Deradicalization programs can reduce VEO activity.

109; 110; 111; 112; 113; 107; 114; 115; 116; 11; 12

General Description of the Literature:

Scholars in political science, psychology and criminology discuss the impact of various techniques, including the use of hard and soft incentives, on deradicalization and disengagement from VEOs (e.g., Rabasa et al 2010 and Deardorff 2010). The literature indicates that disengagement is a more practical goal, although not as ideal as deradicalization; deradicalization is described as a complex and difficult process in which success is questionable (Rabasa, Pettyjohn, Ghez, and Boucek, 2010; Woodward, Amin and Rohmaniyah, 2010). Deradicalization is difficult to achieve for several reasons, including the fact that it is unclear whether an extremist has truly deradicalized from a group or simply disengaged, as well as the notion that some extremists simply cannot be deradicalized (Rabasa 2010). Various researchers discuss the importance of inducements on deradicalization (Ashour 2009; Benraad 2009; Gvineria 2009). Rabasa outlines the assumptions and possibilities of success for both disengagement and deradicalization, as well as possible future goals for programs dedicated towards these ends. Several articles provide discussions of successful deradicalization programs which utilize soft incentives (Schulze 2008; Kruglanski et al. 2010; Horgan 2009; Bjorgo and Horgan 2009).

Ashour (2009) provides a theoretical model that explains deradicalization. The model is built on the concepts of charismatic VEO leadership, state repression (violent and non-violent civil and political rights violations), interactions with the 'other' and within the VEO (e.g., in prisons), and inducements from the state (e.g., stop torture, power-sharing). These concepts or variables can potentially lead to deradicalization. Interactions with the 'other' and state repression cause shifts in the leadership beliefs and expectations and steer the leadership towards deradicalization. Carefully timed state inducements can then shore-up the leadership's position and status. Internal interactions within the VEO consolidate the deradicalization. According to Ashour (p. 17), if a state applies pressure in the absence of a charismatic leader, the other variables will lead to unfavorable outcomes such as VEO fragmentation, more violence and more radicalization. Rabasa et al. (2010) have a different model based on studies of individuals who have left gangs, criminal enterprises and VEOs. They argue that a dramatic 'trigger' precipitates events. The government can facilitate disengagement by interacting with prisoners who might be on the fence. States can also offer inducements and increase the costs of being a member of a VEO (note the overlaps of these last two points with Ashour). After individuals have been ostensibly disengaged, the state should monitor progress and offer economic and basic living support and counseling. Noricks (2009) notes that social networking is a radicalizing influence on youth and efforts to counter this should be explored. Empirical work on deradicalizing right wing youth in Europe could hold relevance in the VEO context. Evidence from Norway and Germany has been presented by Bjorgo (2006) and (Grunenberg and van Donselaar 2006) respectively (cited in Noricks 2009).

Rabasa (2010) argues that extremists must be presented with a balance of costs and benefits to induce them to disengagement. However, punishments and benefits should be strategically used to ensure the desired reaction. Deardorff (2010) agrees with the need for balance between hard and soft incentives, while also suggesting that neither one will be especially useful in a well-established extremist organization. Instead, he suggests the use of a holistic approach which "addresses the conditions that result in social polarization and in-group/out-group violence." In addition, researchers suggest using caution when concluding that disengagement and deradicalization processes are successful, since not enough research has been conducted on the efficacy of the programs or on the social and behavioral processes underlying the issue (Horgan and Braddock 2010).

Detailed Analyses

109: *Deradicalization programs can reduce VEO activity.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Ashour (2007, 2009) provides interview-based case studies to buttress the claim that groups can deradicalize. The empirical case study evidence suggests that deradicalization has worked in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic Group, al-Jihad (all of Egypt) and AIS in Algeria. These findings support his theoretical model discussed above. He notes deradicalization failures in Algeria (GIA and GSPC). Ashour's model is a bit vague on exactly how interactions with the 'other' work. The Rabasa et al. (2010, xvi) study posits that there is little to no empirical evidence supporting deradicalization. They also call into question deradicalization programs that claim success arguing that there is evidence that only non hard-line militants have been reformed. Noricks (2010) and others in the general discussion at the beginning provide empirical support that programs in various contexts work. Ashour warns that deradicalization can backfire if it is attempted in the absence of a credible VEO leader who backs reform. Others such as John Horgan insist the best we can hope for is disengagement but this still means less violence.

Empirical Support Score: 3

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: According to Ashour's model, the VEO leadership should be kept intact if it is potentially heading towards deradicalization. It is this leadership that can bring about deradicalization. A leader with credibility and status related to the VEOs struggle. Ashour states that in the absence of such a clear and unquestioned leader, the group is susceptible to fragmentation in the wake of repression. Could this happen to al-Qaeda? At the individual level, the Rabasa et al. (2010) model predicts disengagement influence could be most effective after an actor experiences a traumatic/violent event (recall some of the work on deradicalizing right wing youth in Europe cited above also make this claim). The state should make the individual decision to disengagement easier for the person. Then the state should monitor progress.

Applicability Score: Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs.

110: *Social interaction between the VEO and the 'other' helps chances for deradicalization.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Ashour (2009) writes that these interactions, as part of the overall process discussed above, will aid in deradicalization. He provides case study evidence from Egyptian prisons. VEOs encountered and were influenced by secular liberals in prisons. Support in Egyptian and Algerian contexts.

Empirical Support Score: 5

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: Social interactions with the 'other' seem a viable and practical way to influence VEOs.

Applicability Score: Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs

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111: *Deradicalization/disengagement is more likely to succeed when efforts are initiated by the VEO leadership.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: This is a key component of Ashour's (2009) model. In the absence of a leader who is seen as pious, brave, and credible, there can be no top-down deradicalization. The state repression (violent or non-violent) precedes the top-down approach to deradicalization. Ashour admits that this part of his model is not as clear-cut as the other linkages. However, he provides evidence from the IG context that state repression likely radicalized earlier, but subsequently had an effect on the leadership that moved it towards deradicalization. A leader with credibility can influence his followers to end violence. Without leadership driving the process, the group can splinter and spoilers (see Stedman 1997) could emerge. The literature on decapitation is briefly summarized in hypothesis 24. The literature is divided on the efficacy of decapitation. The effectiveness of decapitation may be explained by the effects of not having a leader to drive reform and/or preventing splintering. Ashour (2007) provides evidence that the IG leadership prison tours in 2002 helped consolidate support for IG's 1999 unilateral cease fire called the Initiative for Ceasing Violence (ICV) in 1999. These interactions between VEOs and various secular individuals had a deradicalizing effect. This is empirical case study support for the hypothesis.

Empirical Support Score: 5

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: This is directly relevant and raises serious questions about leadership decapitation. Repression can help convince the leadership that the armed campaign is not worth it. If there is no leader to explain to the rank and file about ending violence, the group could splinter and some groups could become even more violent.

Applicability Score: Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs.

112: *VEO deradicalization/disengagement 'initiated at the top' is more likely to succeed if accompanied by 'inducements by the state.'*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Noricks (2009) also points to the importance of positive inducements. She notes that negative actions can have the opposite effect on deradicalization and in fact might increase group cohesion. Ashour (2007, 2009) reports that, in the case of IG, the state provided three waves of different types of inducements. The most notable came in 2002 and 2003 when the state helped IG publish its books, released thousands of prisoners and even helped IG with a website (Ashour 2007).

Empirical Support Score: 4

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: Inducements are a viable means of influence.

Applicability Score: Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs.
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113: *VEO decradicalization/disengagement initiated at the top is more likely to succeed if accompanied by 'internal interactions between leadership and members of the movement.' [Bottom up feedback]*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Ashour (2007, 2009) finds that it is critical for credible leaders to sway the support of the rank and file towards non-violence.

Empirical Support Score: 4

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: Leaders who have clearly given up on violence can be encouraged to tour prisons and other locations with a radical audience that might be won over.

Applicability Score: Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs.

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107: *Influencing a potential VEO member before he/she shifts from the "virtual jihad" to the actual violence in the real world will be more effective.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Brachman (2005) observes comments on the increase of radical websites. Radical Islamic VEOs are using the internet to recruit and are relatively unfettered in their use of the internet. Awan (2010) provides examples of individuals driven to act because of radical Islamic sites. Ariza (2005) also comments on the scope of the problem. He notes that the increase in sites advocating violence (from all groups-not only Islamist) increased over 400% from 1997 to 2005. The hypothesis is plausible but the evidence appears only anecdotal.

Empirical Support Score: 0

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: The sites are a growing problem and there is evidence they are leading to actual terrorist actions. Brachman notes that it is essential that the US check this growing problem. The Ariza article notes that the internet could probably also be used to spread a message of disengagement and/or misinformation that would hinder VEO efforts. Because a link has been shown between the internet and action by VEOs, the hypothesis is directly applicable.

Applicability Score: Not Applicable – There is no empirical support in any context.

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114: *On the whole, positive inducements seem more effective than negative ones deradicalizing/disengaging.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Noricks (2009) notes that negative actions can have the opposite effect on deradicalization and in fact might increase group cohesion. Ashour (2007, 2009) also notes that selectively applied inducements are a key part of his model. When the VEO seems to be moving towards non-violence, it is a good time to stop repressing and offer up positive concessions. Walsh and Piazza (2010) also note the positive benefits of ending torture.

Empirical Support Score: 9

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: Stopping maltreatment of prisoners and provided physical integrity is applicable if the goal is to influence VEOs.

Applicability Score: Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs.

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115: *Deradicalization/disengagement of VEO actors is often preceded by a traumatic/significant event.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Grunenberg and van Donselaar (2006, cited in Noricks 2009) observe a pattern whereby traumatic events precede an individual decision to leave right wing VEOs in Germany. Garfinkel (2007, cited in Noricks 2009) also notes the importance of traumatic events in her case studies of Jewish, Muslim and Christian deradicalization.

Empirical Support Score: 5

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: Traumatic events often cause individuals to question certain realities and decisions. To the extent it is a possibility targeting individuals who have experienced such events for DER/DIS programs could be fruitful.

Applicability Score: Moderate Confidence – Empirical results are derived from alternative contexts, but the researcher has *some* degree of confidence that they apply similarly to the context of influencing VEOs.

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116: *The more psychological and emotional support that an ex-member of a militant group has access to post de-radicalization/disengagement, the less likely he/she is to rejoin the extremist group in the future.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: (Rabasa et al. 2010) cite studies arguing that militants that deradicalization or disengagement should be monitored. In addition they should be offered psychological therapy to take care of any doubts that may arise. In addition there should be adequate family support. Theological discussions that explain the inaccuracies in violent interpretations of Islam also fit in here. Rabasa et al cite evidence from Saudi Arabia and Singapore psychological counseling programs.

Empirical Support Score: 5

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: Clear applicability. Support for aftercare makes sense and seems to work. Once deradicalized, follow-up is necessary.

Applicability Score: Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs.

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11: *As hard incentives (punishment) and soft incentives (rewards) for members to exit a VEO become more balanced, the chance of members deradicalizing or disengaging increases.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Sole or over-reliance on "hard" incentives can have serious negative consequences for counter terror operations (Deardorff 2010; Rabasa 2010; Woodward et al. 2010). Woodward et al.'s qualitative analysis (2010) of the efficacy of "soft" versus "hard" approaches used on jailed extremists suggested that "soft" approaches were more likely to result in disengagement, and possibly even deradicalization, after release than were "harsh" punishments. In a discussion of the efficacy of soft incentives, Schulze (2008) details how police in Indonesia provided religious discussions, medical care, financial resources, and family access to successfully incentivize the deradicalization of prisoners. Kruglanski and colleagues (2010) provide another example of the success of soft incentives with their analysis of an Iraqi civic education program that provided job training and family reintegration for 18,000 detainees who had been released back into society. However, researchers caution that it is also possible for these extremists to be released and rejoin with their organizations (Woodward et al. 2010).

In a discussion of the Saudi deradicalization program, which utilizes career placement and government assistance, Stern (2010) purports that deradicalization programs must account for individual motivations. Ashour's study (2009, as cited in Johnston, 2009), suggests that when state repression was combined with a select choice of parallel inducements, extremists and extremist organizations were more likely to disengage. Johnston (2009) purports that Algeria's use of repression followed by the offer of amnesty was more likely to result in extremist deradicalization than repression alone. Thus, the balance of pressure and inducements provided by the state is important to the success of extremist deradicalization.

The empirical studies suggest balancing hard and soft incentives does increase the likelihood of disengagement or deradicalization. However, other studies focused on soft versus hard incentives or only

on soft incentives suggest soft incentives may be more effective than hard incentives. Yet, the long term effects of balanced incentives versus only soft incentives are not known.

Empirical Support Score: 3

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: The empirical studies are in the context of VEOs.

Applicability Score: Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs.

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12: *When pressure from the state is high with no parallel inducements, Islamist VEOs will not deradicalize and vice versa.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: The literature of the main hypothesis focuses primarily on Islamist VEOs which makes the same conclusions relevant. Woodward et al. (2010) and Schulze (2008) provide studies suggesting parallel inducements are integral to incentivize deradicalization. While studies mostly support this hypothesis, a direct comparison of the effects of many hard incentives and no soft incentives with few hard incentives and parallel inducements on the deradicalization of entire Islamic VEOs has not been done.

Empirical Support Score: 3

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: The empirical evidence is specifically in the context of VEOs.

Applicability Score: Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs.

General comments: A statistical analysis of the Ashour model would be very interesting. Ashour himself admits the state went out of its way to show that IG had reformed. This gives the reader pause to ask whether Ashour's model is as strong as he claims or that the state—acting out of self-interest—made it look like IG cooperation.

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