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Reintegrating radicals: A strengths-based approach to 'deradicalisation'

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Introduction

Increasingly, governments are facing the challenge of resettling those convicted of terrorism offences. Overseas conflicts associated with the 'War on Terror' have provided the backdrop for a steady number of terrorism convictions. Numbers are not large: fewer than 450 people have been convicted of terrorism related offences in the UK since 2001 (Home Office, 2015). Importantly, many of these sentences are for comparatively minor offences. From possession of terrorist material, to fundraising or incitement to terrorism, one consequence of the comparatively lower-order offences is that a growing number of people are being freed from prison (Home Office, 2015). These ex-prisoners raise a number of challenges for statutory agencies, most prominent of which is whether they are likely to reoffend. It is not an idle concern, the Charlie Hebdo attack, the Brisbane siege, and the murder of Lee Rigby were all carried out by people who were known to have been involved in radical milieus. Understanding the risk those involved in violent extremism may pose has therefore become a major concern.

Yet we know comparatively little about how and why people renounce violence, nor are existing efforts to 'deradicalise' extremists well understood. Drawing on research with those who work with people involved with militant Islamism in the United Kingdom, this chapter examines the practical, conceptual and theoretical foundation of 'deradicalisation' efforts to present an alternative account of disengagement from radical settings. It does so by first, examining the concept of 'success' with politically motivated ex-prisoners. Although fundamental to interpreting notions of 'deradicalisation', we have a relatively limited understanding of appropriate aims of work with this population. Based on extensive interviews and fieldwork, I develop the implications of a framework for understanding effectiveness to interpret the processes implicated in disengagement from violent subcultures, proposing three factors important to supporting successful disengagement: reintegration, resilience and redirecting the initial motivation to offend.

Exploring the aims of work with those involved in terrorism, the chapter develops three core arguments. First, the need to take account of the individual in their relational, social and political context; more specifically, to shift attention away from limited, and conceptually ambiguous notions of 'deradicalisation', towards a focus on reintegration. Rather than attempting to 're-educate', or 'de-programme' those convicted of terrorism offences by focusing on attitudes and ideas, as is common in many accounts of deradicalisation (Morris et al., 2010), greater gains are likely by approaching the individual holistically, cognisant of their unique trajectory into and out of extremism. Second, I interpret work with those involved in violent extremism through two theoretical approaches to resettlement in the community: the 'strengths based' approach and the 'risk' model. The first encourages the individual to conceive of ways of working towards a positive future, while the second tries to plug perceived deficits, such as poor educational attainment.

In exploring the implications of applying more established criminological theories to the reintegration of politically motivated offenders, I argue that the potential of the strengths based approach suggests a reframing of how we approach 'deradicalisation' work. Acknowledging the 'goods' individuals seek to achieve by engaging in illegal political activity, and working to redirect rather than deconstruct the motivation to break the law are both important elements in this. Relatedly, concentrating on developing resilience rather than the predominant focus on managing risk, is likely to be effective, not least because doing so supports personal agency, an important feature of long-term desistance from crime (McNeill, 2009).

Finally, looking more carefully at the strengths based approach suggests a reframing of how we approach the concept of 'radicalisation'. Acknowledging the positive benefits individuals seek to achieve by engaging in illegal political activity is the first step in this. Implicit in most existing models is the assumption that 'radicalisation' is a process related to fulfilling particular needs, for example, related to experiences of discrimination or persecution of a wider identity group. Taking seriously the benefits people pursue through radical action suggests a somewhat different interpretation of the engagement process. Here 'radicalisation' can be understood as an increasing commitment to pursuing particular goods, defined by the ideological framework within which the individual is situated. The chapter ends by setting out the conceptual and theoretical implications of this approach for 'radicalisation'.

Interpreting 'deradicalisation' and disengagement

It is difficult to interpret the likelihood of re-engagement in violence, and a number of challenges face efforts to support people considered 'at risk' of becoming involved in extremism. First, work to move people away from violent extremism is relatively recent, it is also a difficult field to research. Gaining access to prisoners is challenging, and there are few independent, open-source evaluations of such programmes. Together, this means the evidence base for interpreting the long-term effects of interventions in this area is relatively weak.

More fundamentally, questions remain about what the core features of this work should be. Programmes across the world differ on the relative weight given to a range of issues believed to be relevant. Some focus heavily on ideological issues, others concentrate on social reintegration, providing material incentives for those who renounce violence, yet others rely on control and monitoring to ensure public safety.¹ Such differences are informed by two of the core questions in this work: by what measure might we know that a person no longer poses a risk? And relatedly, what is this work trying to achieve? Practitioners as well as academics are facing these questions, not least because it is difficult to develop best practice, or evaluate programme effectiveness if the fundamental aims of the work are not clear.

A second challenge is conceptual. The theoretical and conceptual tools in this area remain underdeveloped, posing problems for efforts to adequately explain how and why people renounce extremism. Broadly, two concepts are used to interpret the processes

¹ For reviews of some of the programmes operating across the world see: United Nations Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force, *First Report of the Working Group on Radicalisation and Extremism that Lead to Terrorism: Inventory of State Programmes*. <http://www.un.org/terrorism/pdfs/radicalization.pdf>, 2008, (accessed 1 October, 2015); L. Vidino, *Foreign Fighters: An Overview of Responses in Eleven Countries*, http://www.css.ethz.ch/publications/pdfs/Foreign_Fighters_2014.pdf, 2014, (accessed 1 October, 2015)

associated with the move away from violence: deradicalisation and disengagement. The first is generally understood as attitudinal change and the second reflects behavioural change (Horgan, 2008). Linking the two concepts is the assumption that attitudes inform behaviour, hence, many 'deradicalisation' initiatives have tended to work from the premise that by changing an individual's ideas and attitudes, there will be a change in behaviour. Inversely, efforts to prevent violent extremism often attempt to engage with ideological issues in order to prevent the move to violence. One of the challenges facing these types of initiatives is that the relationship between attitudes and behaviours is complex (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2008). Attitudes are not always a good predictor of what people actually do, an issue that's further complicated in the case of high risk activities. Identifying how and when attitudes and ideas matter therefore remains an important area for research.

Two further issues face the current approach to 'deradicalisation'. First, the neglect of the wider social, political and cultural context and the effect this has on the individual and the possibilities for reintegration. And second, the preoccupation with 'causes' of violent extremism that largely interpret involvement as a response to negative experiences, often framed in terms of personal deficits. Both of these issues are to some extent a function of the fact that 'radicalisation' situates the problem in the individual. While external events inform the move to violence, and facilitating factors such as mobilisation and recruitment networks remain important, the problem remains located in the head of the individual, often with the attitudes and ideas believed to inform their offending. External events, such as foreign policy, perceptions of discrimination or alienation from wider society become internalised: a problem for the individual they are required to resolve, rather than an issue for society to address. These features of the radicalisation and deradicalisation constructs inform the search for quantifiable measures of risk. If we can identify a sufficient number of factors correlated with involvement in violent extremism, the argument goes, we can interpret the risk they are liable to pose.

Several problems face the prevailing approach of trying to understand why people engage and disengage from violent political subcultures. First, by looking for specific factors at the individual level, there is a comparative neglect of the wider social and political context in which they live. Disregarding the interconnected aspects of someone's life, their interpersonal relations, and their interaction with civil society overlooks the complex interplay of internal and external influences on behaviour. Relatedly, by focusing so heavily on the individual, 'deradicalisation' fails to take account of the context into which the individual is being reintegrated. As well as willingness on the part of the ex-prisoner, there has to be an acceptance on the community's part to allow them to re-join society (Dwyer, 2013). As I've argued previously, there are demands on these probationers to reintegrate but the mechanisms that might make this possible are often not available (Marsden, 2015), for example it is often difficult for them to find jobs, or re-join communities because of the stigma of the offence.

Finally, although there is increasing awareness of the complex motivations for involvement in violent extremism, there is often a focus on individual deficits (Hafez and Mullins, 2015). Areas that have attracted attention include crises of identity, socio-economic deprivation, discrimination and marginalisation (Awan, 2008). These are not unimportant, but focusing heavily on such negative experiences, and in some cases pathologising particular issues, means the positive benefits of involvement in radical settings are often overlooked. There is, in general, neglect of the ways violent action can, from the subjective perspective of the individual, fulfil a range of personal and collective goods. As a consequence, questions of personal agency associated with contentious

political activism are under-prioritised, painting instead, a somewhat passive object of indoctrination and peer influence.

Theorising ‘deradicalisation’

The challenges facing existing accounts of ‘deradicalisation’ are not unique to politically motivated offending. Debates over the role of personal agency, the importance of taking account of the wider context and approaching people holistically rather than concentrating on atomised measures of risk have been taking place in the criminological literature for some time. Providing a valuable body of work for research on terrorism and political violence to draw on (Altier, Thoroughgood and Horgan, 2014), these debates have in part been characterised by a distinction between two theoretical frameworks: one focused primarily on assessing and mitigating risk, and another concerned with developing strengths and supporting desistance. In brief, risk-focused approaches, most commonly embodied in the risk-needs-responsivity (RNR) model, focus on addressing criminogenic needs empirically linked to offending, for example substance abuse or low educational attainment. The theory is that by addressing these needs, the associated risk of reoffending is reduced, particularly when interventions are tailored to the individual – the responsivity principle (Andrews and Bonta, 2003).

There is some evidence that programmes based on the RNR framework do lead to a reduction in reoffending (McGuire, 2010). However, there have been criticisms, similar to those already described, that the RNR model focuses too heavily on the offender’s deficits, and that it fails to take account of the embedded nature of people’s lives, concentrating too heavily on risk profiles rather than the wider context within which rehabilitation takes place (Ward and Maruna, 2008). Although not always explicit, the risk-based model prevails in efforts to ‘deradicalise’ politically motivated offenders. Because of the threat they are deemed to pose, and the potentially catastrophic consequences of misjudging their risk to the public, there have been a number of efforts to develop risk assessment measures (Pressman and Flockton, 2012; Klausen et al., 2016).

Inspired, in part, by the desire to address some of the issues facing the dominant RNR paradigm, strengths-based approaches, such as the Good Lives model (GLM), begin from a somewhat different premise. Rather than focusing on reducing recidivism, this concentrates on trying to support desistance from crime (Bushway, Brame and Paternoster, 2004). It attempts to move beyond knowing ‘*what works*’, to understanding *how* and *why* intervention works to promote change in the wider context of desistance (Maruna, Immarigeon and LeBel, 2004). The GLM is perhaps the most prominent model in the desistance canon, and begins from the starting point that we all pursue human goods, hence efforts to support desistance are best served by harnessing this motivation in order to find pro-social ways of fulfilling them (Ward and Brown, 2004).² Its foundation is therefore the “pursuit of a better life; ways of living that are constructed around core values, and concrete means of realising their goals in certain environments” (Ward and Maruna, 2008, p.24).

² Nine human needs, or ‘goods’ have been hypothesised: healthy living, knowledge, excellence in work and play, excellence in agency (self-management), inner peace, relatedness (to others), spirituality and happiness (Ward and Maruna, 2008). Important criticisms of this approach include the view that it perhaps overstates the universality of such needs, potential conflict between the various goods and the effort to achieve them is overlooked, and the challenges the differing notions of what a ‘good life’ constitutes may pose. See McNeill (2009).

Although initially considered incompatible, there have been increasing calls for the desistance and risk-based approaches to be combined to inform interventions (McNeill, 2009). There are a number of reasons why this hybrid approach may be helpful in interpreting and developing work with those involved in terrorism. First and foremost, there is a need for a robust understanding of the dynamic and complex nature of risk. As already discussed ‘terrorist recidivism’ can have devastating consequences, and interpreting risk remains an important aspect of public protection. However, alongside this, there seem to be a number of benefits from incorporating a more clearly strengths based approach. First, the agency associated with involvement in political contention seems better reflected in the strengths based approach, rather than the current emphasis on personal deficits. Although subjective, engaging in violent extremism involves, no matter how poorly defined or weakly conceptualised, an end state which the individual or group is invested in achieving. Goals are orientated to a different, and from the subjective perspective of the individual, a better future. Developing the individual so they can pursue, perhaps even the same objectives, in pro-social rather than maladaptive ways is therefore better accommodated by models like the GLM, rather than a heavy focus on individual measures of risk linked to need.

Finally, the range of reasons people engage in violent extremism can be accommodated by the GLM in ways risk based models are perhaps less well equipped to do. A number of clusters of motivations have been described as relevant, including social identity, familial and friendship ties, personal rewards, wishing to respond to discrimination and marginalisation, as well as protecting co-religionists and a commitment to particular ideas that support violence (Silke, 2008). Despite attempts to try and unify these varying motives into ‘radicalisation pathways’, process models, or even less successfully, into ‘extremist profiles’, the heterogeneous and complex drivers implicated in involvement in terrorism have stymied efforts to develop a coherent theory of radicalisation (Hafez and Mullins, 2015). The range of features associated with the GLM, focusing as it does on goods as diverse as spirituality and relatedness provide a broader canvas by which to interpret motivations. And, perhaps as importantly, strengths-based approaches provide a set of conceptual and theoretical tools to first, inform interventions in a field often criticised for being atheoretical, and second to interpret existing work in this area. In the next section, I explore the promise of combining strengths and risk-based approaches in interpreting the aims of work with those who have been involved in radical settings.

Interpreting ‘deradicalisation’ programmes

Intervention efforts with former terrorism offenders are in their infancy, and reliable measures of appropriate aims and methods have yet to emerge. As John Horgan and Kurt Braddock have argued: “[t]hus far, it has been practically impossible to ascertain what is implied by or expected from programs that claim to be able to de-radicalise terrorists” (Horgan and Braddock, 2010, p.268). Informed by extensive interviews with practitioners, I developed a framework for understanding ‘success’ in this context.³ Setting out 13 measures of what effective engagement ‘looked like’, as Figure 1 describes, the framework is made up of two parts. The first focusing on public protection issues, and the second, larger tier of measures concerned with reducing the risk of reoffending and encouraging desistance.

Figure 1 about here

³ For a full account of the framework see: Marsden (2015).

A number of points about the framework are worth emphasising. The first is that, although it represents one of only a few pieces of empirical research looking at appropriate outcomes in this area, it demands further refinement and testing to determine how robustly it represents existing practice, and how well it reflects and supports successful outcomes. Second, the framework incorporates elements of both risk and strengths based approaches. It looks to interpret changing levels of risk, perhaps most clearly in the public protection measures, while also taking account of positive strengths oriented outcomes such as developing positive social networks and deepening critical thinking skills. However, combining these approaches is not without problems. Practitioners spoke in particular about the challenge of balancing a heavy focus on risk management with more rehabilitative goals. For example, trying to develop and repair family relationships can be difficult if family members are believed to pose a risk, perhaps because of their links to extremist networks. Similarly, trying to support the move into employment or education can be a challenge because of the sometimes restrictive licence conditions former prisoners are subject to on release from prison. A common condition, for example, is that those on probation in the community are not allowed to use electronic equipment, making it difficult to study or carry out a wide number of jobs.

Standing back from the detailed measures that make up the framework, three themes emerge describing what success might 'look like' with this group: supporting reintegration back into the community, in terms of employment or education and also helping them reintegrate back into the family; resilience with respect to critical thinking skills, knowledge of religion and deepening and broadening their personal identity; and finally, redirecting the motivation to offend, be that in responding to political or personal grievances in pro-social ways or developing positive social networks. What follows explores these themes in more detail to examine what successful reintegration means in this context.

Reintegration not 'Deradicalisation'

Once holding such promise that Time Magazine described it as one of the '10 ideas that are changing the world' (Ripley, 2008), the popularity of the 'deradicalisation' concept has waxed and waned. As discussed, significant challenges face the 'deradicalisation' construct, both conceptual and empirical. Conceptually, the focus on ideas and attitudes implicated in 'deradicalisation' initiatives overlooks the complex ways attitudes inform behaviour. Equally, the heavy focus on the individual neglects the importance of the wider context in the individual's resettlement, and finally, the role of personal agency is often overlooked. Nevertheless, no clear alternative framework for interpreting work with those involved with terrorism has emerged. Here, I'd like to argue reintegration is a more appropriate approach. Reintegration speaks to the process of developing a more positive relationship with wider society and operates at a number of different levels. Primarily, the focus is on the local community; those networks of people and institutions that make up daily life. Beyond this, reintegration back into the family is important. Former prisoners can have a difficult relationship with their family, the stigma of their offence, and the suspicion with which the family is often treated can make the post-release period particularly challenging at home. And finally reintegration into the structures of society, such as work or education; those mechanisms that enable the individual to build networks of commitment that embed the individual in wider sets of social relations.

Notwithstanding debates over how to best conceptualise reintegration and its appropriateness in work with former prisoners (Maruna, Immarigeon and LeBel, 2004)

reintegration seems appropriate for work in this area for a number of reasons, not least because it was the framework most often reflected by practitioners. As one put it when asked about the ultimate aims of their work: “reintegration, reintegration, reintegration into British society, where they can contextualise their religion in modern British society, without either side having to be compromised” (Community Mentor). Beyond this practice perspective, the post-conflict experience of politically motivated offenders has been usefully interpreted through strengths-based reintegration approaches in other contexts, notably Northern Ireland (McEvoy and Shirlow, 2009; Lynch, 2015). McEvoy and Shirlow (2009) argue it is appropriate for two reasons, first because it emphasises the agentic capacity of the individual, and second, because those barriers to reintegration facing former combatants are understood as a human rights issue that are reflected in the ongoing campaigning of this group of former prisoners.

One of the core tenets of community-based work with ex-prisoners was the importance of developing an agentic approach to their future, as one interviewee put it: “[t]he about-turn needs to give them dignity, and give them the chance to change themselves” (Probation Officer). Practitioners paid attention to supporting the individual in moving towards positive outcomes, rather than responding exclusively to ‘needs’ associated with particular measures of ‘risk’. Community mentors and probation staff tried to help individuals, as Shadd Maruna describes it, ‘discover’ agency and conceive of ways to work towards a more positive future (Maruna, 2001). Moreover, they explicitly addressed the perceived concerns around the extent and form of intervention, and the related worry that probationers may be robbed of agency. Probation staff prompted discussion about the approach the work was going to take, creating a space for the probationers to air their concerns. For example, using the following quote referring to prisoners’ experience of structured interventions as a prompt to explore their expectations:

“distaste for such programmes [structured rehabilitation] is linked to a sense that these interventions involve things being ‘done to’ or ‘prescribed for’ passive recipients who are characterised as deficient, ineffectual, misguided, untrustworthy, possibly dangerous and almost certainly going to get into trouble again.” (Harris, 2005, p.318).

However, significant challenges face the effort to facilitate reintegration. A core issue was the contested nature of the crime, particularly given that some of the probationers rejected the legitimacy of the state and its authority to pass sanction on the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Similarly, the increasing amount of terrorism legislation has seen those boundaries constrict, exacerbating the sense their convictions were illegitimate. Developing trust and demonstrating credibility was important in opening up conversations about the probationer’s relationship with wider society and its laws. Not only is this an issue when addressing the actual offence, but speaks to an often broader resistance to reintegrating into a society many felt little affiliation toward. Their commitment to wider society was typically described as weak, and finding appropriate mechanisms by which this might be strengthened was difficult. In particular, because of the distrust and stigma that accompanied their offence. Not only did the ex-prisoner often reject society, their experience was that society rejected them.

The risk they were deemed to pose, and the terrorism label that came with the offence placed them in a particularly precarious position. Agencies tasked with supervising them were risk averse, and exercised a great deal of control over ex-prisoners’ lives. Specifically, any request to change the probationer’s circumstances, for example, if they wanted to apply for a job or a training course, had to be considered and approved by

MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements)⁴. The result was that it took a long time to make decisions, and the outcome very often prioritised risk management and public protection over more reintegrative aims. Similarly, when decisions were positive, finding work, training or housing often demanded they disclose their offence, placing an additional barrier to their reintegration, beyond the well-known problems former prisoners face when trying to rejoin society. Even day to day interactions were negatively impacted. One probationer was described as hesitant to develop friendships with people he didn't know. The possibility that strangers were involved in militant circles, along with the belief he was under surveillance made him reluctant to engage fully in social life because of the risk it posed. There are therefore considerable barriers, at the social, economic and personal levels that make reintegration particularly difficult for those convicted of terrorism offences.

Together, these challenges to reintegration raise a broader question: that of society's role in supporting the successful resettlement of former extremists, and the importance of taking account of the wider context in which they live. Looked at from this perspective, 'deradicalisation' seems particularly ill suited to the complex interplay of factors that inform successful reintegration. Focusing almost exclusively on the individual, and the imperative for them to change neglects the importance of their relationship to wider society. Even where they develop a more positive approach to reintegration and commit to moving away from extremism, they can remain trapped by their offence, and the identity that accompanies it. As the following quote demonstrates, the challenge of reintegration is not just one for the former prisoner, but also one for society:

The problem with [terrorism] offenders is to integrate people into a community; to bolster the community so they feel confident enough to say they may be a risk in the community but that they will accept them. Also to make people understand why being part of a community is a positive way forward.

Senior Probation Officer

Resilience and Social Identity

One of the original features of the desistance approach involved understanding how people moved away from crime without formal interventions. In more recent work, efforts to reconcile reintegrative and desistance based approaches have suggested the focus should be on "interventions that can enhance or complement these spontaneous efforts". (Maruna, Immarigeon and LeBel, 2004, p.16). Ex-prisoners spend much of their time away from formal engagement with statutory or community-based interventions. As a consequence, developing resilience to negative external events and experiences by fostering attributes liable to support change is important. However, a range of potential challenges to this were described by practitioners, both local and global. Proximate challenges included negative peer influence from those who remained committed to violent extremism, while more broadly, the effect of political and social events, for example, flare ups in conflicts or events that involved Muslim persecution were described as areas where support was necessary.

⁴ These are multi-agency panels which have an interest in the individual, and are designed to enhance public protection and facilitate inter-agency working through information sharing and resource allocation. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-public-protection-arrangements-mappa--2>

Rather than exclusively trying to address specific areas of 'risk' or deconstructing attitudes related to particular issues, for example, foreign policy, there was an effort to broaden and deepen core personal attributes. More specifically, there were efforts to develop more robust critical thinking skills, and find ways of responding to strong emotional experiences in ways that didn't lead to a reassertion of their commitment to illegal activism. Developing critical thinking and a less dichotomous way of approaching issues were therefore both important parts of intervention work directed toward building resilience. Aiming to encourage probationers to question the evidence that had supported their offending, practitioners focused on strengthening cognitive skills to question information and recognise the complexity of social and political relations.

A feature of the approach that had developed with these probationers was an implicit de-exceptionalisation of their offence. Although 'terrorism offenders' were considered high risk and practitioners recognised that additional support was necessary, there was less focus than perhaps might be expected on those ideological issues that supposedly mark out their offence from 'normal crime'. It was an approach that some of the probationers were not necessarily anticipating, as one probation officer put it: "it's a holistic thing that we are doing, and we try and help with everything. The reluctant ones are surprised we're not trying to push faith" (Senior Probation Officer). The overall approach was therefore one of developing and supporting the individual holistically rather than isolating specific issues of risk. Where specific work was done on issues of faith or ideology, there was an awareness it needed to be introduced sensitively, again providing opportunities for the individual to support their own reintegration.

Engaging with questions of personal and social identity was a further important feature of this work. The aim was not to deconstruct the individual's identity, but rather to broaden it, to encourage them to explore alternative, additional aspects of their self-concept. Developing a broader social identity, rather than the single minded focus on a narrow conception of identity related to the radical group was therefore a central part of what practitioners believed was important in supporting reintegration. This helped to, as one Community Mentor described it, "break down the 'us' and 'them' attitude".

Probation officers explored issues around identity in supervision through exercises and discussion. Importantly, this was considered most effective where the individual saw a positive way of approaching the question of identity, as one interviewee explained: "[w]hen I asked him about his identity in a positive way, and he saw and acknowledged his background in a positive way. Asking about dual identity, and what makes this a good thing – he relaxed a bit because it was more positive." (Offender Manager). The aim was to encourage the individual to broaden their sense of affiliation beyond the predominantly Muslim, jihadist or takfiri identity so important at the time of the offence, to include concepts of British-ness, London-ness, or even Walthamstow-ness. Here again, integration is a key aim, not only in terms of practical mechanisms, but also with respect to personal perspectives of the self.

Importantly, the most effective efforts in this area involved recognising the value of their existing attributes and building on them. Similarly, although it was part of practice, there was less focus on addressing specific ideas and attitudes. Instead, there was an effort to develop an individual's strengths so they were better able to critically examine the ideas they had previously held, and to think more carefully about their relationship to wider society. Similarly, attempts were made, not necessarily to deconstruct their thinking or their sense of self, but instead to broaden their identity commitments, and deepen and widen the object of their critical thinking. Indeed, they were often highly critical, in particular of government practices, the aim, therefore, was to broaden this, so

these faculties were directed at a wider range of ideas and actors, including those they had previously been persuaded by. Together, this approach reflects a more clearly strengths based approach than it does one focused on risk and need. Developing the individual, supporting their strengths and finding ways of fulfilling personal goods in ways that don't break the law were therefore all important features of this work.

Redirection over Deconstruction

The goals reflected in the outcomes framework described in Figure 1 are not absolutes. With the exception of no reoffending, there are degrees of reintegration, identity development and resilience. It is here that the idea of a process of desistance (Maruna, 2001), and a route out of terrorism (Horgan, 2009) are most helpful. Moving away from crime is gradual, as McNeill says: “[d]esistance is not an event but a process and, because of the subjectivities and issues of identity involved, the process is inescapably individualised” (2009, p.4). Developing the implications of this approach for research on politically motivated offenders suggests an alternative approach to the broad process models currently prevalent in the literature (for example see: Rabasa, Pettyjohn, Ghez and Boucek, 2010). I would like to suggest we should consider how politically motivated offenders may be encouraged to pursue what the Good Lives approach considers primary human goods, for example, relatedness, spirituality, community, and agency (Ward and Maruna, 2008). Rather than looking for discrete risk factors, attention is perhaps better directed towards reconceptualising the positive goals individuals seek to achieve through political crime and attempting to redirect this motivation in legal, pro-social ways.

In a recent synthesis of work on the causes of ‘radicalisation’, Hafez and Mullins (2015) proposed a number of reasons for violent extremism: personal and collective grievances, networks and interpersonal ties, political and religious ideologies, and enabling environments and support structures. Although these are largely descriptive rather than analytical categories, they provide a way of thinking about how pursuing excellence in these areas may be encouraged in ways that are pro-social rather than maladaptive. By interpreting work with former terrorism offenders within a strengths-based framework, those positive goals their offending was often motivated by are made visible. Looking again at the framework of outcomes suggests a number of relevant areas. For example, developing social ties, deepening knowledge of religion, responding positively to grievances and strengthening cognitive skills can all be understood in the, admittedly broad, framework of the goods the GLM assumes us all to be motivated to pursue, namely, developing excellence in spirituality, agency, relatedness, knowledge and work.

For example, one of the common features of involvement in militancy is the role of close inter-personal ties, which in turn makes such commitments likely to be important in the disengagement process (Koehler, 2015). A strengths-based approach would suggest that finding ways of nurturing those goods related to social relations is fulfilling and motivating. As such, providing positive social networks for those for whom this was an important feature of their involvement in violent extremism is likely to pay dividends. Indeed, a number of the community organisations recognised this, making social events and developing positive networks a central aspect of their work. Similarly, looking to the political aspect of illegal contention, from the subjective position of someone who believes the wider identity group to which they are committed is being persecuted, using or facilitating violence to bring about change is a positive goal. A corollary of this is the possibility of redirecting the motivation to offend in a way that does not involve breaking the law. For example, finding a way of responding to discrimination in ways

that support rather than undermine the social contract is liable to provide a more sustainable mechanism for long-term reintegration. One community group leader described this in the following terms: “there’s a war going on in our own streets, in our own community, that we’re addressing. So we’re giving them that negative cause [that informed their offending], and replacing it with a positive cause, and a justifiable one.”

By supporting probationers to find legal ways of pursuing human goods, practitioners are in a position to facilitate both a ‘way out’ of their current situation, and a ‘way in’ to a society from which many feel alienated. The aim is to develop a set of commitments to wider society that enables them to pursue their goals in positive, pro-social ways, with the ultimate marker of success being a desire to contribute to a society’s well-being rather than undermine it, as one interviewee put it:

We consider success, that a person feels confident to tell us that somebody’s gonna do something, and at least we need, or somebody needs to know about it ... That [shows] we’ve turned him around.

Community Organisation Leader

Conclusion

Interpreting the work of a range of statutory and community-based organisations through criminological theory I have argued that efforts to successfully resettle those involved in terrorism should focus on three core issues: reintegration, resilience, and redirection. Underpinning this argument is the idea that, rather than concentrating on specific maladaptive ideas or attitudes, an approach reflected in most conceptualisations of ‘deradicalisation’, we should instead approach the person holistically, taking account of their wider socio-cultural context. And further, that in doing so, we should look carefully at the goods they sought to pursue through involvement in violent extremism, and from there, determine adaptive, pro-social ways of fulfilling them to support their successful reintegration into society.

Most models of ‘radicalisation’ and ‘deradicalisation’ assume first, that these processes can be interpreted via a series of largely descriptive categories typically related to negative phenomena, for example, victimisation or grievance. Looking more carefully at the strengths-based approach suggests, rather than conceptualising of ‘radicalisation’ as a process related to addressing particular needs, positioning the positive benefits individuals seek to achieve by engaging in illegal political activity at the heart of our interpretation offers explanatory gains. Here, ‘radicalisation’ is understood as an increasing commitment to pursuing particular goods, for example, related to personal agency or spirituality, defined by the ideological and relational context within which the individual is embedded. Such goods provide a unifying mechanism for interpreting engagement and disengagement processes, what differentiates them is the way in which goods are realised: ‘radicalisation’ in ways that violate social norms, and ‘deradicalisation’, in ways which increasingly support them.

Such work is far from easy, and interpreting the multiple aims implicated in this work through the lens of criminological theory has made visible some of the internal tensions and competing priorities practitioners face. On the basis of these insights, rather than the heavy focus on risk-oriented supervision that prevails, a desistance or strengths based approach has significant promise. In particular, because of the unique features of politically motivated offending, often informed by the desire to achieve a subjectively defined positive future, the approach reflected in the GLM seems particularly well suited. Taking account of the wider context in which the individual is situated has also

made visible some of the significant barriers to reintegration faced by this population. Acknowledging these barriers, and making efforts at both the practice and political level to reduce them are vital to supporting long-term desistance from terrorism offending. It also remains important to prioritise reintegration over 'deradicalisation' and take a holistic, contextualised and above all individualised approach to this population. Finally, there are important implications for those returning from fighting overseas. In particular, there is a need to maintain an inclusive approach, such that they feel they have a 'home' country that is willing and able to facilitate their reintegration back into society over the long-term. And, that when they do return, notwithstanding the importance of due process and legal redress for wrongdoing, mechanisms for supporting their long-term resettlement and reintegration are made available.

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