ‘legitimate resistance’. As noted above, the RDC attempts to persuade suspected al-Qaeda militants that their way of thinking is wrong through Qur’anic verses that speak ill of attacks on innocents and justify armed conflict only in the form of self-defense. Al-Hitar has been cloudy on what the current conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Israel-Palestine justify. Although he claims that the aforementioned conflicts have prompted “unsuitable reactions”¹⁶⁷, it remains unclear whether he counts former participants in the RDC fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan, or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as “failures.” The *apparent* failure of al-Hitar to explicitly state what the RDC considers terrorism (as opposed to legitimate political protest or legitimate ‘violence’) further complicates any attempt to comprehensively evaluate the program.

Conclusions

Because of his notoriety as a respected Islamic scholar (even prior to the development of the RDC), Hamoud al-Hitar has been appointed the Minister of Islamic Affairs in Yemen by President Saleh. In 2008, al-Hitar publicly conceded that the operations of the Religious Dialogue Committee had stopped because of time constraints due to his government appointment. In response to a question posed by Abdul-Aziz Oudah¹⁶⁸ regarding the status of the dialogue program, al-Hitar replied that “it is stopped for the time being because I dedicate all my time to my ministry” (p. 2). Although it is plausible that the RDC was halted due to al-Hitar’s new government responsibilities, it is not unreasonable to suspect that the general lack of clarity with regard to the RDC led to its decline. These incongruities, coupled with the release of suspected militants with ties to attacks on U.S. interests, has in many respects strained U.S.-Yemen relations. Central to this appears to have been a negative backlash against the RDC.¹⁶⁹

166 Oudah, A. (2008, June 4). Judge Hamoud al-Hitar, Minister of Islamic Affairs, talks about using dialogue to confront extremists. *Yemen Observer*. Retrieved June 9, 2008, from <http://www.yobserver.com/reports/10014374.html>.

167 Johnsen, G. D. (2004a). Terrorists in rehab. *Worldview Magazine*, 17(3). Retrieved June 13, 2008, from <http://www.worldviewmagazine.com/issues/article.cfm?id=139&issue=34>

168 Oudah, A. (2008, June 4). Judge Hamoud al-Hitar, Minister of Islamic Affairs, talks about using dialogue to confront extremists. *Yemen Observer*. Retrieved June 9, 2008, from <http://www.yobserver.com/reports/10014374.html>.

169 Brandon, J. (2005, February 4). Koranic duels ease terror. *Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved June 8, 2008, from <http://>

Although al-Hitar claimed that he has plans to revive the RDC in the near future¹⁷⁰, the political climate in Yemen seems to suggest that doing so would be extremely difficult. The September 17, 2008 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a¹⁷¹ may prompt the United States to eventually abandon what has been criticized as a soft approach to dealing with terrorists. The continued violence in Yemen suggests that the success of President Saleh's and al-Hitar's RDC in the first few years after the September 11th attacks may be academic. The RDC, despite initial promise, seems to have broken down due to lack of transparency, suspicious reported rates of recidivism, and lingering skepticism on the part of some of Yemen's allies.

www.csmonitor.com/2005/0204/p01s04-wome.html; See also Boucek, C., Beg, S., & Horgan, J. (2009). Opening up the jihadi debate: Yemen's Committee for Dialogue. In T. Bjørge & J. Horgan (Eds.), *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement* (pp. 181-192). London: Routledge.

170 Brandon, J. (2005, February 4). Koranic duels ease terror. *Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved June 8, 2008, from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0204/p01s04-wome.html>; See also Oudah, A. (2008, June 4). Judge Hamoud al-Hitar, Minister of Islamic Affairs, talks about using dialogue to confront extremists. *Yemen Observer*. Retrieved June 9, 2008, from <http://www.yobserver.com/reports/10014374.html>.

171 Labott, E., Ruggiero, D., Elwazer, S., & Wedeman, B. (2008, September 19). US Embassy staff asked to leave Yemen. Retrieved October 2, 2008, from <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/meast/09/19/yemen.embassy.staff/index.html?iref=newssearch>.

Case Study: Saudi Arabia's Counseling Program

Introduction

On May 12, 2003, at approximately 11:30PM local time, nearly simultaneous explosions rocked several areas of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, killing 34 people.¹⁷² Targeted were housing compounds known to be frequented by Westerners:¹⁷³ vehicle-borne bombs struck the Al-Hamra compound in the Gharnata district, the Vinnell compound, and a third compound in the Cordoba district. Additionally, reports stated that witnesses to the bombing in the Gharnata district described gunfire just prior to the explosion. A source to the Emergency Response and Research Institute (ERRI) described the attacks as being conducted in a "very coordinated manner," which ERRI analysts believed to be an indication of al-Qaeda's involvement in the bombings.¹⁷⁴

When arrests were made, several of those apprehended were discovered to be members of al-Qaeda.¹⁷⁵ Foreign minister Prince Saud said that 15 Saudis had taken part in the attacks on their native soil.¹⁷⁶ The Riyadh compound attacks served as a clear indication that al-Qaeda had a reach that could infiltrate Saudi Arabia's borders and recruit yet more of its citizens.

Although Saudi Arabia had been dealing with a sustained domestic insurgency for several years by 2003¹⁷⁷, immediately after the Riyadh compound attacks the Kingdom instituted a series of new security measures to combat terrorism within its borders. In addition to the traditional "hard" methods of combating terrorism, the Saudis developed a series of "soft" measures intended to win their own "war of ideas" by seeking to de-legitimize what the Kingdom deemed to be incorrect and/or violent interpretations of the Qu'ran.¹⁷⁸ One of these "soft" approaches to combating terrorism saw the development of a special program intended to rehabilitate insurgents through a combination of open dialogue and psychological evaluation.¹⁷⁹ Although the program was started in secret, it has since become extremely well known

172 Emergency Response and Research Institute. (2003, May 15). Terrorist attack on Western residences in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; May 12, 2003 to present. *EmergencyNet News*. Retrieved July 28, 2009, from http://www.emergency.com/2003/saudi_bombs_051203.htm.

173 Ibid.

174 Ibid.

175 PBS. (2003, May 23). Saudi Arabia arrests at least five linked to Riyadh bombings. *Online NewsHour*. Retrieved July 28, 2009, from http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/riyadh_05-28-03.html.

176 Emergency Response and Research Institute. (2003, May 15). Terrorist attack on Western residences in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; May 12, 2003 to present. *EmergencyNet News*. Retrieved July 28, 2009, from http://www.emergency.com/2003/saudi_bombs_051203.htm.

177 Henry, T. (2007, June). Get out of jihad free. *Atlantic Monthly*. Retrieved July 28, 2009, from <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200706/saudi-jihad>.

178 Boucek, C. (2007). Extremist reeducation and rehabilitation in Saudi Arabia. *Terrorism Monitor*, 5(16). Retrieved June 18, 2008, from http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?issue_id=4213.

179 Boucek, C. (2007). Extremist reeducation and rehabilitation in Saudi Arabia. *Terrorism Monitor*, 5(16). Retrieved June 18, 2008, from <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373926>; See also Boucek, C. (2008a). Jailing jihadis: Saudi Arabia's special terrorist prisons. *Terrorism Monitor*, 6(2). Retrieved June 18, 2008, from <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373926>; Boucek, C. (2008b). Saudi Arabia's "soft" counterterrorism strategy: Prevention, rehabilitation, and aftercare. *Carnegie Papers*, 97; and Fleishman, J. (2007, December 21). Saudi Arabia tries to rehab radical minds. *The Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved June 21 from <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/dec/21/world/fg-rehab21>.

both within and outside Saudi Arabia. As such, it has generated interest from many who hope to fight terrorism by means other than traditional suppression.

Unlike Yemen's Religious Dialogue Committee, which was founded and operated primarily under the supervision of one man, Judge Hamoud al-Hitar¹⁸⁰, the Saudi program (dubbed the "Advisory Committee Counseling Program") operates in a much more formalized and structured manner. Because the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for promoting public safety in Saudi Arabia, including domestic security, civil defense, and counterterrorist activities, the Advisory Committee falls under the auspices of this Ministry.¹⁸¹ The head of the Ministry of the Interior is Prince Naif bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud.

Although he is primarily known for special forces-based counterterrorism activities, Prince Muhammed bin Nayef, the third-highest ranked official in the Ministry of the Interior, oversees the Kingdom's prevention, rehabilitation, and reintegration efforts.¹⁸² He has become internationally-renowned for his dedication to fighting terrorism within Saudi Arabia. According to Boucek's¹⁸³ detailing of the committee and its administrators, Prince bin Nayef's office organizes several components of the Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Aftercare (PRAC) programs. The Advisory Committee is responsible for all prison counseling, for example. Another office under the Prince is responsible for family social and logistical care while participants are detained. Yet another of Prince bin Nayef's offices is responsible for the organization and coordination of several Western-educated social scientists, psychologists, and psychiatrists dedicated to analyzing terrorism on both the micro- and macro- levels. Boucek¹⁸⁴ has regularly argued that the "number and quality of the people assembled to work on the strategy is indicative of the state's commitment to implement change in society" (p. 5).

The primary purpose of the Counseling Program is to help those individuals within Saudi Arabia that have espoused radical ideologies to abandon those schools of thought that support terrorism.¹⁸⁵ Ultimately, Saudi officials seek to reintegrate individuals into society after forfeiting their radicalized beliefs.¹⁸⁶ Although individuals who successfully carried out a terrorist attack (i.e. "have blood on their hands") are eligible to participate in the program, they are not eligible for early release (contrary to much commentary about this program).¹⁸⁷

Boucek¹⁸⁸ and Murphy¹⁸⁹ described four subcommittees that make up the counseling program. These subcommittees include the Religious Subcommittee, the Psychological and Social Subcommittee, the Security Subcommittee, and the

180 See Johnsen, G. D. (2004, January 20). In Yemen, a benevolent alternative to Osama bin Laden. *New America Media*. Retrieved June 4, 2008, from http://news.ncmonline.com/news/view_article.html?article_id=be013890b8c48cf458e54f95b8708629.

181 Boucek, C. (2008b). Saudi Arabia's "soft" counterterrorism strategy: Prevention, rehabilitation, and aftercare. *Carnegie Papers*, 97.

182 Ibid.

183 Ibid.

184 Ibid.

185 Hassan, M. H. (2005, March 4). Saudi kingdom strikes back. *The Straits Times of Singapore*.

186 Dailey, D. L., & Travers, R. (2008, April 30). Release of the country reports on terrorism 2007. *U.S. Department of State website*. Retrieved December 25, 2008 from <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rm/2008/104233>.

187 Boucek, C. (2007). Extremist reeducation and rehabilitation in Saudi Arabia. *Terrorism Monitor*, 5(16). Retrieved June 18, 2008, from http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?issue_id=4213.

188 Boucek, C. (2008b). Saudi Arabia's "soft" counterterrorism strategy: Prevention, rehabilitation, and aftercare. *Carnegie Papers*, 97

189 Murphy, C. (2008, August 20). Saudis use cash and counseling to fight terrorism. *Christian Science Monitor*, p. 1.

Media Subcommittee. Each is charged with different aspects of the counseling process. The Religious Subcommittee is comparable to the Yemeni Religious Dialogue Committee in that it is composed of clerics, other religious experts, and university scholars charged with engaging the participants in open discussion about their experiences and interpretations of the Qu'ran and Islamic duty. The Psychological and Social Subcommittee is comprised of psychologists and psychiatrists who evaluate participants for psychological problems and gauge participant compliance with the counseling. In addition, they are responsible for determining what needs the participant and his/her family may have as a result of the participant's detainment. One of the cornerstones of the counseling program is to help reintegrate the participant into society not only via ideological change, but in terms of practical logistic support as well.¹⁹⁰ The Psychological and Social Subcommittee serves this purpose.

According to Boucek, the Security Subcommittee is responsible for monitoring program detainees during and after their participation.¹⁹¹ In coordination with the Religious and Psychological/Social Subcommittees, the Security Subcommittee makes recommendations on which prisoners are safe to release. In addition, the Security Subcommittee advises program participants about how to avoid repeating the actions that got them into trouble. Although the Security Subcommittee informs program participants that they will be monitored after they complete counseling, Boucek claimed that "not all [functions of the Security Subcommittee] are publicly known" (p. 13), suggesting that monitoring activities transcend what officials publicly claim.

The Media Subcommittee is chiefly concerned with outreach and education. Through extensive research as to how to reach young Saudi men with media campaigns, the Media Subcommittee developed materials to be used both within the context of the counseling program and as warnings against those individuals who have not yet taken the step to adopt terrorist ideologies.

Although there are four subcommittees that make up the Advisory Committee's counseling program, the majority of the counseling is performed by the Religious Subcommittee. Upon their first meeting with participants, participants are told that they may take part in a rehabilitation program and renounce the terrorist movement of which they are a part or face time in prison.¹⁹² If participants choose to undergo the rehabilitation process, members of the Advisory Committee ensure them that they are not officials from the Ministry of the Interior or security officials, but are independent scholars that wish to help them.¹⁹³ Although hostility between program participants and counselors was initially widespread, as the reputation of the Advisory Committee and Saudi Arabia's programs became more well-known, the animosity of participants toward counselors dissipated. Because participants in the program are treated as victims rather than criminals, the Advisory's Committee's first order of business is to simply listen to participants.

190 Verma, S. (2008, September 11). Terrorists 'cured' with cash, cars, and counseling: Controversial Saudi rehab program aims to reform jihadists returning from U.S. prisons. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved December 23, 2008, from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/article708655.ece>.

191 Boucek, C. (2008b). Saudi Arabia's "soft" counterterrorism strategy: Prevention, rehabilitation, and aftercare. *Carnegie Papers*, 97.

192 Henry, T. (2007, June). Get out of jihad free. *Atlantic Monthly*. Retrieved July 28, 2009, from <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200706/saudi-jihad>.

193 Boucek, C. (2007). Extremist reeducation and rehabilitation in Saudi Arabia. *Terrorism Monitor*, 5(16). Retrieved June 18, 2008, from http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?issue_id=4213; See also Boucek, C. (2008b). Saudi Arabia's "soft" counterterrorism strategy: Prevention, rehabilitation, and aftercare. *Carnegie Papers*, 97.

In his interviews with several Saudi officials, Boucek¹⁹⁴ found that counselors ask participants what they did, how and why they did it, etc., and let the participants respond freely. Upon hearing their responses, Advisory Committee members offer structured responses to participants by explaining how their interpretation of Islam is wrong and misguided, and thus begins the process of teaching participants the Saudi-approved interpretation of the Qu'ran.

Beyond the preliminary meetings with religious scholars, program participants partake in one of two programs. In one program, participants are involved in short counseling sessions (normally only a few hours). Boucek noted that although many participants verbally abandon their beliefs after a single session, they are typically subjected to several short sessions beyond their recanting. The other program is akin to a six-week workshop in which two religious clerics and a social scientist work with up to twenty participants.¹⁹⁵ During the course of this six-week class, participants are taught about relevant topics such as loyalty, terrorism, and the state-sanctioned rules of jihad. In addition, participants may partake in psychological instruction regarding self-esteem. At the conclusion of the six-week course, participants are given an exam and a psychological evaluation. If they pass both, they "graduate" to the program's next phase: after-care.

Several sources¹⁹⁶ reported that the aftercare programs provided by the Saudi government consist of various initiatives, each of which is designed to meet a specific need. After being approved by the various officials associated with the Advisory Committee and the counseling program, participants are taken to an external rehabilitation facility. At this facility, detainees are subjected to a lifestyle that is very different than one would encounter in prison. For example, detainees have access to fresh air on a regular basis, they live communally with other inmates, play sports on the facility grounds, etc. In addition, there are several counseling initiatives that continue while a detainee spends time at the Care Rehabilitation Center. Arts and crafts therapy has been instituted as a means to continue the de-radicalization process after the participant has completed the six-week counseling program.

Because the program recognizes that individuals may become radicalized for different reasons, the Care Rehabilitation Center treats individuals on a case-by-case basis. For example, detainees at the center consist of domestic offenders, fighters heading to Iraq, and former Guantanamo detainees. Whereas domestic offenders and those heading to Iraq spend their time in dialogue with counselors, those who were detained in Guantanamo are afforded more psychological counseling and special instruction intended to reintegrate them into a Saudi Arabia that may have changed since they were originally imprisoned.¹⁹⁷ In sum, the Care Rehabilitation Center exists as a logistical extension of the six-week

194 Ibid.

195 Dailey, D. L., & Travers, R. (2008, April 30). Release of the country reports on terrorism 2007. *U.S. Department of State website*. Retrieved December 25, 2008 from <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rm/2008/104233>; See also Horowitz, A. (2008, July 13). What's the best way to stop terrorism? (a) Political intervention, (b) torture, (c) pampering: The Saudi government believes it's found the answer. *The Sunday Telegraph*. Section 7, p. 8.

196 Boucek, C. (2008b). Saudi Arabia's "soft" counterterrorism strategy: Prevention, rehabilitation, and aftercare. *Carnegie Papers*, 97; See also Horowitz, A. (2008, July 13). What's the best way to stop terrorism? (a) Political intervention, (b) torture, (c) pampering: The Saudi government believes it's found the answer. *The Sunday Telegraph*. Section 7, p. 8 and Verma, S. (2008, September 11). Terrorists 'cured' with cash, cars, and counseling: Controversial Saudi rehab program aims to reform jihadists returning from U.S. prisons. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved December 23, 2008, from http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/article708655_ece.

197 Allam, H. (2007). To stanch spread of radical Islam, Saudi Arabia woos detainees. *McClatchy Newspapers*. Retrieved December 21, 2008 from <http://www.cclatchydc.com/159/story/16043.html>.

counseling program. Although participants are technically detained, they are afforded opportunities that they would not have received otherwise. In addition, their counseling continues at the Center through psychological initiatives such as art therapy.¹⁹⁸

In addition to the psychological and social support received at the Care Rehabilitation Center, Boucek¹⁹⁹ and Verma²⁰⁰ claim that once an individual gave up his terrorist ideologies, he/she is given help in securing employment (both public and private sector), transportation, funds, and a place to live. Participants' families are also recruited as a source for his recovery. Families are used in two ways: (a) the Ministry of the Interior offers social support programs to participants' families and trips to visit detainees and (b) families are held financially and socially responsible if a participant falls back into terrorism.

Conclusions

The Saudi program is perhaps most publicly associated with de-radicalization efforts in no small part due to highly publicized claims of success. Boucek²⁰¹ claimed that Saudi officials have said that participants are successfully rehabilitated 80-90% of the time. Those who do not successfully rehabilitate, it is argued, either chose to forgo the rehabilitation program or effectively failed the program (e.g., were screened out for insincerity). Of the 3,000 individuals to participate in different portions of the counseling program, Prince Muhammed bin Nayef claimed in 2008 that 1,400 have given up their terrorist beliefs and were subsequently released, while another 1,000 remain in the program.²⁰² Because data surrounding the program are difficult to access, the circumstances surrounding the 600 individuals who have not been accounted for remain unclear. In his interviews with Boucek²⁰³, Prince bin Nayef claimed that fewer than 35 individuals have fallen into recidivism, making for a recidivist rate of less than 3 percent. According to officials from the U.S. Department of State²⁰⁴, the American government understood that of 2007, more than a thousand Saudis have completed the rehabilitation program. Additionally, Dailey and Travers²⁰⁵ claimed that the progress of the program would be closely watched, particularly to monitor rates of recidivism, an issue the Saudi authorities are now openly concerned about and discussing.

198 Verma, S. (2008, September 11). Terrorists 'cured' with cash, cars, and counseling: Controversial Saudi rehab program aims to reform jihadists returning from U.S. prisons. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved December 23, 2008, from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/article708655.ece>; See also Zoepf, K. (2008, November 7). Deprogramming jihadists. *New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved December 25, 2008 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/09/magazine/09jihadis-t.html>.

199 Boucek, C. (2008b). Saudi Arabia's "soft" counterterrorism strategy: Prevention, rehabilitation, and aftercare. *Carnegie Papers*, 97.

200 Verma, S. (2008, September 11). Terrorists 'cured' with cash, cars, and counseling: Controversial Saudi rehab program aims to reform jihadists returning from U.S. prisons. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved December 23, 2008, from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/article708655.ece>.

201 Boucek, C. (2008b). Saudi Arabia's "soft" counterterrorism strategy: Prevention, rehabilitation, and aftercare. *Carnegie Papers*, 97.

202 Ibid.

203 Ibid.

204 Dailey, D. L., & Travers, R. (2008, April 30). Release of the country reports on terrorism 2007. *U.S. Department of State website*. Retrieved December 25, 2008 from <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rm/2008/104233>.

205 Ibid.

Conclusions

Despite the astronomical interest in terrorism since the events of 11 September 2001, there is exceptionally little knowledge and understanding about the issues of disengagement and de-radicalization from terrorism. This is despite the fact that it is in understanding the relevant underlying processes associated with these issues that perhaps the greatest practical and operational implications may become apparent.

Given the lack of detailed research on the underlying social and behavioral processes involved, it might appear premature then to attempt to comment on the success of programs that, in many cases appear to attempt to secure sustainable disengagement from terrorism, and in some cases, 'de-radicalization'. In other words, and to summarize a recurring theme, if de-radicalization is not even reliably conceptualized (to say the least), how can we make progress on a discussion about de-radicalization programs?

At present, it is practically impossible to know exactly how many disengagement programs exist. This is in part because what constitutes such an initiative may be defined quite broadly, while, in addition, it would seem that many existing programs that are known about were once shrouded in secrecy (e.g., the Saudi Arabian program) and were never originally intended for analysis of any type. Early signs of success, particularly in the Saudi case, appear to have spurred on host countries to showcase their efforts. This is despite the ongoing lack of any clear sense of evaluation. These particular case studies were chosen in part because of the fact that they have been widely discussed in open sources, as well as the fact that there is at least some limited data associated with them (e.g., on recidivism rates) that may be subject to further analysis.

Before we can do that, however, there is an urgent need for some terminological clarity. In a recent book, Horgan²⁰⁶ offered the following operational definitions:

Radicalization: the social and psychological process of incrementally experienced commitment to extremist political or religious ideology. Radicalization may not necessarily lead to violence, but is one of several risk factors required for this.

Violent radicalization: the social and psychological process of *increased* and *focused* radicalization through involvement with a violent non-state movement. Violent radicalization encompasses the phases of a) becoming involved with a terrorist group and b) remaining involved and engaging in terrorist activity; it involves a process of pre-involvement searching for the opportunity to engage in violence and the exploration of competing alternatives; the individual must have both the opportunity for engagement as well as the capacity to make a decision about that engagement.

A critical distinction is made between radicalization and violent radicalization because it is increasingly accepted that radicalization is not necessarily a reliable predictor of engagement in violent activity.

Disengagement: the 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. Additionally, while disengagement may stem from role change, that role change may be influenced by psychological factors such as disillusionment, burnout or the failure to

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

reach the expectations that influenced initial involvement. This can lead to a member seeking out a different role within the movement.

De-radicalization: the social and psychological process whereby an individual's commitment to, and involvement in, violent radicalization is reduced to the extent that they are no longer at risk of involvement and engagement in violent activity. De-radicalization may also refer to any initiative that tries to achieve a reduction of risk of re-offending through addressing the specific and relevant disengagement issues.

If we take such distinctions seriously, can we say that the programs under examination here are truly about 'de-radicalization'? From the distinctions above, de-radicalization implies a different kind of change than those associated with disengagement alone. De-radicalization implies a change at the cognitive level, and not simply the cessation of some observable behavior. De-radicalization would certainly suggest a more permanent change in orientation such that there is a substantially reduced risk of re-engaging in terrorist activity. However, while clearly identifiable as a component in particular programs (perhaps most obviously in the Saudi case), it would appear that a preoccupation with de-radicalization may be both premature and naïve. At the very least, it might be more appropriate to *collectively* refer to these as 'risk reduction' initiatives since perhaps the most shared common factor is the fact that regardless of the often-substantial operational differences, resources, and expected outcomes (let alone terminology), attempting to reduce the prospects of re-engagement in terrorism is the one unambiguous common thread between these initiatives. Whether de-radicalization is a requirement or not is highly questionable.

This deserves some further exploration. An immediately apparent feature of the comparison between these programs is their heterogeneity. As a consequence, it would appear that the objectives and expectations of such programs are as numerous as they are varied. On the surface, it would appear that these programs (*collectively*) seek to achieve the following:

1. Reducing the numbers of active terrorists
2. Reducing the prospect of re-engagement of convicted and suspected terrorists upon release
3. De-radicalizing the ideological views and attitudes of participants
4. Re-socializing ex-members back into some society
5. Acquiring intelligence, evidence and potential witnesses in court cases
6. Using the accounts and testimonies of former terrorists as opinion builders that may have a role to play in countering radicalization
7. Providing a clear and unambiguous exit from terrorism and subversive life more generally
8. To reduce the dependency, from a counterterrorism perspective, on repressive means and make more use of morally, ethically, and legally sound means of counter-terrorism
9. Reducing the economic, social, and political cost of keeping large numbers of terrorists in prison for extended

periods of time

10. Increasing the perceived legitimacy of the government, regardless of the perceived centrality of the role played by government in the program itself

Of course, the particular emphasis on any or all of these objectives appears to vary substantially from program to program. This has enormous implications for efforts to evaluate their success: even, for now, in the absence of data there are enormous challenges surrounding attempts to elicit clear criteria for establishing that success as the principal objectives associated with these initiatives are neither explicit nor formalized.

The issue of who exactly runs these programs is also unclear and open-ended. While governments are typically identified as the facilitators of the development of such programs, it is clear that the execution of these initiatives depends on the role of non-governmental agencies as much as governmental agencies, and that in some of the apparently longer-lasting cases (e.g., Colombia), cross-agency collaboration invoking a working relationship between security (e.g., police, intelligence community) and social services (e.g., welfare agencies, education) is critical.

It would also appear that there is no one specifically targeted group intended for disengagement and/or (where relevant) de-radicalization. On the surface it would appear that former terrorists represent the immediate and most obvious target for such initiatives, though the broader gamut of participants appears to extend to imprisoned terrorists, terrorists at large, direct participants more generally (encompassing imprisoned and at large terrorists), leaders and ideologues (e.g., indirect participants), peripheral direct and indirect members that occupy supporting roles, sympathizers, as well as parents and family members of those who have participated in subversive and terrorist activity.

Participation in these initiatives appears to offer an equally varied and numerous list of potential benefits ranging from: full amnesty for crimes committed, partial amnesty and reduced sentencing, improved prison conditions, serving in prison with other ex-members, job training and education for reintegration, ideological dialogue and redressing of core beliefs deemed conducive to engagement (and possible re-engagement in risky behaviors), economic subsidies to participants and their families, assistance at forming a new family, developing new social networks, attaining a job and cultivating the development of a new identity. A related issue here is that it would appear to be obvious also that the range of resources required for the development of such programs ranges from qualified practitioners (e.g., clinical psychologists, subject matter experts (e.g., terrorism)), reformed ex-terrorists, economic resources, networking between and within agencies, NGOs and civil society, participants' families, and so on.

In return, the expectations on the part of those who support the development of such programs cuts across a similarly wide range. It is clear that the expectations associated with disengagement programs are not homogenous. The case studies illustrate that individuals who participate in such programs can be expected to engage in one or more of the following activities:

- a) Disengagement from terrorism and related activities (direct activity)
- b) Disengagement from radical movements and associated politics (indirect activities)
- c) Accepting and serving reduced sentences for crimes committed

- d) Providing intelligence and/or serving as a witness in court, which may or may not result in delivering testimony that may see the subsequent imprisonment of former comrades
- e) Meeting victims as part of reconciliation and restorative justice initiatives
- f) Distancing themselves publicly from terrorism and extremist activity as well as symbolic figures associated with same
- g) Taking part in activities aimed at reducing recruitment and radicalization to extremist groups as well as taking part in activities aimed at encouraging disengagement for those currently involved

As far as the programs themselves are concerned, it would appear that a major concern must be the issue of how to deal with the risk of insincere participants and the possibility of recidivism to terrorism and/or related activities.

Before we go further then, it would appear that a number of critical areas for exploration would include:

- a) Clarity around the selection process and screening procedures for admittance to the program
- b) Developing objectively verifiable and valid means of changing the values, world-views and behavior of participants both during and after the program
- c) Related to this, monitoring participants in a meaningful and effective way post-release
- d) Developing meaningful and valid deterrent measures for re-engagement

Several of the programs illustrate also the need both to protect program participants from reprisals as well as the need to effectively counter attempts to discredit such programs. It should be noted that that critique may emerge from multiple sources, ranging from victims of terrorism, media and opposition figures, foreign governments, or from the terrorist movements themselves.

Clearly, however, the most prominent issue appears to be one of evaluation – how will these programs and their associated outcomes be evaluated? From the outset, external evaluation would appear to be the desired situation – there is little expectation that internal evaluation would result in negative outcomes being made public, or available even internally. External evaluation on the other hand raises other challenges. Perhaps the principal issue is the question of who it is that performs that evaluation, and whether or not access to information and real transparency can accompany such evaluation. It is clear from even the most cursory analysis of these existing programs that evaluation is not part of them. However, and perhaps most challenging, we should ask if collective evaluation is even a realistic objective now given how context-specific and highly diverse these initiatives appear to be?

Despite the highly publicized claims for success associated with some of these risk reduction initiatives, there are major barriers to evaluation:

- 1) There are no explicit criteria for success associated with any initiative
- 2) There is little data associated with any of these initiatives that can be reliably corroborated independently

- 3) It is clear that there has been no systematic effort to study any aspect of these programs, even *individually*, to date (let alone collectively)

Time and time again, the most common, if implicit, measure of perceived success relates to recidivism. However, there is virtually no research on terrorist recidivism, nor has it been adequately conceptualized in the contemporary literature. Furthermore, and closely related to recidivism, there is no research literature to speak of on the issue of terrorist risk assessment. If we are to understand the risk associated with recidivism (a core concern in the development of clear and explicit criteria for assessing the success or otherwise of risk reduction programs), we must understand the relationship between this and risk assessment procedures as they apply to the terrorist offender.

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Dr. John Horgan is Director of the International Center for the Study of Terrorism at the Pennsylvania State University, where he is also Associate Professor of Science, Technology and Society. He was previously Senior Research Fellow of the University of St Andrews' [Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence](#) (CSTPV) in Scotland, where he retains an honorary position. Dr. Horgan was awarded his [PhD](#) (Applied Psychology) from University College, Cork in 2000. While in Ireland, he spent several years conducting detailed research on Irish Republican terrorist movements, and published several noted articles on the financial activities of the Provisional IRA. Author of over 50 publications, his primary area of research is on the psychology of terrorist behavior. His books include *The Psychology of Terrorism* (2005), *The Future of Terrorism* (1999, with Max Taylor), and *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement* (2009, with Tore Bjørgo). His latest book *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements* was published in July 2009, and presents detailed fieldwork interviews Horgan has conducted with former members of radical and extremist movements (from the IRA to Al Qaeda) in several countries throughout Europe, the Middle East and South Asia. He is a member of the Editorial Boards of *Terrorism and Political Violence* and several other journals.

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