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Terrorist rehabilitation: a global imperative

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Introduction

Rehabilitation is to help someone return to normal life by providing education, training, and therapy. Those exposed to and convinced by terrorist ideology do not lead normal lives. They adopt the writings and speeches of ideologues that espouse hatred and transform themselves. Whether they are operational terrorists or extremist supporters, they believe that violence and other extreme measures are acceptable means to bring about political change. Terrorists and their supporters are not mainstream but are extreme. To facilitate their return to the mainstream from the extreme, they must be rehabilitated. Unless a terrorist is rehabilitated before his release from custody, he is likely to pose a security threat to the government and a societal threat to the community upon his return. As his belief system did not undergo change, he is likely to contaminate others with his ideals and recruit them to advance his cause.

Unlike economically-motivated criminals, brief or prolonged incarceration is unlikely to change the belief system of ideologically-driven terrorists. Terrorist rehabilitation is different from criminal rehabilitation. Those terrorists or supporters released from custody have repeatedly offended after their release. This includes those detained and released from the US detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The Muslim world perceived Guantanamo Bay as revenge by the US and not as justice by them and, as such, many returnees received a hero's welcome in their own countries. Upon release, the terrorists who were not transformed or experienced radicalisation during detention, advocated, supported, or committed acts of violence. As those detained in Guantanamo Bay were not rehabilitated, they often remained committed to the philosophy of Al Qaeda and its associated groups.

Rehabilitation is the answer to two grave challenges the world is faced with today. First, Al Qaeda and its family of groups that specifically target Muslim populations. The contemporary wave of violence and counter violence produces terrorist recruits and extremist supporters. Those exposed to the vicious ideology believe in the philosophy and methodology of Al Qaeda. They need to be ideologically and theologically rehabilitated. Second, contemporary detention and prison conditions contribute to radicalisation. Unless detainees and inmates are kept in isolation, they become susceptible to indoctrination and training by fellow detainees and inmates. In most penitentiary and detention facilities, detainees and inmates are housed

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communally. In some facilities, both criminal inmates and security detainees are co-located leading to an exchange of skills and will as well as co-recruitment and alliances that persist after release.

The reverse of radicalisation in custody is rehabilitation. To address the above-mentioned problems, rehabilitation should be made available in every facility housing terrorist detainees and inmates. After examining the practices of terrorist rehabilitation programs, this paper argues why a global regime on terrorist rehabilitation is necessary.

The context

The global campaign against terrorism has been dominated by an overwhelming kinetic response. The lethal operations have temporarily disrupted terrorist operational infrastructures but have not disrupted the conceptual infrastructures driving extremism and terrorism. The *modus operandi* to catch, kill, and disrupt terrorist organisations is having a boomerang effect. Although the operational capabilities of terrorist groups have been reduced in some theatres, the motives and intentions of the terrorists to fight back have grown, protracting the fight.

In some countries, soft power has been cast aside as hard powers are wielded. The combination—smart power—is used only by a very few nations. Whilst the use of operational measures should not be disregarded, an equal amount of attention has not been given to the strategic fight—the battle of ideas. Ideological and intellectual infrastructures form the foundations of the terrorist movement. As the environment remains permissive, ideology remains the lifeblood of contemporary terrorist groups and movements. Terrorist ideologies can only be de-legitimised by ideological and theological refutation. To safeguard the next generation of youth from the lure of fighting and the appeal of extremist ideology, counter ideology must be incorporated into the counter-terrorism toolbox. Ideally, the two counter-ideology prongs of community engagement and terrorist rehabilitation should be used in parallel.

By building community-based programs that aim to engage indoctrinated extremists and rehabilitate operational terrorists, regeneration of violence can be prevented. These programs can be built in partnership with the government. Terrorist rehabilitation is a vital tool in the fight where incarcerated terrorists are engaged to recant, repent, and express remorse for their thoughts and acts of violence.

The background

There are over 100,000 convicted and suspected terrorists languishing in penitentiary and detention centres from Europe to the Middle East and Asia. Although there are vocational and educational programs to rehabilitate criminals, there are very few initiatives to rehabilitate terrorists. Though terrorist rehabilitation has been the topic of significant interest and debate from academic circles in the US to officials in Europe, there has been very little effort to examine the concepts, the processes, and the outcomes of terrorist rehabilitation. Despite significant study into terrorist mindsets and the ideologies driving them, terrorist rehabilitation remains the exception worldwide. Terrorist rehabilitation is not the norm.

During the Bush presidency, the US had an opportunity to start a rehabilitation program in Guantanamo Bay (Gitmo). Instead, the US earned the anger of the Muslim world by portraying images of muffled and chained men wearing orange

jumpsuits. Gitmo should have been divided into two sections, one of them being a section where detainees who cooperated received counselling, learnt livelihood skills, played with their children, and met with their families. When released the Gitmo detainees were more radicalised than when they were brought in. As there was no rehabilitation program it was very seldom that, upon release, detainees gave up their ways. As the battlefield of the mind was not addressed, nearly 100 former detainees have returned to the fight. President Obama signed a decree on 22 January 2009 ordering the closure of the detention centre. Most countries receiving the Gitmo detainees have no rehabilitation programs. Thus, there is an urgent need for countries to develop rehabilitation programs.

Egypt pioneered the idea of religious rehabilitation in the 1990s. Al Azhar scholars and other counsellors as well as the historical leadership of al Gama al Islamiyah al Masri (Islamic Group of Egypt) began to influence detainees and inmates to abandon violence and build peace. Programs for rehabilitating communist terrorists in Malaysia and Singapore were developed in the 1960s and 1970s but these were not elaborate. Communism in Asia was not a global threat and religion was not the basis for the ideological mindset in that era. Resolution of the problem at the time was contextual. After realising the scale of the threat following the Al Qaeda attacks on the US on 11 September 2001, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia developed national rehabilitation programs. Since then the process of detainee and inmate rehabilitation has been gaining popularity worldwide. As a new frontier in counter-terrorism practice, rehabilitation programs have provided degrees of success in countries that have adopted them. Some programs, such as those in Singapore, have been developed with community participation where clerics and scholars have volunteered to counsel detainees and other well-meaning individuals and institutions have provided for the detainee families. In such counter-terrorism and extremism initiatives, participation and ownership by the community is an important first step in the right direction.

Why terrorist rehabilitation?

Rehabilitation should become a complementary strategy in the ongoing fight against terrorism and extremism. Today, many arrested terrorists are not considered as requiring treatment. They are either treated as criminals or prisoners of war. However, unlike common criminals, terrorists carry an ideology. The mind is the most powerful weapon against their enemies and opponents. By unlocking the mind, a terrorist can be made to reflect and re-examine his own ideas and thoughts. This is why terrorist rehabilitation is unique. Still in an experimental phase, terrorist rehabilitation requires visionary leadership, government-community partnership, and a well-resourced specialist program of dedicated and trained staff.

Terrorist rehabilitation is based on the theory that mere punishment through imprisonment is not enough to permanently reform and facilitate their re-integration into society upon release. Particularly for the Islamist terror detainees, the ideological debate or religious counselling sessions are a very important component of the rehabilitation program. This is because their behaviour and ways of thinking are based on an incorrect understanding or misinterpretation of Islamic concepts. Hence, the counselling sessions serve to provide them with the correct understanding of Islam and its leading concepts. This correct understanding will not only forestall future criminal acts, but will also convince them that such behaviour is inappropriate

and misguided. Consequently, this may bring about genuine feelings of remorse and repentance, hence permanently removing the source of motivation for their involvement in terrorist and extremist-related activities.

The global threat coming from violent extremist ideology requires captured terrorists to be rehabilitated before they are released. Unless they abandon the idea of violence before they are released, they will contaminate others with their ideas, and support and commit acts of violence. The disengagement strategy used should incorporate incentives, re-education, and rehabilitation. As an essential element in the fight against extremism, detainee and inmate rehabilitation is the reverse of terrorist indoctrination. De-radicalization is both detainee and inmate rehabilitation, and community engagement. Such de-radicalization initiatives can proactively and reactively counter the contemporary wave of extremism.

To share global best practices, build a network, and chart the future of terrorist rehabilitation, Singapore hosted the first International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation (ICTR) from 24–26 February 2009. Organised by the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research and the Religious Rehabilitation Group of Singapore, the three-day international conference included 200 delegates and participants from 20 countries that have existing and aspiring rehabilitation programs. The world's leading practitioners and scholars on detainee and inmate rehabilitation presented at this conference. Security and intelligence specialists, psychologists, religious counsellors, social workers, and other practitioners active in the process of rehabilitating extremists and terrorists all participated. To learn from global best practice and understand the gaps in knowledge, the national programs shared their experience and future plans. The conference was designed not only as a listening and learning event but also an event that will allow participants to focus on the steps to be undertaken in the near future. The understanding gained, the knowledge developed, and the network built aimed at taking rehabilitation to a national level to building support for establishing a global regime in terrorist rehabilitation.

The 'human terrain' is key

The contemporary wave of ideologically-driven violence presents a series of new challenges. Most of our countries have built the skill and will to fight using security and intelligence services, the military, and enforcement authorities. However, most countries have not adequately developed the ideological and intellectual understanding, knowledge, and structures to counter the conceptual terrorist infrastructures. To reduce the immediate threat, operational terrorists should be hunted. But, for strategic peace, the reality of the world needs to be corrected. For success, the government should understand that human terrain is the key.

Unlike the previous generation of threat groups, Al Qaeda understood the importance of the human terrain and placed a premium on using new media and technology to spread its message. Many years have passed since Al Qaeda attacked America's most iconic landmarks on 11 September 2001, but governments are still best at using lethal, kinetic, and hard power. By investing heavily in operational counter terrorism—catch, kill, and disrupt—we cannot win the fight in totality. To reverse the current global trend, greater strategic capabilities to win hearts and minds and platforms for engagement should be built. The future is about preventing the creation of extremists and terrorists through community engagement and offender reintegration into the community through rehabilitation.

Terrorism presents the tier-one national security threat to most countries. No country is immune from the threat of extremism or its vicious by-product, terrorism. Even if governments built the most capable military, law enforcement, and national security agencies, no government can guarantee total security from terrorism. The threat is diverse, complex, and global. Truly transnational threats, terrorism, and extremism permeate territorial borders and communities. If any single country or region is producing terrorists and extremists, other countries and regions will remain at risk. There should be recognition that no country is too big to secure itself without the cooperation of others. Similarly, no country is too small when it comes to contribution to global security.

Currently, cooperation and collaboration are largely on the operational arena and not at the ideological frontier. To make rehabilitation a part of the solution at a global level a more concerted effort is needed. More than ever before, the world needs expertise and dedication to make this transition from local to regional, and national to international.

The neglected battlefield

Today, the most significant terrorist threat emanates from a global movement, underpinned by a violent politico-religious ideology. Political incompetence drives it, and religious misinterpretation legitimises it. Members of this movement seek to overturn regimes they consider to be apostate through violent and undemocratic means. The local and international grievances of the Muslim masses are exploited to help construct a picture of a modern world hostile towards Islam and Muslims. The threat driven by a volatile ideology can never be adequately addressed by military and law enforcement actions. A paradigm shift must occur.

A terrorist suffers from exposure to terrorist propaganda and indoctrination. A vicious by-product of society, perhaps he was more susceptible and vulnerable to the terrorist message than other members of society. By skilful approaches and interviews, it is possible to map the detainees' ideological, theological, and intellectual makeup, as well as his orientations and inclinations. After discerning the terrorist narrative that prompted him to cross the line, the factors that radicalised him to hate, conceive, plan, prepare, and attack can be identified. The understanding and knowledge to strategically fight the contemporary wave of radicalisation and violence rests within that terrorist. Rehabilitation allows communication with the captured terrorist, challenging his thoughts and ideas, as well as allaying any misgivings he might harbour. Such an approach will eventually defeat terrorism by decreasing the need for militaristic means.

The battlefield of the mind is the neglected battlefield. A strategic investment, fighting the battlefield of the mind is less costly. Extricating the negative thoughts and replacing them with realistic thoughts is a more humanitarian approach. Making terrorist rehabilitation mandated by law will have other benefits. It will reduce humiliation, abuse, and torture, routine in most detention facilities and penitentiaries in the developing world.

Modes of rehabilitation

Rehabilitation requires engaging the beneficiary on all its facets. A successful program must recognise all modes of rehabilitation. Within each mode of

rehabilitation, there are various styles. The four principal modes of rehabilitation are: religious rehabilitation; psychological rehabilitation; social rehabilitation; and vocational rehabilitation.

Religious rehabilitation

Every religion promotes peace and harmony and values tolerance. However, religious ideology has been used to provide legitimacy in the justification for violence. Although all the great religions teach us compassion, tolerance, and moderation, religion is misused in the process to influence and convince people. In the past two decades we have witnessed terrorism stemming from the propagation of deviant versions of Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Sikhism. Only the religious teachers and scholars can correct this by addressing incorrect interpretations and incorrect teachings. Many terrorists believe that the US, its allies, and its friends are deliberately attacking Islam and killing Muslims. They are made to believe that the West is the 'Satan' and a religious obligation binds them to attack the US, its allies, and its friends. Through the imposition of an extremist and militant interpretation of Islam, the terrorists are committed to re-establishing the Caliphate.

To derive legitimacy for their struggle, they interpret the *Qur'an* and other religious scriptures in a manner that portrays them as the true guardians of Islam. Learned Islamic scholars and clerics have the understanding, knowledge, and authority to correct the Islamic misconceptions a terrorist holds. Unfortunately, among religious communities, the realisation of the dangers of extremist ideas has not been significantly and adequately addressed. Only the clerics of religion are equipped to address this urgent issue. If the right formula is not applied, the terrorist message will spread to epidemic proportions. A systematic methodology is needed to bring the misguided back to the right path. Singapore's Religious Rehabilitation Group produced two manuals in 2004 and in 2009 to aid religious counselling of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) detainees held by the Internal Security Department (ISD), the security and intelligence service of Singapore. In addition to imparting structured counselling sessions, the detainees are provided with religious texts to correct their misconceptions about Islam. In addition to the *Qur'an*, books on *Tafsir* (exegesis of *Qur'an*), *Hadith* (sayings and deeds of Prophet), *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), and *Sirah* (the Prophet's history) are provided.

In the process of religious rehabilitation, the terrorists' errors in thinking and their worldview need to be eradicated. This includes their tendency to think in a binary mode (I am good, everyone else is evil) and a sense of exclusivity (us versus them mentality). Second, there is a need to shatter the myths surrounding misunderstood Islamic concepts e.g., glorifying suicide bombing as a form of *Jihad* in the name of God and the concept of allegiance and non-allegiance in which terrorists believe that their loyalty is only to God, His Messenger, and Muslims who abide to their interpretation of Islam, while demanding that Muslims hate and do not have any association with non-Muslims or 'impure' Muslims.

After extricating the negative ideology and concept, there is a need to replace them with the accurate mainstream religious concepts including the true meaning of *Jihad* in Islam and the correct way to treat non-Muslims. Finally, terrorists are to be immunised against future challenges by providing them a wholesome understanding of religion.

The services of *Ustazahs* (female clerics) are also made available to counsel wives. In some cases, the husbands have tried to indoctrinate the wife and the children with extremist beliefs and thoughts. As the husband went through a period of exposure to deviant teachings, the wife must be supported to understand that the husband has been propagating an incorrect understanding of the faith. Counselling extended to the wife must challenge the benefits of propagating extremist thoughts and beliefs within the family. In the future, the wife must neither propagate nor facilitate such views within the family. Some wives, especially those who attended similar classes, were highly exposed to radical ideology. When the husbands became very secretive, wives were left confused by their husband's ideology and behaviour. As such, it is necessary for wives to be provided with religious counselling. Some of the children of the JI members were exposed to the JI ideologies. To prevent them becoming a new generation of JI members, mothers are counselled with the aim of facilitating the recognition of errors and enabling them to promote a correct understanding to guide their children to follow the correct principles.

Through a combination of tools, a terrorist who needs help can be reformed. While psychological, vocational, and social and family rehabilitation can change one's heart and mind, the most powerful is religious rehabilitation. Religious rehabilitation has the power to unlock the mind of a detainee or an inmate. It has the power to make a beneficiary of rehabilitation repent, become remorseful, and re-enter the mainstream.

Psychological rehabilitation

The psychologist adds an important dimension to the rehabilitation process. Psychology enables us to understand why some cross the line and kill. The methodology involves psychological profiling, assessment, and solutions. From a psychological perspective, it is much easier to change behaviour with rewards than with punishment. Introducing a carrot to accompany the many sticks we have means that the reformation of terrorists may be less costly. By showing the beneficiaries that they can benefit from both denouncing a violent ideology and from adopting pro-social behaviour/ideology, their reasons to fight will be nullified.

The captured terrorists must be convinced that their imprisonment or detention is to allow them to participate in a rehabilitation program. They must be assured of getting all the help they need to understand their current situation and how to avoid falling into the same behavioural patterns that trapped them in the first place. For this, they must be given access to enter into dialogue with qualified clerics and scholars of Islam. Their genuine concern for the suffering of Muslims in places such as Gaza and the West Bank, Iraq, and Afghanistan must not be dismissed as extremism. On the contrary, it should be considered as a window that can provide greater understanding as to how the mind works. This will present counsellors with the opportunity to strengthen the poor reasoning capacity and poor communication skills most of them are known to have. Whenever they manifest emotional attachment to a certain issue, counsellors must help them develop a realistic attitude to deal with the issue and seize the opportunity to diminish extremist thoughts, beliefs, and behaviour. With all these benefits, rehabilitation becomes not a choice but a must.

Social rehabilitation

When the head of a family is detained, he ceases to be the breadwinner of the family. As the family starts to suffer, both the wife and the children need assistance to survive. Social rehabilitation becomes essential because the family is traumatised by the detention. Social rehabilitation addresses the concerns of the family: the means of livelihood for the family; the need for school for the children; and making sure the wife and children have a roof over their head. Then family rehabilitation becomes a part of social rehabilitation.

As a part of the community aftercare initiative, wives should be visited by community and social workers. Children should not be socially isolated or treated as if everyone in the family is a terrorist. It becomes necessary to take care of children in a way where the children do not form the next generation of terrorists. By preventing isolation and trauma, the family's reintegration into society is facilitated.

As a part of the social rehabilitation, social workers assigned to the program provided the children with required play items and helped them with school. To give them strength to live, the community and social workers regularly visit and motivate them. It is important to engage the family mentally and socially to prevent a build up of anger and resentment. Otherwise, it would create the opportunity for extremists and extremist groups to reach out to them. To deny bitterness and counter extremism, community and social workers provide aftercare by way of jobs, monetary assistance, and a fresh outlook. By the time the detainee is released, the family is also transformed. Even after release, community and social workers should continue to work with the family.

Singapore's Inter-Agency Aftercare Group is a voluntary community effort between different Malay/Muslim agencies and organisations that provide assistance to the families of the detainees, including their wives and children. Within the aftercare framework, the unique approach by these agencies and organisations is aimed at supporting the families of detainees during this difficult period. Yayasan Mendaki (YM), Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP), and Taman Bacaan focus on their specialised expertise, consolidate expert areas, and coordinate efforts between different agencies for the benefit of the client. YM covers the educational program and assistance in the form of tuition fee subsidy or program fee waiver that it provides to the families. In addition to coordinating with Taman Bacaan and AMP to help the families, YM also refers such families to relevant national agencies (e.g., CDCs, MOE, FSCs, and MUIS) and Malay/Muslim Organisations (e.g., TAA) for financial assistance. In addition to crisis-management initiatives, AMP assists spouses and children providing family counselling.

Vocational rehabilitation

To reintegrate the detainees and inmates back to society, they need to be guided and prepared through the development of skills and educational attainment. Designed to provide necessary skills for a job, vocational rehabilitation imparts skills useful to detainees and inmates upon release. This ranges from teaching them metal and woodwork, carpentry and masonry, dairy farming and agriculture, computer and language skills, and self-study and distance education. Unlike the other modes of rehabilitation, vocation rehabilitation runs a security risk. To minimize the risk,

detainees and inmates are not taught certain skills such as electronics, a capability that could be used to build circuitry for bombs.

More than in any other country, under the careful guidance of Major General Douglas Stone, vocational rehabilitation was developed in Iraq to an unprecedented level. Working with OSS, a US Department of Defense contractor specialising in rehabilitation, and the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research in Singapore, Dr Stone's vision and mission created renowned resident expertise. After release, 'Picasso', a former Al Qaeda detainee in Iraq with a talent for art was recruited by OSS to teach art. A master theoretician and practitioner of rehabilitation, Dr Stone built a wide-ranging program in Iraq, from which governments interested in creating rehabilitation programs continue to benefit. Coupled with vocational rehabilitation, the integration of art, dance, song, and other cultural expressions into the rehabilitation package broadened the horizons of the detainees. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia established a care centre in a suburb of Riyadh with games, cooking, and the study of arts. A beneficiary of the centre, Mohammed Dousery, a Guantanamo detainee for six years, said:

The centre prepared me to engage gradually with the rest of society. You can't go directly from Guantanamo bay to normal life. This is an extremely difficult thing, and everything changes, Saudi changes and so does the rest of the world. I have a great wife, and she is encouraging me to try and forget Guantanamo and she says to me; forget that prison, you are a new man and you have a new life in front of you and you have your family. Focus your concerns on this. This makes me feel much better (*Al Jazeera News*, 2008, July 9).

The five compounds, each with capacity for 1200 people, support reintegration back into Saudi society. The beneficiaries, as they are called, are able to swim, play football, table tennis, and TV games. In an air-conditioned tent converted into a dining hall that serves traditional food, they engage in dialogue. In vocational rehabilitation, as in other modes, the range of activities is limited only by human imagination.

A working model

There are practical difficulties in developing a universal model to rehabilitate terrorists seeking to justify their actions through Islam. To start with, Islam comes to every country in different ways. As such, there is a need to understand diverse values and traditions of the Muslim community—how they practice Islam, how they relate to each other, and how they see the world. The economic context, political environment, and unique language and culture make standardisation a challenge. Just as the security landscape in every country is different, so terrorists are also different. As the conditions of capture, treatment during incarceration, as well as release differ, there will not be one standard rehabilitation program. A government can develop a standard model but it will be applicable to a specific threat group at a specific place and time. Every rehabilitation program operates in the context of a community. Although criminal justice and prison systems are unique to different countries, an approach to rehabilitation must exist. Instead of a standard model, a working model on rehabilitation should consider a number of essential aspects.

First, those selected to undergo rehabilitation should be viewed as beneficiaries and no longer as inmates or detainees. Most security prisoners and detainees are treated

poorly, at times harassed, and even tortured. Most guards have preconceived notions of how to train detainees and inmates that lead them to act aggressively towards them. As most penitentiaries and detention centres have no rehabilitation space, the potential beneficiaries should be relocated to a facility that mirrors society. As the beneficiary is to be released back in to society, he should no longer be isolated but engaged. To build understanding and create a channel for peaceful articulation of differences, an environment conducive for dialogue with the beneficiary should be created.

Second, rehabilitation should begin on day one of arrest. If the captured terrorist is beaten, he is likely to harbour a grudge and is very likely to remember the treatment meted out to him. Even the best form of interview with a detainee is rapport based. Threats and torture are unlikely to yield truthful information. Rehabilitation is a painstaking process that requires patience, dedication, and reflection.

Third, rehabilitation is a collective effort not only by investigative officers and operations officers but by the clergy and the academia. Although it involves different interest groups working together, the most crucial part of rehabilitation is the public-private partnership between security and intelligence services and the clergy. It is of paramount importance to build a lasting relationship between the government holding the detainees and inmates and the clerics and scholars committed to protecting their faith from misinterpretation and misrepresentation. Unless government and clergy work together to create the most crucial platform, the rehabilitation program will fall apart.

Fourth, as religious justification was used to bring about the concept of hate and violence, counselling by the clergy should be an essential part of the program. In the West, where church and state are separate, there is a reluctance to use religious counsellors. By neglecting this crucial dimension, other modes of rehabilitation are unlikely to work. Government should cast aside their suspicions and find a channel to better understand and work with the clerics. The clergy must be exposed to witness what terrorism has done to individuals, and decide for themselves the impact of distortion on the terrorist, having strayed from the right Islamic teachings. When it becomes apparent that a few minorities are casting a bad image on the religion, there will be many clergy members volunteering to protect Islam. Then, working with terrorists becomes the responsibility of clergy keen to uphold the dignity of the religion itself. Members of the clergy must be careful not to project their own school or orientation as the right interpretation of Islam as that will lead to discord between the clergy. Clerics from the diverse schools and orientations should join hands and work together to fight a common threat.

Fifth, successful rehabilitation requires the continuous study of the evolving terrorist narrative and ideology as well as their perceived and real grievances and aspirations. It requires access to studies by other programs and institutions. Terrorists and their supporters thought that they could help Muslim brothers by doing *Jihad* in Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Chechnya, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Clerics and scholars should develop an intellectual capacity to rebut this ideology and deliver an Islamic alternative to travelling and fighting in conflict zones. The response should be a rebuttal to correct the deviation that says that *Jihad* permits killing non-Muslims. Instead, an alternative can be proposed to support the humanitarian work in Gaza and Kashmir. Energy and resources can be committed to work peacefully to rebuild the lives and property of those who have suffered in conflict zones.

Sixth, constant training and education of the professional and support staff at the rehabilitation centre is essential. Whether it is a guard or a sports instructor, no one should be assigned to the rehabilitation centre without undergoing an orientation course. Even momentarily, if a guard on duty mistreats a beneficiary, the goodwill built by others will be damaged. There is no standard textbook to rehabilitate a terrorist. As terrorist rehabilitation is a new discipline, it is necessary to nurture a culture of research where a specialist team will constantly learn, develop, and refine the existing understanding and knowledge. Terrorist rehabilitation is neither an exact science nor a romance. Rehabilitation is an obligation, a science, and an art. As such a rehabilitation centre should never be run by a bureaucrat but should be run by a dynamic leader. As beneficiaries differ from one another, it requires creative leadership, not classical bureaucracy at work. It is essential to evaluate successes and failures and maximise successes and minimise failures.

Seventh, trained, dedicated, and expert staffs are needed to classify and profile the detainee and inmates. Before selection as a beneficiary of the rehabilitation program, it is necessary to assess if the terrorist is a high, medium, or low risk. It is also necessary to profile his education, his family, and the depth of his operational involvement and ideological commitment. Both his involvement and ideology are not dependent on his level of education (low, medium, or high) but are dependant on the degree of his exposure. Even the most educated are susceptible to the message of a charismatic preacher. Like love, ideology makes terrorists and supporters blind. As the degrees of indoctrination and commitment differ, government experts, together with clerics and scholars, should work on a structured program and a tailored syllabus for each of the beneficiaries. Otherwise the message will not reach the beneficiary and the investment will be wasted.

Eight, resources are needed to create an environment conducive for counselling. As most detention and penitentiary facilities are over-crowded and their conditions are exceptionally poor, the environment is not conducive for rehabilitation. As such, governments should invest resources to construct new facilities or relocate the beneficiaries to appropriate facilities. As opposed to mass and group counselling, one-to-one counselling will involve a dialogue in a comfortable room. Seated on a sofa, the preacher and the beneficiary will sip tea, eat dates, listen to each other, and discuss matters of interest from God to the *Qur'an* and Islam to Muslims. If mass counselling is being carried out, it is necessary to determine the target audience. It is necessary to structure the message being delivered by looking at to whom we want to talk and about what we want to talk. There should be continuous assessment of the beneficiary/beneficiaries to assess how well they are responding to counselling.

Ninth, no rehabilitation program will achieve its desired impact unless the government works to counter the extremism dormant in the community. While the reverse of radicalisation in custody is rehabilitation, the reverse of radicalisation outside detention is community engagement. Ideally, the blueprint for winning hearts and minds should come from debriefing and deprogramming detainees. Terrorist rehabilitation holds the key to inoculating communities against the contemporary wave of extremism and terrorism. During rehabilitation, counsellors can elicit from the beneficiary the content of counter-terrorist propaganda targeting and affecting the community.

Tenth, no one can guarantee that a person's mindset can be changed through rehabilitation. To ensure he will not become a contaminant upon release, it is necessary to support his gradual reintegration into society. Even before final release,

the beneficiary should be placed in a halfway house where he can spend time with his family and friends and remain committed to peace. To prevent rejuvenation of extremist ideas and thoughts, the counsellors that helped in his transformation should remain in contact with him. If the milieu is hostile, the revival of earlier beliefs will lead him to violence again. A classic example is Said Ali al-Shihri, alias Abu Sayyaf, a detainee released from Guantanamo in November 2007, who went through the Saudi rehabilitation program. After he was approached and recruited by the Yemeni branch of Al Qaeda, he travelled to Yemen where he was appointed deputy leader of Al Qaeda in Yemen. He participated in the bombing of the US Embassy in Sana in September 2008 that killed 16 people. Abu al-Hareth Muhammad al-Awfi, alias Muhammad Attik al-Harbi, another Saudi beneficiary who joined Al Qaeda in Yemen, returned home after the clergy and his family spoke to him. As there is no methodology to read the mind or to test if the beneficiary has been transformed after treatment, there will always be lapses in judgement and assessment. High rates of recidivism will adversely impact on the reputation of the program.

Eleventh, it has already been mentioned that the government and the ulema have to work together for a successful rehabilitation program. However, other than the government and the ulema, we also need to understand the importance of the establishment of specialised centres of academic research in political violence and terrorist research. As ideology is evolving, constant research and analysis is needed to both produce and update rehabilitation manuals. The academic community generates new ideas, looks at the antecedents, looks at success and failure, and scans, analyses, and fills potential gaps. Academics look beyond the immediate and the urgent, and provide strategic direction. For instance, by reviewing detainee debriefings, academic specialists can formulate the counter-ideological arguments to rebut the terrorist narrative aimed at de-radicalising the detainee as well as the community. Building a partnership between government, the Muslim community, and academia is at the heart of a successful rehabilitation program. Thus, academic research centres will provide an avenue that focuses on problems of understanding global terrorism and its occurrences, while at the same time providing databases and resources from which both the government and the *ulema* can gain. At the same time, these centres can become training facilities to nurture research-oriented scholars specialising in terrorism both among the *asatizah* and the *non-asatizah* community.

Twelfth, formulate, implement, and manage a comprehensive security framework to rehabilitate the detainees and inmates. This should involve both security and religious screening of staff. Depending on the environment, it is necessary for professional and support staff to be routinely and, if necessary, continuously screened. The beneficiary should be closely monitored during counselling sessions and also when with family and other visitors as well as fellow detainees and inmates. If there is any suspicion that a beneficiary has not fully transformed and will return to violence, he should not be released. It is necessary to understand that rehabilitation should never be the end goal. Safety of the community is the ultimate objective. Early release should be regarded as a breach of security. After release, the beneficiary should be monitored to ensure that he does not return to violence. In a conflict zone, there are inherent difficulties in monitoring a terrorist that has been released. By releasing a beneficiary to a tribal elder and to the family, and by making him swear an oath on the *Qur'an* and to a religious figure, mechanisms have been developed to enhance compliance. A fully-transformed beneficiary is a strategic weapon in the fight against terrorism

and extremism. If successful, upon release, every beneficiary can play his role in spreading the message of peace.

Challenges

There are multiple challenges in initiating, building, and sustaining national programs.

First, the government should understand that religious justification was used to bring about the terrorist mind. Furthermore, the government should understand that Islam is never the driver, but that Islam has been misinterpreted and misrepresented to legitimise violence. As such, the role of the *ulema* is at the very core of dismantling the concept of hate and violence harboured by operational terrorists and extremist supporters. This understanding should generate willingness by every government to bring Islamic scholars and clerics—those learned and knowledgeable about Islam—to the front line.

There must be recognition that a theologian is as important as a counter-terrorism practitioner. Without Islamic scholars and clerics, we can fight operational terrorism but not its precursor and generator, namely ideological extremism. However, most governments treat terrorism as a mere law enforcement issue and extremism as a non-issue. Church and state are separate in the West, the group of nations with a global reach, staying power, and discipline to fight terrorism. As such, there is reluctance in North America, Europe, and Australasia, to bring in Islamic scholars and clerics to the forefront in matters of state. Government also has difficulty in identifying the rightful scholars suitable to staff who can lead the ideological fight. Without having negative thoughts about religious leaders, government must understand the reality on the ground and start to work with them.

Second, through training and education Islamic scholars and clerics should develop a full understanding of the ideology and psychology of detainees and inmates. Scholars and clerics know about Islam and Islamic law (*sha'ria*) but they do not know the religious understanding of the terrorists. Even if the government identified scholars and clerics with the right attitude, they need to be trained. The training should cover two principal areas: first, terrorist ideologies, and the linkages between ideology and operations; and second, the skills of psychological counselling, especially listening patiently to the inmate or detainee. Islamic scholars and clerics must be equipped with the ability to understand Islamic concepts as understood by the terrorists, especially their misinterpretation and misrepresentation. They should examine the writings and speeches of ideologues of hatred and violence, especially how Abu Mohamed al Maqdisi and his followers perceive Islam and how Osama bin Laden's followers understand *Jihad* as holy war.

Third, without a vision and without resources and a strategic direction, no program that requires a long-term investment will succeed. For a rehabilitation program to be successful, long-term commitment is a must. Rehabilitation comes with the notion that a country must gain a greater understanding from others and provide more resources. For instance, the Saudi Interior Ministry spent 1.7 billion riyals to construct five modern headquarters and high-tech security prisons in Riyadh, Jeddah and the eastern region, and Abha, Qassim in 2008. Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz, Minister of the Interior, and his son, Prince Muhammed Bin Nayef, the Assistant to the Interior Minister for Security Affairs oversaw the establishment of nine centres for rehabilitation, which began in a centre near Riyadh. In addition to

the special facilities for housing families and meeting visitors, high-tech class rooms, and libraries for reading and studying were built. A special committee oversaw specialists in security, sports, Islamic law, social science, and psychology drawn from government and university working together.

Classifying the terrorists

As different levels of extremism require different levels of response, government should be able to differentiate between terrorist leaders, members or operatives, and supporters and sympathisers. Just as there are circles of extremism, so there are multiple target audiences. Counter-terrorism practitioners, Islamic scholars, and academic specialists should work together to develop a program and a syllabus that can be tailored to every category—from extremists that advocate and support to the terrorists that kill, maim, and injure. As not all detainees are identical in their understanding, it is necessary to divide them into leaders, operatives, and supporters. For instance, many foot soldiers do not know about ideology. When a terrorist is detained, he is assessed. As each of these categories requires different approaches, the detainee is categorised into high, medium, and low risk.

High risk: Mostly spiritual and operational leaders. They are usually those that form the core. They believe in the ideology and they do not want to move from it despite many counselling sessions. Such people are very few. But they had contact with and received direct inspiration from the terrorist leadership. Even though Mullah Omar never completed his religious education and Osama bin Laden had no formal religious education, many terrorists received instruction and guidance from them. They regard a poorly-educated Afghan or a Saudi as more important than a scholar or cleric from their own country. They believe that their beliefs are correct. It is necessary to use the most prominent *ulema* to talk to them and allow them to reflect and repent. When released, they are the most susceptible to return to violence.

Medium risk: Operatives and the experts that form the bulk of the membership. They are ideologically and operationally active. They experience hatred and are ready to commit violence. They will always look for justification and an interpretation that suits their current mindset. They have usually served long in the organisation. They know the ideology and accept it. They can be rehabilitated. In a few cases, it is debated if there was genuine transformation or strategic calculation. There are cases where they tried to mislead the counsellor by agreeing with the religious counsellor with the intention of gaining an early release.

Low risk: Active and passive supporters. They are mostly foot soldiers, inactive members, and those that are not involved in crimes. They do not know the ideology. They joined thinking that their peers (relatives, colleagues, and friends) were fighting for Islam. They completely believe that whatever they do is justified by religion. Some provide money without realising that their contributions have been used to purchase arms.

After a process of assessment, a suitable cleric or psychologist is assigned to counsel the beneficiary. The beneficiary is continuously assessed; it is essential to identify difficulties. Are these personality-related factors or dangerous ideology? Is he still sympathetic to *jihadist* ideology? What is his worldview? The process of rehabilitation is long and multifaceted.

Towards a global regime

The US, the nation leading the global fight against terrorism, was late in buying into the idea of rehabilitation. After 9/11, the US leadership did not see rehabilitation as a solution. Although the US invested expertise and resources to build a rehabilitation program in Iraq, as a government, the US did not espouse the concept of rehabilitation. Building on the success of Task Force 134 in Iraq, there is some interest on the part of the US to initiate a similar program by Task Force Guardian in Bagram, Afghanistan. At this point in time, there are more countries that do not believe in rehabilitation compared to the countries that embrace and promote it. A number of other countries including Israel do not believe that terrorists can be ideologically rehabilitated.

To make terrorist rehabilitation a global imperative, there must be agreement that rehabilitation is a part of the global solution to solve the problem. The key to establishing a global rehabilitation regime is to build a sufficient number of national rehabilitation programs. A roadmap towards establishing national programs includes establishing the following elements.

First, a common database. An information repository—a common pool of resources—was launched by Singapore Law and Second Minister for Home Affairs K. Shanmugam at the inauguration of the first International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation on 24 February 2009. The p4peace portal has both a public and a restricted interface. The password-verified restricted section for practitioners and scholars is a dedicated space for counter-ideology content that focuses on terrorist rehabilitation. This includes a database of articles, papers, and other documents for use by practitioners and scholars. P4peace solicits contributions and writings by delegates and their colleagues on counter ideology that focuses on rehabilitation.

Second, exchange of personnel. Governments worldwide lacked both human expertise and material resources to start *ad hoc* rehabilitation initiatives and structured rehabilitation programs. One of the most effective methods to build capacity to rehabilitate terrorists is to exchange personnel. Exchange of personnel will lead to information sharing on systems, modes, and best practices of terrorist rehabilitation. Capacity building helps raise new, and improve existing, capabilities of detainee and inmate rehabilitation. Countries with rehabilitation programs can either attach or second their specialist staff to support countries keen to build rehabilitation programs. Likewise, countries keen to build rehabilitation programs can learn from countries with rehabilitation programs. Such exchanges will also enable countries with *ad hoc* programs to build systematic programs and countries with no programs to initiate programs.

Third, joint research, publication, education, and training. Joint research into the terrorist mindset, psychology, use of religion, and other areas could pave the way for collaboration in more challenging areas. For terrorist rehabilitation to be successful, all the staff of the program should be oriented. As a specialist discipline, clerics, scholars, psychologists, security and intelligence professionals, prison guards, and others servicing the program should be trained. While courses on counselling skills could range from seven months to one year, a course on counter extremism and counter terrorism could range from one week to two years. Specialist trainers or trainees can be exchanged either to impart training or to receive training. When conducting courses, countries with fully-fledged rehabilitation programs could invite staff from countries keen to initiate rehabilitation programs to participate. As the

number of specialist trainers is limited, some courses could be jointly conducted. A successful rehabilitation program requires the government, academia, and community to work together. Without well-trained, dedicated, and motivated staff a national program cannot succeed. Together with the Religious Rehabilitation Group of Singapore, the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research hosted the first International Course on Terrorist Rehabilitation in August 2009.

Four, transfer of expertise and resources. Without a vision and strategic direction, no terrorist rehabilitation program can succeed. For a rehabilitation program to be successful, a long-term commitment of intellectual and material resources is a must. The program in Egypt died because the resources were diverted. In contrast, governments from Uzbekistan, Singapore, and Saudi Arabia have allocated significant resources. Although Malaysia, Indonesia, and Yemen have allocated resources, they need to have a full-time, dedicated specialist staff focusing exclusively on terrorist detainees and inmates. To make terrorist rehabilitation a global imperative, wherever possible, countries need to share the expertise and resources with countries that lack them. As of 2009, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, and the Philippines expressed an interest in building programs. To build a global regime to rehabilitate terrorists, governments with the expertise and resources need to pave the way and create a path for other nations. Every successful program requires a long-term investment of intellectual and other resources.

Five, sharing of experience. Every national rehabilitation program is country specific. Saudi Arabia, for instance, supports the beneficiary to enter mainstream life, and would therefore look for wives for the detainees and also buy them cars, homes, give them jobs, and assist them in starting businesses. To change mindsets, there is sustained family pressure to transform. Some have made use of the benefits and gone back to violence. Instead of seeking to replicate national models, what would be useful is to draw lessons and adapt them to specific country conditions. However, there are many common areas for collaboration from research into key Islamic concepts misinterpreted by the terrorists to the assessment progress or non-progress of rehabilitation.

Six, an international advisory council. To sustain momentum, to ensure common interest, and to create synergy, it is necessary to create an international advisory council of practitioners and scholars. The council will determine membership, set modalities, and provide strategic direction to the community of terrorist rehabilitation practitioners and scholars. The council will plan and prepare for an annual international conference on terrorist rehabilitation. This conference should continue to serve as a platform to project to the world the message of rehabilitation.

To make terrorist rehabilitation a global imperative, the government needs to move from a cooperative to a collaborative model. While preserving their unique identities they must be willing to advance common interests. To have universal acceptance of an idea such as terrorist rehabilitation, the understanding of the community of nations, especially the West, is paramount. In moving towards a United Nations convention making it mandatory for member countries to pass legislation, the nations that constitute the UN needs to be convinced. This will require a step-by-step approach of formally and informally educating governments and intelligentsia, building a significant number of national rehabilitation programs and initiatives, and eventually approaching the UN.

Conclusion

After 9/11, Western-led kinetic, lethal, and punitive approaches have emerged as the dominant strategies to fight terrorism. These tactical and operational responses have produced mixed results. Although several important terrorists have been killed or captured, the strategic threat has not diminished. Soon it will be ten years since the terrible attacks in New York and Washington DC. Unless governments share and adopt non-kinetic, non-lethal measures to fight terrorism and extremism, the threat will persist. Ideology driving violence, including terrorism, is growing. Unless the ideology in the environment and inside the mind of the terrorist is dismantled, the threat is likely to persist in the foreseeable future. Terrorist rehabilitation is a classic example of using smart power. It is neither soft nor hard power. It is a combination of not only integrating our laws to detain and hold but also using our goodwill and judgment to correct the misled and the misguided. As no one is born an extremist or a terrorist, it is necessary to reverse the global trend of radicalisation.

Rehabilitation is a holistic program. For rehabilitation to work, community engagement is as important as the four modes of rehabilitation. The confluence of these two domains must take place to bring about successful rehabilitation. The most crucial partnership is that between government and community. As communities produce extremists and terrorists, the participation of the community in the fight against extremism is essential. Law enforcement, intelligence and the military can help, but ultimately the community must defeat terrorism. Without community participation, where the *ulema* and other secular leaders take the lead, no program can succeed. There should be synergy where the government works with the community elite to create an environment hostile to the terrorists and unfriendly to extremists.

The Islamic world has yet to play the frontline role in both countering extremism and its vicious by-product, terrorism. As religion has been misused and abused, the Muslim world looks up to Saudi Arabia to debunk the terrorist ideology. The Royal Family, religious scholars, and *ulema* in Saudi Arabia should give a bold mandate, resources, and direction to the Muslim world. Other strong referral points should be Egypt and Pakistan, where radical movements have emerged and festered. Unless the *ulema* in Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, Jordan, and Algeria speak up, a segment of the Muslim community will continue to consider Osama bin Laden, Dr Ayman al Zawahiri, Abu Bakar Bashir, and Abu Mohamed al Maqdisi as their *ulema*. More than ever before, Muslim nations face a grave challenge. For success, a coordinated and collective effort is needed.

In most Muslim-minority governments, the greater challenge rests with government. Muslims have little or no channels to the government. As counter terrorism is within the realm of national security, to successfully target the conceptual terrorist infrastructures the government has no option but to invite Muslim leaders, elders, and the elite to work together. Governments must take the initiative and create bridges and pathways: by opening doors, inviting participation, and making them belong to the country, their identity will become a national Muslim identity. To foster government-community partnerships towards building a viable program, the government should take the lead. At the beginning, initiatives to engage Muslims will only have the support of a handful of genuine Muslim leaders and institutions. With success and time, more volunteers will join and greater participation will ensue. The Singapore government's approach in building a close partnership between its

Muslim minority communities in countering terrorism is a good model to learn from and adopt.

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