Review of Evidence:
Prison-based interventions targeting violent extremist detainees

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XCEPT

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Summary

Background

Despite the importance of prisons to terrorist movements and the surge in the jihadist prison population in the Middle East, relatively little is understood about how the prison environment influences terrorists to become violent or peaceful. Prisons have been "centres of gravity" for virtually every terrorist group in the modern era. The strategies, goals, and operations of a variety of groups – from Egyptian Islamists to German Marxists and Irish Republicans – have all been heavily influenced by the imprisonment of their members. In many instances, the treatment of imprisoned comrades served as an important rallying cause, and the lives of extremists have been fundamentally shaped by their time in the jail cells of the state. The increase in the number of suspected and convicted terrorist inmates throughout the Middle East, particularly in Iraq and north-eastern Syria, has made prisons even greater focal points in countering Salafi-Jihadi movements. It is vitally important to continue to tailor policy according to the best available evidence in various contexts and to understand the dynamics and consequences of different types of prison management.

Aims

The aim of this rapid review of evidence (RoE) is to identify which interventions have been most effective in managing and rehabilitating violent extremists across the world. Its purpose is to help inform current and future FCDO policy debates about prison-related interventions for convicted or suspected violent extremists.

Methods

This review examines 34 studies (including academic articles, policy reports, programme evaluations, and the grey literature) published in English between 2000 and 2021. The systematic search generated 9,447 articles, of which 25 met the inclusion criteria. The hand search identified an additional nine studies for inclusion.

Key findings

The evidence base for prison-based interventions targeting violent extremists, whether in fragile and conflict-affected states or in the developed world, is very poor. Many existing programmes are in their infancy, and so they have not yet been robustly evaluated. However, there are promising themes. The naming of programmes can affect attitudes towards them, whether of participants or wider society. Involving family members can be beneficial to participants, and relatives can be supportive of deradicalisation/disengagement measures. Using deradicalised/disengaged leaders of extremist groups in interventions can have a positive impact on low-level members. There are promising signs that rapport-building is an effective technique when interviewing terrorist detainees. The same is true of motivational interviewing (MI), especially when applied to detainees who are ambivalent about and resistant to change. These techniques encourage engagement and disclosure of information. There is also some evidence that conducting sessions in informal settings leads to greater engagement. Regarding wholesale programmes, the most effective programmes are ones with a comprehensive array of interventions, which include treating inmates with dignity and respect. The Sri Lankan programme has been most effective, and there are promising aspects of the Saudi Arabian and Pakistani initiatives. Those programmes are comprehensive and multifaceted in approach, including vocational training, psychological support, family support, religious counselling and education, and, in some cases, financial assistance.

Limitations and gaps

There are severe limitations to the existing evidence base. While the gold standard in scientific research is a randomised controlled trial with a large, double-blind sample, it is not possible to research counterterrorism practices in this manner. Given that the subject is highly sensitive (as it involves issues of national security), the field is beset by opaque and limited data. It is rare for authorities to grant access to independent, external researchers, who would then scrutinise and publicly report on what they encountered. This is especially the case regarding prison-based interventions targeting violent extremist detainees, which involve heightened sensitives and often occur in authoritarian states where criticism of state practices is suppressed. Negative past experiences with evaluations can also deter authorities from permitting future evaluations. Interventions are often implemented due to necessity and urgency (rather than because they are the result of a double-blind pilot programme) and do not have an explicit Theory of Change. These difficulties mean it is exceptionally rare to find a systematic study on counterterrorism practices, and none of the studies examined here meet the gold standard of scientific research. Instead, the gold standard of research within counterterrorism would involve extensive qualitative interviews with a large sample of practitioners and participants, with a substantial period (>5 years) of post-intervention follow up. Yet this is also rarely achieved in the field. Even when a successful intervention can be identified, it may not necessarily be viable in other contexts. For instance, while Sri Lanka's programme aimed at LTTE detainees has good evidence of its success, its interventions took place following the abject military loss of the LTTE, meaning there was no armed movement for detainees to return to post-release. The lessons from that programme, therefore, will not perfectly apply to jihadist detainees in Syria and Iraq, where there remains an active insurgency by Islamic State and other groups.

The weak evidence base has implications for HMG and FCDO policy regarding prisons and violent extremism. Numerous and important evidence gaps remain. There is no evidence as to whether civil society organisations (CSOs) are more effective than governments at delivering interventions. There is no evidence as to what interventions offer the best Value for Money, what the minimum or maximum durations should be, or whether participation should be compulsory or voluntary. There is limited evidence of the effect of different placement regimes (i.e. placing extremists together or separating them), and almost no research has focused on interventions aimed at women. Moreover, risk assessment tools for violent extremism are relatively new and have not been validated. It is unknown whether treating trauma would reduce the risk for violent extremism. Finally, there are no proven, reliable means of assessing whether a participant is hiding their true intentions and concealing their extremist beliefs.

Key recommendations

Given the dearth of a reliable and robust evidence base, a priority should be to develop further the evidence of "what works". Beyond that, existing HMG and FCDO programmes and policies relevant to prison-related violent extremism should, where relevant: encourage elements of motivational interviewing (MI); conduct interventions in a transparent manner to participants; involve some form of religious counselling and guidance; include educational and vocational training; and, where appropriate, engage with detainees' families.

Conclusion

Overall, the evidence base for "what works" for prison interventions targeting violent extremism is weak. Determining causality is challenging. Future research is needed to build upon the most promising interventions, to identify nuances and understand the complexities involved. It is necessary to clarify when successful interventions work, when they are at their *most* effective, and what compounding effects may exist.

Overview

The aim of this rapid review of evidence (RoE) is to identify which interventions have been most effective in managing and rehabilitating violent extremists across the world. Its purpose is to help inform current and future FCDO policy debates about prison-related interventions for convicted or suspected violent extremists.

Its main objectives are to:
1. Identify what interventions from across the world are most effective in encouraging deradicalisation or disengagement among violent extremist detainees.
2. Identify gaps in the existing evidence that XCEPT can plug conceptually and programmatically.
3. Identify "common elements" and compare "what works" across different groups and countries. Explore the extent to which "successful" interventions could be scaled up or implemented in another location or population and inform FCDO's programmes and policies targeted at reducing violent behaviour.

This review examines 34 studies (including academic articles, policy reports, programme evaluations, and the grey literature) published in English between 2000 and 2021, that cover prison interventions regarding the management and rehabilitation of violent extremists. The systematic search generated 9,447 articles, of which 25 met the inclusion criteria. The hand search identified an additional nine studies for inclusion. These 34 studies were assessed according to six principles of research quality in line with DfID's How to Note (2014) and previous DfID-commissioned rapid reviews (for more details on Methodology, Search Strategy and Quality Assessment, see the Annex).

Key findings

The evidence base for prison-based interventions targeting violent extremists is poor. Many existing programmes are in their infancy, and so they have not yet been robustly evaluated. However, there are promising signs of "what works".

The language used within interventions can affect detainees' attitudes towards them; even using the term "deradicalisation" can be aggravating, with participants having a preference for "beneficiaries" instead. For their part, there is tentative evidence that most detainees want to have a humane and comprehensive rehabilitation programme. Family members, in a variety of contexts, have been shown to be willing to support their relatives who are participating in programmes, and there is promising evidence that their involvement may be beneficial.

Regarding the interlocutors of the interventions, using deradicalised/disengaged leaders of extremist groups can have a positive impact on low-level members, though this approach appears to rely on the authorities simultaneously offering concessions to inmates.

There are promising signs that rapport-building is an effective technique when interviewing terrorist detainees. Motivational interviewing (MI) has been shown to be an effective technique when dealing with individuals who are ambivalent about and resistant to change and can encourage engagement and disclosure of information. There is also some evidence that conducting sessions in informal settings can lead to greater engagement.

Regarding wholesale programmes, those in Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan have the most promising results. Those programmes were multifaceted in nature, including several elements such as vocational training, psychological support, family contact and support, religious counselling and education, and, in some cases, financial assistance.

Structure

The Review of Evidence is structured as follows:
- **Section 2** summarises the characteristics of the studies identified.
- **Section 3** looks at "what works" and "what does not work", listed thematically.
- **Section 4** discusses the limitations and current knowledge gaps.

Study characteristics

This section summarises the key characteristics of the studies identified: geographical focus, study design and methods, participants and target populations, and outcome measurements.

Geographical focus

Of the 34 studies, 13 (38% of the total) focused on South East Asia or Australia, ten (29%) on countries in Europe, seven (21%) on the Middle East and North Africa, 3 (9%) on South Asia, and two (6%) on Sub-Saharan Africa. The most researched country was Indonesia, with ten studies (29%) focusing on its programmes, while Australia and the UK (excluding NI) each had four studies (12% each), and Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, and Sri Lanka each had three studies (9% each). There is a paucity of studies examining practices in Iraq and the broader Levant.

Study design and methods

Of the 34 studies, only one (3% of the total) was quantitative in nature; it employed an experimental survey design to measure public attitudes towards deradicalisation programmes. The remainder all used various forms of qualitative methodologies. Interviews or Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) accounted for 15 (44%) of the studies, while seven (21%) studies used a case study approach. Of the ten studies that adopted mixed methods, six used an ethnographic approach, meaning that a total of seven (21%) studies included some form of observation or ethnography. No study employed a Random Controlled Trial (RCT) method. Only four (12%) studies utilised some form of a control group.

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Figure 1.
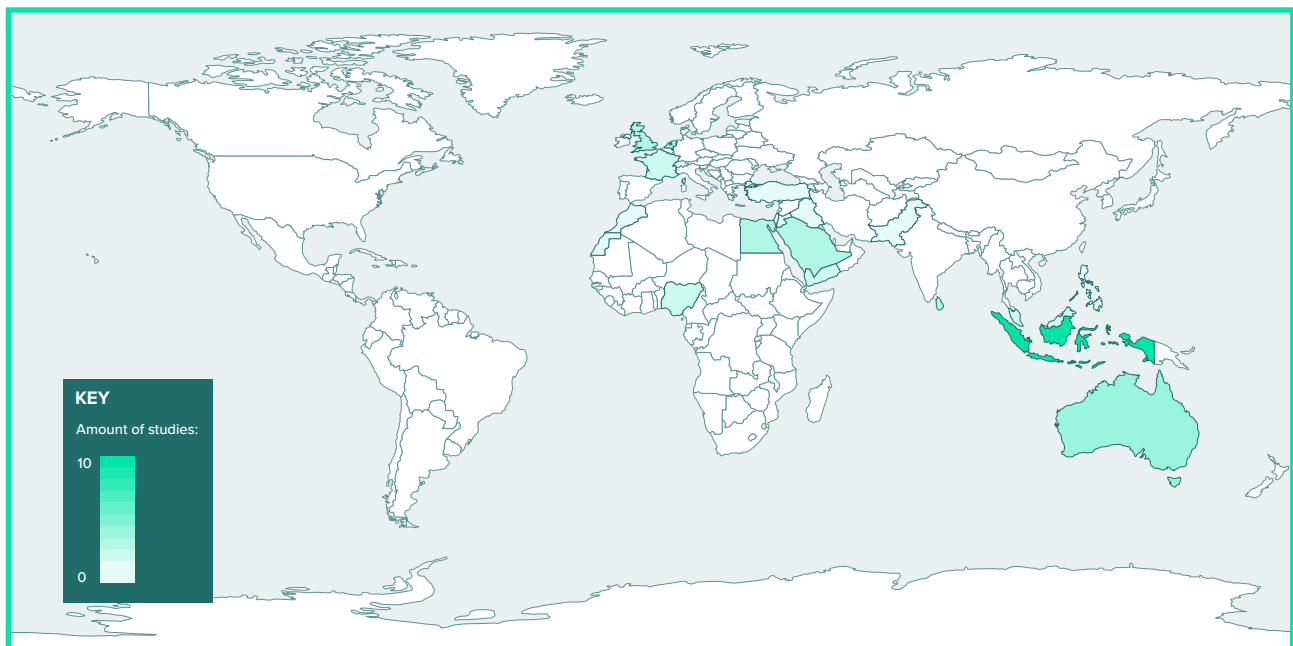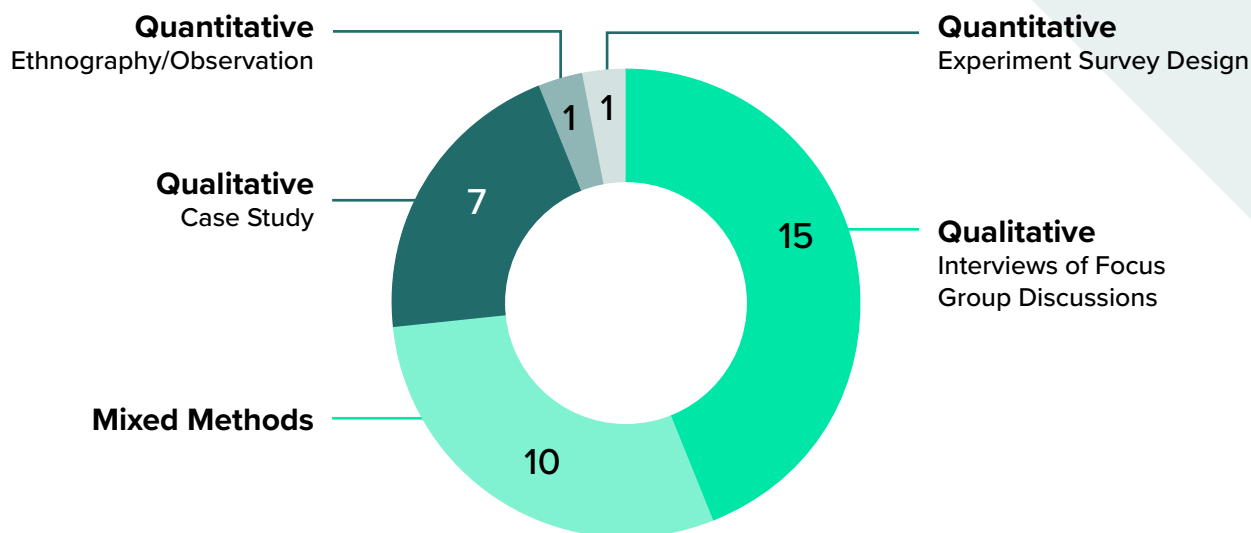Geographical distribution of studies identified in the RoE

KEY

Amount of studies:

10

0

Figure 2.
Design and methods of studies identified in the RoE

Quantitative
Ethnography/Observation — 1

Quantitative
Experiment Survey Design — 1

Qualitative
Case Study — 7

Qualitative
Interviews of Focus
Group Discussions — 15

Mixed Methods — 10

Participants and target populations

The vast majority of studies have focused on male adults. Only six studies (Hecker 2021, Dhami et al. 2020, Van der Heide & Schuurman 2018, Webber et al. 2018, Hettiarachchi 2013, Stone 2011) looked at interventions that targeted female detainees. Although other interventions studied would likely also be applicable to women (e.g. Surmon-Böhr et al.'s 2020 study on motivational interviewing), this represents a substantial gap in knowledge.

All studies focused on adults, while two studies also included adolescents (Muluk et al. 2020, Hettiarachchi 2013). Although not every study disclosed the age range of detainees, it is clear that there was a substantial range in ages: Chantraine & Scheer (2020) looked at those aged 19-55, Muluk et al. (2020) involved those aged 16-51, and Sukabdi (2015) examined those aged 25-61.

Most studies (27 of the 32 that assessed detainees, or 84%) focused on jihadist detainees. These varied according to their group affiliation and included members (whether suspected or confirmed) of Boko Haram, Jemaah Islamiyah, Islamic State, and Al-Qaeda. While these groups can be broadly categorised as Salafi-Jihadist, they do have their own ideologies and circumstances, meaning that the detainee populations should not be considered interchangeable. Several studies noted

variation in detainees' motivations and ideological commitment over time, at least in Europe. Before the establishment of Islamic State's self-styled caliphate in 2014, jihadist detainees were found to be "strongly driven by their convictions" and more interested in jihadist ideology and theology (see, for instance, Van der Heide & Schuurman 2018, 217).

In contrast, only two studies included interventions aimed at far-right detainees (Cherney 2018, Surmon-Böhr 2020), two studies aimed at paramilitary detainees related to Northern Ireland (Butler 2020, Surmon-Böhr 2020), and two studies examined LTTE (Tamil Tigers) detainees (Webber at al. 2018, Hettiarachchi 2013).

It is important to note that prison services almost never reveal their criteria for classifying an inmate as a "violent extremist". As such, there is certainly variation in the thresholds and inclusion/exclusion criteria used across the countries studied, which further limits the extent to which the studies' populations can be considered interchangeable.

Outcome measurements

Determining what "success" looks like is, in and of itself, a difficulty (Horgan & Braddock 2010). Programmes around the world often use the recidivism rate as their primary metric. After being

released from custody, this rate measures whether a convicted terrorist is subsequently re-convicted for terrorism offences. Recidivism is thus straightforward to understand and easy to measure, and those qualities have likely contributed to its widespread adoption as a metric. However, its use has one central flaw: recidivism is an incomplete metric. It does not record those who re-engage in terrorism activity but who are *not* subsequently convicted. That represents a substantial gap in information.

One way around this is to use *re-engagement* as a metric, which records whether convicted terrorists re-engage in terrorist activity after their release from custody. This is a broader metric and offers a more grounded understanding of what happens post-release. Yet, there is still some uncertainty over what constitutes success in terms of re-engagement: is it when a convicted terrorist does not re-engage at all? Or is it a "success" if the convicted terrorist re-engages, but at a much lower intensity of activity (for example, if someone convicted of planning an attack is subsequently involved in something of lower intensity, such as sharing propaganda)? The programmes surveyed have no definitive answers to these questions. It is likely that outcome measurements will remain a point of contention in the coming years.

Even though recidivism and re-engagement are both objective and widely understood, they are not always appropriate for deradicalisation programmes. That is because these programmes often must demonstrate impact *before* an individual is released at all. In that situation, it would be impractical to simply wait and see whether a released individual recidivates or re-engages upon release. They use alternative metrics, such as the attitudes and behaviours of detainees, to see if there is a reduction in support for terrorist causes. These alternative metrics vary according to the programme; interventions that target identity would therefore measure identity-related attitudes, for instance. Even so, it is not uncommon for deradicalisation programmes to use no objective measure of "progress" at all. The PAIRS programmes in France, for instance, has no common standards with which to measure a participant's progress, which was highlighted as a cause for concern in its evaluation (Hecker 2021, 64).

As each study uses its own outcome measurements, this RoE analyses each by its own choice of metrics.

Williams and Kleinman (2014) proposed a "utilisation-focused" programme evaluation. Their process checklist included: 1) identifying key/lead stakeholders, 2) selecting the evaluation personnel, 3) identifying stakeholders' consensus regarding problems and objectives, 4) deliberating about the variables to measure, 5) drafting the programme's logic model (or theory of change); 6) designing the evaluation including a pilot test; 7) commencing the substantive evaluation; and, finally, 8) communicating the findings and making recommendations. Even though this was specifically designed for terrorism interventions, and it is the most comprehensive of its kind, none of the programmes included in this RoE adopted this process checklist and evaluation method.

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What works?

Detainee attitudes and desires

The language used within programmes can affect attitudes towards them. In Indonesia, interviews with current and former rehabilitation programme participants found that all displayed an aversion to the term "deradicalisation" (Sukabdi 2015, 50). Other studies mentioned this labelling as an aggravating factor, as some programmes deliberately avoided (or subsequently removed) the term "deradicalisation" in their names. The Sri Lankan programme, which had the most effective of all the studies, referred to its participants as "beneficiaries" rather than "prisoners" or "detainees". Similarly, Australia's PRISM intervention, which has an aspect of deradicalisation, is described to inmates as focusing on "disengagement and reintegration" (Cherney 2018, 27). In wider society, including "deradicalisation" in the name and content of a programme leads to a slight increase in public support for such initiatives, although it decreases perceived effectiveness (Clubb et al. 2019).

Detainees desire a humane and comprehensive rehabilitation programme. Detainees' desires have rarely been examined. In one of the only studies of its kind, Sukabdi (2015) interviewed 43 *Jamaah Islamiyah* (JI) members (either in prison or post-release) in Indonesia. When asked what critical areas of development they required from the rehabilitation process, participants identified 36 areas, which were grouped into six "dimensions": 1) social skills, 2) personal skills, 3) vocational skills, 4) spiritual maturity, 5) domestic skills, and 6) contextual insight. The most popular areas for development were self-empowerment (highlighted by 88% of participants), entrepreneurial skills (86%), and specific skills that support economic independence (81%) (Sukabdi 2015, 46).

Participants stated the following qualities are necessary for a rehabilitation programme (Sukabdi 2015, 49-50):
- facilitators' knowledge about religious teachings (95% of participants)
- empowerment of participants (93%)
- humbleness of counterterrorism practitioners (79%)
- humanism (77%)
- positive intention and transparency (70%)
- sustainable long-term technique (63%)

Participants also stated what the outcomes of rehabilitation should be:
- able to reintegrate with the broader community (74% of participants)
- able to understand the context of Indonesia (77%)
- able to have new life skills from the rehabilitation process (42%)
- restored to their previous condition before joining terrorist groups (21%)

Family involvement

There are tentative signs that family involvement can be beneficial for the deradicalisation or disengagement process. It is widely seen that healthy family relationships can be protective factors for violent extremism, and several programmes thus involve them in some respects. The Mishal programme in Pakistan involves families, with the aim of repairing the broken family structures seen among most of its beneficiaries (Azam and Bareeha 2017, 17), as does the Saudi programme. Both initiatives require families to ask as guarantors of released detainees (and in Saudi Arabia, families have to make a public pledge that the released detainee will not engage in extremism). This seemingly acts as a strong social incentive for participants to avoid recidivism and for families to safeguard their released relatives, with the implication that authorities will be exacting in punishing transgressions. Malaysia's deradicalisation programme also encourages family involvement, with detainees permitted daily telephone calls (Fink & El-Said 2010, 11), as does Australia's PRISM programme (Cherney 2018). Engaging with families can simply

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involve educating them on the signs of radicalisation and making them aware of the conditions imposed on detainees post-release (e.g. checking in with probation officers, avoiding association with known extremists, and so on). In the US, while Minnesota's programme similarly involves family members, it is acknowledged that in some cases, family relations can actually be risk factors (Lowry 2018, 56). This intervention only appears to work when the families have healthy internal dynamics that can offer a stable and supportive environment, which may not always be the case (Cherney 2018, 128).

Family members may be willing to support detainees' deradicalisation or disengagement programmes, according to one of the only studies of its kind looking at family attitudes towards these programmes. Bastug and Evlek (2016) examined family support for a disengagement programme in Adana, Turkey. Administrators of that programme directly approached the family members of imprisoned members of terrorist groups, asking for their cooperation in the process. Of the 326 families of nationalist militants, 316 engaged with the program (97%). Of the 74 families of left-wing militants, 73 engaged (99%). Of the 24 jihadist families, 19 engaged (79%) (Bastug and Evlek 2016, 40-41). This approach does impose – whether inadvertently or not – pressure on families to engage, as they may fear that not cooperating would have adverse consequences for their detained relatives.

Effective interlocutors and using (former) extremists

Using group leaders in interventions appears to have a positive impact on disengagement and deradicalisation. Butler (2020) found that in Northern Ireland in the 1990s, paramilitary leaders were able to influence paramilitary prisoners into considering non-violent means. This contributed to most prisoners supporting the Northern Ireland peace process (Butler 2020, 548). Similarly, the Egyptian jihadist group, Al-Gamaa Al-Islamiyah (Islamic Group), underwent a process of disengagement and deradicalisation in the 1990s. After recognising their armed campaign was failing, its leaders renounced the use of violence in 1997 and negotiated a settlement with the government. For the next five years, the leadership went on prison tours to convince its rank-and-file members that the group's violent tactics were contrary to Islam. These involved 15-day periods of intense discussions every six months, with any topic up for debate and no security officials present (Rubin 2011, 31). The prison tours

were supplemented by conversations with scholars from Al-Azhar, the most prestigious Islamic university in the world (ibid, 26). The tours may have had a significant role in members disengaging: it has been claimed that "there have been no cases of recidivism after the release of 15,000-20,000 Islamic Group members from prison", although this claim it is difficult to verify and, in any case, it is unknown exactly what role the prison tours contributed (Rubin 2011, 26). The tours were only one aspect of the entire group's deradicalisation: the leaders made public statements revising their previous views on terrorism, apologised to the victims of their attacks, and published documents on their newfound understanding of Islam. The process started by Islamic Group leaders was also supplemented by concessions from the Egyptian prison service. The authorities halted executions, torture, and solitary confinement. IG members were rewarded with improved prison visits and placement in prisons close to their homes (which facilitated visits from family and friends). Prisoners were also given greater opportunities for education, socialisation, and access to media such as television and newspapers (IPI 2010, 5).

However, using former extremists or "famous" interlocutors is no guarantee of success. Another intervention, in 2013, saw Indonesia's National Anti-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) invite three prominent anti-jihadist clerics from the Middle East into Indonesian prisons. They were Najih Ibrahim, one of the founders of Islamic Jihad in Egypt (who had spent 25 years in prison during Hosni Mubarak's regime), Hisyam an-Najjar, who had also been active in Islamic Jihad, and Ali Hasan al-Halabi, a Jordanian Salafi cleric. The clerics held a three-hour "course" for jihadist detainees in two prisons. The hope was the clerics would have enough legitimacy to convince the Indonesian jihadists that their terrorist tactics were wrong. The results of this intervention are inconclusive: while the prison service says they were a success, researchers who interviewed the detainees found that they had no apparent effect (IPAC 2014, 8).

Rapport and trust-building

Mentors reported that their work relies on trust, which tends to correlate with time spent with an individual. While mentoring is a popular intervention, its success rates are unknown. Programmes routinely include a form of mentoring, and even though all the factors that make a "successful" mentor have not been determined, there is strong self-reported evidence that trust-

building is important if not essential, as seen in both the British (Weeks 2018) and Dutch contexts (Van der Heide & Schuurman 2018). Weeks (2018) found that effectiveness depended upon the mentor's "ability to establish trust and to reduce the emotional component that leads to a sense of victimisation" (Weeks 2018, 535), and that ability was aided by having more contact time with beneficiaries (Ibid). This was also found in Schuurman and Bakker's (2015) evaluation of the Dutch TER initiative. Groupe SOS's approach with PAIRS in France replaces "top-down teaching and mentoring" with a "form of support that leaves more room for the participant's own desires and plans" (Hecker 2021, 38). Their treatment does not start by "listing individual's problems" but rather emphasises their strong points. That is different from the RNR approach of highlighting risks and needs.

There is some evidence that conducting sessions in informal settings can lead to greater engagement. For example, PAIRS, the French deradicalisation initiative, conducts sessions outside of the typical interview setting by taking participants on field trips, museum visits, day trips to the countryside, or other activities. Hecker (2021) found that these recreational trips allowed assessors to see detainees in various contexts and thus aided in their judgments of their progress. Staff found that insights were frequently obtained by this break in the conventional interview-subject setting, and they gave participants a broader appreciation of life beyond violent extremism. This also helped motivate participants by giving them stimulation after time in prison, and showing them that life can be enjoyed, as one participant explained:

> *It doesn't feel like a vacation to me! It's a return to life! When you've been locked up for years, you get taught not to want anything. PAIRS manages to make you want things. I know that when I start working again, I'll treat myself to trips to museums, to the zoo, and so on. Life is more than just commute-work-sleep. It's not about saying, 'Hey, let's go on a trip.' The aim is to start enjoying life again. When you're enjoying life, you don't have time to think about getting involved in crime (Hecker 2021, 58-59).*

There are promising signs that rapport-building (e.g. small talk, humour, handshakes) is an effective technique when interviewing terrorist detainees. A small-scale study of 11 interviewers of high-value detainees found some promising strategies. Utilising social persuasion (e.g. reciprocity [offering physical or social incentives] and affinity [highlighting similarities between interviewer/detainee]) were promising (Dhami et al. 2020, 76-78). Cognitive techniques (e.g.

going slowly, waiting until a detainee brings up the topic, and moving on to another topic if they appear uncomfortable) were used, but others not (e.g. using manufactured evidence, withholding evidence). The social approach to interviewing was dominant. Dhami et al. (2020) highlighted the "potential efficacy of creating a physically comfortable and relaxed interview setting, and of using interview strategies that focus on rapport-building, principles of social persuasion and elements of procedural justice, along with a patient and flexible stance to questioning" (Dhami et al. 2020, 66).

Motivational interviewing (MI)

Motivational interviewing is known to be an effective intervention when dealing with individuals who are ambivalent about and resistant to change. While no experimental studies have looked at the effectiveness of MI with terrorism suspects/detainees, there are some promising signs that it may be useful. Surmon-Böhr et al.'s study of MI on 75 terrorism suspects in the UK found four promising strategies: 1) reflective listening (i.e. identifying the underlying meaning and feelings behind what a detainee has said), 2) summaries (i.e. repeating back the words of the detainee to them, to ensure that the interview has understood correctly), 3) rolling with resistance (i.e. avoiding argumentation, and exploring why detainees are resistant rather than challenging their resistance) and 4) developing discrepancies (i.e. challenging detainees on the discrepancies between what they have said and the available evidence, in a non-judgmental and objective manner) (Surmon-Böhr et al. 2020, 1011).

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MI approaches were shown to encourage engagement and disclosure of information. In contrast, non-MI approaches (e.g. making accusatory statements, prejudging answers, and forceful confrontations with evidence) had a "profoundly negative" impact on detainee engagement (Surmon-Böhr et al. 2020, 1019). Importantly, this was found to

be the case regardless of how willing a detainee was at the onset of the interview. In other words, creating an empathetic and accepting environment led to increased engagement (Ibid). This suggests it is in the best interests of the interviewer that they remain neutral and open to hearing detainees' versions of events, thus creating an atmosphere "conducive to communication" (Ibid, 1020). In addition, MI is non-judgmental and emphasises freedom of choice, and so is suited to environments where there exists the rule of law and de facto legal protections for terrorism detainees. However, it remains to be seen whether MI would be as effective in other contexts where non-MI techniques are ingrained, or how effective MI training of staff is.

Intervention duration

There is no minimum or maximum length of durations. Interventions vary in intensity and duration, and there is no conclusive evidence that a "minimum duration" is needed. PAIRS, the French programme, has supervision levels of either 3, 10 or 20 hours per week. Those durations can change over time, depending on the participant's progress. In practice, the supervision time varies, and there was no uniform "minimum or maximum" hours of contact time. As one practitioner explained, intense supervision may be "necessary for some people but infantilising, invasive, and counterproductive for others" (Hecker 2021, 57). Sri Lanka's interventions were for two years. Saudi Arabia's initial deradicalisation programme was for six weeks and was then expanded to 12 weeks.

Staff assessments of detainees are influenced by how much time assessors spend with subjects, but there is no evidence of what the "minimum" amount of time needed is. For example, when PAIRS, the French deradicalisation programme, makes the initial assessment of jihadist inmates, they incorporate approximately 25 hours of interviews into consideration (Hecker 2021, 54).[1] One assessment developed by the Indonesian authorities (BNPT) involved a monthly session with a psychology professor (religious scholars were often present during these sessions, too), intending to gauge how "radicalised" inmates are. Participants received a cash contribution at the end of the session. However, it is unknown how reliably these sessions assessed inmates' levels of risk (IPAC 2016, 16). Another risk assessment, developed by UNICRI and used in Indonesia, featured a 50-item questionnaire. It was

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found to be "useful in assessing very high or very low levels of risk was but was less successful in drawing out some of the nuances of those in the middle" (IPAC 2016, 16).

Even rudimentary screening and rehabilitation measures can have an impact. Major General Douglas Stone's (2011) self-evaluation of the US internment camps in Iraq detailed the changes in US policy in the 2000s. After the 2003 invasion and until 2007, there was minimal screening and no rehabilitation programme in Camp Bucca and Camp Cropper. After Stone assumed control, he enacted several basic interventions. These included coordination with community leaders, having religious leaders issue counter-fatwas (religious rulings), dialogue with well-known imams and muftis (religious scholars), and involving repentant terrorists as intermediaries. It is unclear what criteria were used to assess detainees, but those deemed unlikely to be deradicalised were placed in separate units ("modified detainee housing units", MDHUs). A vocational programme to give detainees practical job training was also enacted. Medical care was provided, and detainees were permitted family visits. The change coincided with a substantial drop in the number of re-interned detainees (i.e. detainees who had been released and were subsequently detained again). From September 2007 to May 2008, some 8,546 detainees were released from Camp Bucca and Camp Cropper, and only 28 were re-interned (0.33%). Before implementing their screening and release programme, from 2004 to 2007, some 43,319 detainees were released, and 3,145 were re-interned (6.34%) (Stone 2011, 106). However, other factors may explain that drop in re-internment, such as the changing nature of the insurgency and the US' move away from mass detention.

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1. When, as in most cases, an individual has been mandated to participate in PAIRS, then these initial assessments are not made.

Wholesale programmes

Wholesale deradicalisation/disengagement programmes, with a wide array of interventions, appear most effective and promising. The programmes with the most thorough evaluations (Sri Lanka) and promising results (Mishal, Saudi Arabia) all had comprehensive interventions across an array of themes: vocational skills training; education (including, where necessary, basic numeracy/literacy); psychological support; recreational activities; contact with families; positive relationships with staff/guards; transparency over the methods and objectives; religious counselling/education; and continued assistance post-release. Having an array of interventions is more expensive, and the evidence shows these programmes have invested in staff recruitment, training, and retention.

Adopting a transparent, humane approach appears promising. There is promising evidence that a humane and respectful approach to interviewing terrorism suspects/detainees may encourage engagement, cooperation, and disclosure of information (Surmon-Böhr et al. 2020, 1011). At its heart, this approach assumes that detainees are "more likely to cooperate with authorities and less likely to resume terrorist activities upon release if they are treated humanely while incarcerated" (Woodward et al. 2010, 3). Indonesia, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Singapore have, at times, adopted this general approach, although there is also often the implicit understanding that authorities will punish transgressors; there is often a considerable "stick" to the "carrots" offered. The general aim is to ensure that basic standards are met: sanitary and clean facilities, adequate food, no overcrowding, good relations with prison staff, and regular visits from family members and friends. It appears important to treat inmates with dignity and respect. The humane treatment of detainees can induce a cognitive opening, making them more receptive to new ideas and behaviours (Bastug 2016, 39). Central to this is having an open, transparent programme so that participants know what to expect and what its purpose is. Sukabdi (2015) found that all participants surveyed in an Indonesian programme agreed that "sincerity and generosity by others including law enforcement, civil society members, and practitioners become the key factors" in disengagement (Sakabdi 2015, 45).

The programmes with the most success separated low-level members from committed ideologues and seasoned terrorists. This selection bias may, of course, account for their apparent success. The deradicalisation/disengagement programmes that appear to be most successful – Sri Lanka's rehabilitation camps (Webber et al. 2018), the Mishal Centre in the Swat Valley (Azam and Bareeha 2017), and Saudi Arabia's Mohammed bin Nayef Counseling and Care Center (Boucek 2008) – generally target low-level offenders. The Mishal project in Pakistan omitted any Taleban members with "blood on their hands". The Saudi programme has much higher scrutiny on similar inmates. The Sri Lankan programme placed senior LTTE members in detention and denied them access to the rehabilitation programme; the assumption was that if senior LTTE leaders were allowed to participate, that they would undermine others' progress.

The Mishal rehabilitation centre in Pakistan's Swat Valley appears promising. Psychological rehabilitation is central to its "Deradicalisation and Emancipation Programmes", which administer counselling on a one-to-one basis. This includes some probing of their understanding of jihad but is mainly used to understand their motivations. Psychologists also interview family members and the community. Their assessments of 47 inmates found the following common themes: 1) low socioeconomic status, 2) large and broken family structure with little supervision of activities, 3) history of physical abuse as a child, 4) strict and negligent behaviour of parents and teachers, and 5) lack of formal or informal education (Azam and Bareeha 2017, 13). The programme was modelled on the Saudi deradicalisation programme; however, it has a much less developed religious component (Azam and Bareeha 2017, 15). While the Saudi programme aims to involve participants in a dialogue, the Mishal programme solely involves daily group lectures. There is no individual religious counselling (Ibid, 15-16). Topics include *fitna* (conflict/strife), jihad, and rights of parents and citizens in the community. Unlike the Saudi model, there is no formal testing of participants' religious knowledge. Participants are allowed regular family visits (and phone calls) and are offered vocational skills training (e.g. carpentry, welding, tailoring). The premise is that repairing broken family structures and having a regular income serve as protective factors. Detainees are also offered a one-time fiscal grant (with no obligation to pay it back), which is supposed to support them in their plans for post-release employment. The amount of the grants is unknown. Detainees must produce a plan of action for them to receive the grant. After their release, detainees are visited weekly, and minor counselling and financial help are also offered. For the first three months post-release, participants must also report to a designated military official every

fortnight. The centre reports only a 1% recidivism rate among a total of 1,478 beneficiaries released between 2010 -2015 (Azam and Bareeha 2017, 20-21). However, these results have not been independently verified.

The Sri Lankan programme

A study of the Sri Lankan deradicalisation programme, which focused on Tamil Tigers (LTTE) detainees, found it was effective. The Sri Lankan programme uses a "6+1 model", which contains interventions according to the following themes: 1) educational, 2) vocational, 3) psychosocial and creative therapies, 4) social, cultural, and family, 5) spiritual and religious, 6) recreational, and finally, +1) community rehabilitation (Hettiarachchi 2013, 106). Participants were placed in Protective Accommodation and Rehabilitation Centers (PARCs), which accommodated nearly 11,664 detainees and categorised according to their levels of risk. Detainees judged to be high risk, such as frontline leaders, were not placed in the deradicalisation programme (Hettiarachchi 2013, 109). The deradicalisation programme ran for two years.

Hettiarachchi's (2013) study found that participants had decreased levels of extremist belief a year after completing the programme and claimed successful reintegration of 11,044 of the 11,664 LTTE members as of November 2012 (Hettiarachchi 2013, 108). However, it is not possible to determine whether this success was because of specific aspects of the 6+1 themes or because it was a holistic package. After all, the interventions include an enormous array of activities and events, including meditation and mindfulness training; actors and celebrities giving inspirational talks to beneficiaries; recreational activities such as cricket and athletic competitions; regular interaction between the Tamil detainees and the Sinhalese centre staff; social and cultural trips to communities and locations in Sri Lanka, which the detainees had never done before; and the restoration of broken family ties (Hettiarachchi 2013, 110-112). More practically, detainees were given an education (10-25% had difficulty reading/writing Tamil, and >50% could not speak Sinhalese or English) and vocational skills training (according to their interests, families' vocations, and regional opportunities) (Hettiarachchi 2013, 109-110). Yet Hettiarachchi's study did not distinguish between these different interventions to highlight the most effective one. Sri Lanka also introduced a Presidential Pardon in 2009 for LTTE members who completed the PARCs programme, which likely acted as a strong incentive.

One study (Webber et al. 2018) looked at extremist attitudes among graduates of the deradicalisation programme in comparison with members of the Tamil community who were never involved in the LTTE. That comparison revealed that programme beneficiaries disclosed significantly less extreme attitudes than Tamils residing in the community, even when controlling for age, education, gender, income, and marital status (Webber et al. 2018, 10). Their study, which is the most authoritative of its kind within the field, found that "extremism reduction during rehabilitation was enduring" (Ibid, 13). However, as the authors noted, the deradicalisation programme only occurred after the military defeat of the LTTE. Thus, attempts at deradicalisation "might be less effective in the face of active extremist organisations" (Ibid, 14). They analysed 601 beneficiaries of the Sri Lankan programme between May 2009 and December 2009. Of those, 490 participated in the "full-treatment" programme (which included all 6+1 themes), and 111 participated in the "minimal-treatment" programme (which included only three themes: recreation, family, and meditation). They found that after a year of treatment, extremist attitudes were significantly lower among beneficiaries. Those who participated in the full-treatment programme saw a greater reduction in their extremist attitudes than those in the minimal-treatment programme (Ibid, 7-8).

The Saudi programme

The Saudi Arabian deradicalisation programme, established following the 2003 Riyadh attacks and the 2004 Khobar massacre, is one of the most comprehensive. Inmates are held at the Mohammed bin Nayef Counseling and Care Center, which was opened in 2007. Its 12-week programme includes several strands: education, art therapy, recreation, psychological sessions, and religious counselling. These features are typical in deradicalisation programmes across the world. However, the Saudi programme is novel in its use of family members and offers of material compensation. Not only are family members routinely involved in this programme, but the Saudi government pays the families of convicted terrorists, with the literal aim of "buying" their loyalty and demonstrating the benevolence of the programme. This is especially important when the family breadwinner is incarcerated (and the amount varies case by case). Upon release, a public pledge is then made by the detainee and the head of their family to renounce violence (Al-Hadlaq 2011, 66).

Religious counselling involves one-to-one sessions and group lectures delivered by theological experts

to "correct" their interpretations of the Quran and Hadiths. The meetings can take place in formal or informal settings. Ten courses cover different aspects of religious thought, such as relations with non-Muslims, *takfir* (excommunication), and specific aspects of jihadist ideology (such as *al-walaa wal-baraa*, or loyalty and disavowal). The experts guide, refute, and teach the detainees about a non-violent understanding of Islam. For instance, emphasis is placed on the importance of defensive, non-military jihad (otherwise known as "greater jihad") that involves a struggle against personal weaknesses, rather than offensive, military jihad. The central message is that "the use of violence to affect change within the Kingdom is not permissible" (Boucek 2008, 4). Underpinning their approach is an assumption by the Saudi authorities that jihadists are "naïve" and were "misled by extremists into straying from true Islam" (Boucek 2008, 11).

It is unlikely that the Saudi approach would work in other contexts, primarily due to three reasons. First, the approach relies on having knowledgeable religious interlocutors; the Saudi Arabian committee responsible for this programme has at least 150 clerics and scholars available (Boucek 2008, 11). These experts are seen to be critical of the prison system and relatively distant from the Saudi regime, thus perhaps contributing to greater perceived credibility among the detainees (Boucek 2008, 6). Interpersonal skills are also important: experts are selected if they can "speak with a detainee like 'his own brother'", and they are required to enter into a dialogue with detainees (rather than lectures) (Boucek 2008, 12). Second, the Saudi approach is expensive, employing hundreds of staff, involved in intensive monitoring and interventions. It is unlikely that other states, which do not have Saudi Arabia's oil wealth, could implement such a programme. Third, it requires substantial coordination between different ministries: the programme involves no less than the Ministries of Islamic Affairs, Endowment, Da'wah, and Guidance; Education; Higher Education; Culture and Information; Labor; and Social Affairs (Boucek 2008, 5).

The Saudi programme has promising, if opaque, results. In its first five years of operation, about 3,000 detainees participated in parts of the programme. Saudi authorities claimed an estimated 1,400 of them renounced their former beliefs and were released (Boucek 2008, 21). The Saudi authorities also claimed a general success rate of 80-90%. Of the released detainees, only 1-2% were rearrested for security offences (Boucek 2008, 21). A similar success rate – of 80% of detainees deradicalising – was stated in 2017 (Gardner 2017). However,

these figures are opaque. The Saudi authorities do not release definitive statistics on the number of participants, their release, and their re-engagement in terrorism (whether in Saudi Arabia or abroad). It is also unclear which intervention strands made the greatest contributions to this low recidivism rate, and what risk assessment tools are used. The lack of an independent, external evaluation means that the precise impact of their interventions – especially religious counselling and financial compensation – cannot be accurately determined.

Psychological interventions that target cognitive flexibility and emotional expression are promising. One Indonesian study found that detainees in a deradicalisation programme were more likely to support democratic civil life if they scored high in both cognitive flexibility (i.e. the readiness to adapt one's pre-existing concepts or knowledge in response to stimuli) and emotional expression (i.e. the ability to recognise and express one's emotional burdens) (Muluk et al. 2020). The programme attempted to stimulate these qualities in a series of three workshops over two days. Cognitive flexibility training involved a series of role-playing exercises (e.g. a family scenario), designed to "encourage problem-solving through consideration of different alternatives" (Muluk et al. 2020, 48). Emotional expression training saw participants engage in storytelling as a means to "knowing, specifying and describing emotion through writing" (Muluk et al. 2020, 48). The results were promising: there was an interaction between cognitive flexibility and emotional expression in predicting support for democratic civic life (Muluk et al. 2020, 49). However, the study was unable to confirm the effect of the training itself (due to the lack of a pre-test, post-test, and control groups), to see whether these sessions *improved* detainees' cognitive flexibility and emotional expression.

What doesn't work?

Not assessing inmates for levels of risk, and managing them accordingly, can have adverse consequences. Following the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the US military established a series of internment camps for alleged insurgents and extremists. Tens of thousands of individuals were detained at Camp Bucca and Camp Cropper, including members of Al-Qaeda, foreign fighters, others involved in the insurgency, as well as innocent Iraqi civilians. After the invasion and pre-2007, there was a minimal screening of detainees and no attempts to gauge the level of radicalisation among inmates, and all detainees were "treated as enemy

combatants and held en masse" (Stone 2011, 93). This allowed a minority of "irreconcilable" jihadist ideologues to recruit and intimidate those with weaker ideological affinity. Major General Douglas Stone, who took over control of the camps in 2007, described that first phase as "utterly unmanageable".

Indefinite or long periods of detention without trial can create resentment, which, in turn, can be exploited by extremists. Major General Douglas Stone's (2011) evaluation of detention practices by American forces in Iraq, in the period after the 2003 invasion and before 2007, found that the arbitrary detention of suspected extremists and insurgents caused the detainee population "to surge beyond capacity". Long term detention (and some cases of indefinite detention) created a "considerable pool of resentment", which extremists exploited.

Inadequate follow-up after a detainee is released can be damaging. Yemen's failed "Committee for Dialogue" deradicalisation model serves as a warning to include adequate post-release care. The country's programme, established in 2002, adopted a "theological dialogue" model adapted from the Islamic jurist Hamoud al-Hitar. Jihadist detainees participated in debates on Islamic theology and whether their violent actions were endorsed by the Quran and Hadiths. Approximately 500 militants were released in the early 2000s after admitting that they had an incorrect interpretation of Islam and had been "misled" by extremists. However, the programme was cancelled in 2005 after the high recidivism rates seen among released detainees. Key aspects of the programme are now considered to be mistakes: inmates were offered the chance of early release if they participated; there was minimal post-release surveillance; and detainees were promised help post-release that was found to be left wanting (Johnston 2009, 21-24).

Overly suspicious attitudes towards risk assessments may prove to be a self-fulfilling prophesy. Chantraine and Scheer's (2020) review of France's Radicalisation Assessment Units founds that psychologists often felt under pressure to "find something" dangerous about the inmates they are assessing. Over the course of a three-month period, inmates were monitored for signs of radicalisation, and the staff were tasked with producing an assessment of each inmate, which would determine where that inmate is then placed in the prison system (e.g. in an ordinary or a highly restricted prison). The fear was that inmates were engaging in *taqiyyah*, or dissimulation, to conceal their true beliefs and intentions, with staff saying: "If we don't find anything

it's as if we didn't do our job" (ibid, 12). Inmates responded to this state of "permanent suspicion" by deliberately adapting their behaviour: for instance, they would shake the hands of female staff members, so as not to appear misogynist or fundamentalist. The resulting assessments were thus overly cautious and gave no benefit of the doubt to inmates, likely leading to them being incorrectly identified as radicalised.

Overcrowded and understaffed prisons are not conducive to stopping prison radicalisation or encouraging deradicalisation and disengagement. Butler (2020) found that the poor conditions (overcrowding, staff shortages, poor prison design, inadequate facilities, limited staff training, and restricted surveillance) in Specialised Prison Units in Northern Ireland gave detainees the opportunity to form groups and "establish a powerbase" within prison (Butler 2020, 550). They were using prisons that were not fit for purpose. Places that would have been used for rehabilitation (such as classrooms) were repurposed as dormitories due to overcrowding. Bullying escalated as staff surveillance decreased. Staff had minimal training, and there were difficulties in retention. There was a breakdown in prison governance, as staff did not venture into SPUs and inmates were allowed to associate freely. The SPUs were found to promote an "us versus them" culture and "which hardened group identities, increased investment and commitment to extremism, and hindered the development of effective staff-prisoner relationships" (Butler 2020, 548). Ferguson's (2016) analysis of 11 former political prisoners in Northern Ireland found that for most, prison afforded them "space to think", develop their ideas, and explore "non-violent alternatives" to the conflict, although that study did not elaborate on what the prison conditions were.

Using interlocutors without theological credibility can be ineffective. In one of the few studies of its kind, Fink & El-Said (2011) evaluated Malaysia's prison interventions, which involve religious counselling. Its interlocutors were recruited from the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, JAKIM), with the aim of correcting erroneous and misinterpretations of Islam. Even though individually tailored programmes are developed, the interlocutors have had difficulty establishing theological credibility, with some detainees described as "more knowledgeable" than the clerics (Fink & El-Said 2011, 10). In practice, their discussions centred on political matters rather than theology and religious issues, rendering the religious focus ineffective.

Limitations and gaps

The study of prison interventions targeting violent extremism is beset with issues. While the gold standard in scientific research is a randomised controlled trial with a large, double-blind sample, it is not possible to research counterterrorism practices in this manner. The subject is highly sensitive (as it involves issues of national security), and it is rare for authorities to grant access to independent, external researchers, who would then scrutinise and publicly report on what they encountered. This is especially the case regarding prison-based interventions, which involve heightened sensitives, and difficulties in access occur in a variety of countries worldwide. The problem is especially acute in authoritarian states, where many interventions occur, that suppress or discourage criticism (and lead to self-censorship) of state practices. Implementation of programmes often arises from necessity and urgency rather than because they are the result of a controlled, double-blind pilot study and a Theory of Change. The end result is that researchers can often only analyse opaque and limited data, and it is exceptionally rare to find a systematic study on counterterrorism practices. None of the studies examined here meet the gold standard of scientific research. Instead, the gold standard of research within counterterrorism would involve extensive qualitative interviews with a large sample of practitioners and participants, with a substantial period (>5 years) of post-intervention follow up. Yet this is also rarely achieved in the field.

In practice, these constraints mean that many notable claims of "success" have not been independently verified; the only exception to this is the Sri Lankan programme, which was assessed by a team of external researchers. Even when a successful intervention can be identified, it may not necessarily be viable in other contexts. For instance, while Sri Lanka's programme aimed at LTTE detainees has good evidence of its success, its interventions took place following the abject military loss of the LTTE, meaning there was no armed movement for detainees to return to post-release. Therefore, the lessons from that programme will not perfectly apply to jihadist detainees in Syria and Iraq, where there remains an active insurgency by Islamic State and other groups. Similarly, motivational interviewing may be more effective in a context where detainees know there is no risk of torture for noncompliance and non-disclosure. Like for like comparisons may also be impossible when comparing what works in Western,

industrialised, educated, rich, and democratic states to what occurs in fragile and conflict-affected countries. It remains to be seen what is transferable between contexts.

Another major limitation to the existing research is the absence of control groups. Only one study contained any control or comparison groups, and that was inadvertently the case due to the way interventions were implemented (in Sri Lanka, where one group of beneficiaries underwent a "minimal" intervention, with the remaining beneficiaries receiving the "full" intervention). Compounding this is the fact that isolated interventions are rare. Instead, most programmes involve an array of interventions that are administered simultaneously, resulting in what is known as the "dilemma of attribution". This is when the improvement in certain indicators or metrics cannot be definitively linked to the interventions made.

In short, robust evaluations of interventions are difficult. Given the poor evidence base, there are many more instances of evidence gaps than successful interventions. These range from evidence gaps concerning country-level programmes (such as those in Malaysia, Somalia, Kenya, Canada, Germany, and elsewhere in Europe) through to specific themes of extremist offender management. The following subsections highlight notable country-level (particularly regarding Indonesia, which has an often-cited rehabilitation programme) and thematic evidence gaps.

Country-level evidence gaps

England and Wales run two flagship deradicalisation programmes, which have not been evaluated: the Healthy Identity Intervention (HII) and the Disengagement and Desistance Programme (DDP). HII aims to "promote disengagement and reduce an individual's willingness to offend on behalf of an extremist group, cause, or ideology" (Dean 2014, 98). There are five specific intervention goals: 1) fulfil an offender's needs legitimately, 2) reduce offence-supportive attitude, beliefs, and thinking, 3) increase emotional tolerance and acceptance, 4) increase personal agency, and 5) express values and pursue goals legitimately (Dean 2014, 98-100). It involves inmates voluntarily working one-to-one

with a facilitator, thereby avoiding the pressures that may come from a group session.[2] There are sessions on mindfulness (managing and tolerating specific thoughts and feelings), group conflict, and seeking change, among others (Interventions Unit 2013, 9-10). The programme can take several months to complete. While it went through an initial pilot phase in 2010 and 2011, it has not been evaluated for its efficacy. The DDP, meanwhile, aims to "provide a range of intensive tailored interventions and practical support, designed to tackle the drivers of radicalisation around universal needs for identity, self-esteem, meaning and purpose; as well as to address personal grievances that the extremist narrative has exacerbated. Support could include mentoring, psychological support, theological and ideological advice" (Home Office 2019). Practical support can involve help in finding a job and other administrative tasks. NGOs are contracted to deliver the programme, but little is publicly available about who those practitioners are. DDP was successfully piloted in 2016 but has not yet been evaluated.

Even though Uzbekistan's deradicalisation programme has been in existence for over 20 years, there has not been a single public evaluation of its work (Soliev 2018). This is despite Uzbekistan having a long-established jihadist scene (with notable groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Jihad Union) including an estimated 1,500-2,500 foreign fighters (Cook & Vale 2019, 17). Its deradicalisation interventions are targeted at the cognitive, affective, and behavioural levels, emphasising religious counselling. Detainees participate in compulsory group and voluntary individual sessions with Muslim scholars and clerics to learn "the true teachings of Islam based on peace and harmony" (Soliev 2018, 129-130). Another intervention involves showing documentary films about the devastating impact of war in Syria and Iraq (Soliev 2018, 130). However, the effectiveness of these interventions is unknown.

Singapore's deradicalisation programme is similarly based on the premise that jihadists have "deviated" from mainstream Islam, with a need to address their "distorted ideology", simplistic paradigm, and intense feelings of anger and hatred (Gunaratna & Feisal 2011, 39). Their religious counselling was delivered by the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), which was a civil society group made of religious clerics and teachers who volunteered to deliver religious education to the country's Al Jemaa Al Islamiyya (JI) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) detainees.

They offer non-compulsory sessions to detainees and their families: from 2002 to 2009, 1,200 sessions were delivered to detainees, and over 120 to their families (Ibid, 43). The sessions address aspects of jihadist ideology (from *al-walaa wal-baraa* through to the concept of *jihad* and an Islamic State). Despite being in existence for almost two decades, there are no public figures on the effectiveness of the dialogues.

Similarly, Indonesia's rehabilitation centres for failed jihadist travellers to Syria have not been evaluated. These centres house individuals who were deported from Turkey due to their attempts to cross the Syrian border and join jihadist groups. They are placed for one month in these centres in East Jakarta. Detainees are monitored, assessed for their levels of risk, spend time with counsellors, and attend compulsory sessions aimed at promoting Indonesia's *Pancasila* ideology (belief in one God, humanitarianism, national unity, consensual democracy, and social justice). At the end of their one-month stay, detainees must sign a document pledging loyalty to the Republic of Indonesia before they are allowed to return home. Over 200 individuals have passed through these centres (Sumpter 2018, 1,6). The effectiveness of these interventions, and the recidivism rates, are unknown (Anindya 2019).

Indonesia's main iterations of its rehabilitation programme for extremists/terrorists have also not been evaluated. From the 2002 Bali bombing until 2012, one of the government's deradicalisation programmes was run by the police's Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terror Unit. It was targeted at convicted terrorists in its custody, as well as those awaiting trial. The programme focused on building relationships between the police and the detainees. The primary means of doing so was rewarding cooperative detainees with material benefits, such as "all-expenses-paid family visits, better food, good medical treatment, school fees for their children and even periodic outings" (IPAC 2014, 2). Imprisoned jihadists were allowed to marry their girlfriends, and on some occasions – remarkably – the police even paid for the wedding ceremonies (Ibid). In contrast, there were "no systematic attempts" at counselling or psychological support (Ibid, 2; Istiqomah 2011, 32). While there were some high-profile detainees who disengaged (who were then encouraged to dissuade other detainees from jihad), the success of this approach has not been quantified or independently evaluated. Indeed, it has even been

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accused of presenting itself as a deradicalisation program, even though its true intentions were solely to gather intelligence on participants (Hwang 2018). Detachment 88 did not coordinate its activities with the Indonesian prison service. Thus, once its detainees were placed in the regular prison estate, they could no longer continue with the strategy of cultivating relationships with those jihadist detainees. This lack of coordination between the police and the prison service was seen by IPAC (2014, 2) as a lost opportunity.

The Indonesian NGO, "Indonesian Alliance for Peace" (Aliansi Indonesia Damai), ran an intervention where victims of terrorist bombings had meetings with the perpetrators of terrorism. While these meetings have been described as "promising", "very emotional", and have ended with "reconciliation between bomber and victim", there has been no wholesale evaluation of their effectiveness (IPAC 2016, 18; Sumpter 2017, 130). Another programme, by the NGO Yayasan Prastasi Perdaimaian, involved religious guidance, small business loans for released inmates, and the funding of prison libraries that stock anti-jihadist material (IPAC 2016, 18; Sumpter 2017, 129-130). Its effectiveness is similarly unknown.

> **While there is good evidence that sport and recreation can be effective interventions with "regular" offenders, no study has solely focused on these interventions in the context of violent extremists.**

Other projects have developed more organically, and as such, formal evaluation has not been possible. For instance, the authorities in Indonesia's largest prison, Cipinang, constructed a skateboard park in the wing for terrorist offenders in 2015. Its construction was driven by a founding member of the Indonesian Skateboard Federation, who was imprisoned for drug trafficking. The park proved popular with the offenders. It appears a promising intervention; previously uncooperating inmates were seen to be interacting more. Skateboarding became "an outlet for positive self-expression" (Sumpter

2017, 130). While an IS leader in the prison declared a fatwa against the use of the skateboard park, other non-IS affiliated jihadist prisoners continued to use it (Ibid). While there is good evidence that sport and recreation can be effective interventions with "regular" offenders (Richardson et al. 2017), no study has solely focused on these interventions in the context of violent extremists.

Thematic evidence gaps

Evidence Gap 1: There is no proven, reliable way of assessing whether an inmate is hiding their true intentions (often termed "taqiyya", or dissimulation, in the context of jihadist inmates). Such a scenario would involve a jihadist detainee feigning compliance to deceive the authorities as to their true beliefs, motivations, and intentions. While the views of religious counsellors vary (with some saying it is impossible to spot, while others are more confident that a broad approximation can be made), no study has tested the ability of assessors to discover feigned compliance. That was one reason why the Indonesian authorities cancelled the VERA-2R risk assessment tool implementation in the 2010s (Sumpter 2020, 108-109).

Evidence Gap 2: There is no evidence that civil society organisations (CSOs) are more effective than governments at delivering implementations and vice versa. While governments are primarily responsible for their prison practices and management of violent extremists, CSOs are crucial to adopting a whole-of-society approach, which has been recommended by international organisations such as the United Nations (see UN Security Council Resolution 2178). CSOs can provide knowledge of local contexts and bring specialist expertise, however in countries where civil society is weak or has a poor reputation (due to a history of being misused or co-opted by authoritarian governments, for instance) they can find it challenging. For their part, states may be unwilling to share information and tend to be cautious when dealing with a politically sensitive topic such as violent extremist offenders. No study has thoroughly examined the efficacy of using CSOs, and so it is unknown whether they are more or less effective at delivering interventions than governments.

Evidence Gap 3: There is no evidence of what approaches offer the best Value for Money. No studies have focused on the cost of interventions relative to outcomes. The most comprehensive programmes are, naturally, the most expensive, and studies have generally noted their high costs due to

the number of staff and resources required (which can be even higher when financial assistance is paid to detainees and their families). The only study to explicitly mention cost-saving initiatives was Barkindo and Bryans' (2016) evaluation of the Nigerian deradicalisation camps noted that the country's programme was designed to be cost-effective, though details about costs and sustainability are not disclosed in that study.

Evidence Gap 4: The link between treating trauma and risk for violent extremism is unknown. Nascent literature has identified a correlation between trauma and attitudes towards (and participation in) violent extremism (Koehler 2020), with indications that extremist groups also look to exploit the mental health issues arising from trauma (RAN 2018, 4, Speckhard and Akhmedova 2006). Ellis et al.'s (2016) study of Somali refugees (n=79) found that greater exposure to personal trauma was associated with greater openness to illegal and violent activism. Despite this apparent correlation, no studies have assessed interventions that specifically address trauma and other mental health issues among violent extremist offenders.

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> **_Almost no research has focused on programmes aimed at women. Existing research is heavily male-centric, and there is a dearth of evidence as to how programmes should be adapted to, or created for, female detainees._**

Evidence Gap 5: There is limited evidence of the effect of different placement regimes. There are three broad categories of placement regimes: 1) putting all extremists together ("concentration"), 2) dispersing them among the regular criminal population ("dispersal"), or 3) isolating them from each other _and_ the regular criminal population ("isolation"). Butler (2020) found that in Northern Ireland, the concentration model of placing paramilitary prisoners in Specialised Prison Units made disengagement more difficult. This was because their psychological characteristics and motivations meant the prisoners "knew each other, were highly committed to their cause, and had the

support of their families, friends, and valued peers" (Butler 2020, 550). Disengaging in such a scenario would adversely affect their status among their peers, friends, family, and community. Other countries, such as Algeria, the Philippines, and the Netherlands, have adopted a "concentration" model, while England and Wales, France, and Belgium have recently introduced a mixed model of partial concentration (Basra & Neumann 2020), but the effects of these regimes have not been thoroughly evaluated. The views of staff have rarely been sought; Suarda's (2018) focus group discussions with prison officers in three Indonesian prisons found they unanimously supported the idea of concentrating terrorist detainees in special prisons.

Evidence Gap 6: Almost no research has focused on programmes aimed at women. Existing research is heavily male-centric, and there is a dearth of evidence as to how programmes should be adapted to, or created for, female detainees. Given that thousands of women mobilised to join Islamic State, which has resulted in an increase in the number of women in detention (whether in detention camps in Syria and Iraq or in prisons in Europe), this evidence gap is particularly notable.

Evidence Gap 7: Risk assessment tools for violent extremism are relatively new and have not been validated. While risk assessments were not the focus of this Review of Evidence, the studies examined here noted the poor evidence base regarding risk assessment tools. The two most established tools have been in existence for less than 15 years: the Violent Extremism Risk Assessment (VERA-2R) is the most widely used in Europe (Basra & Neumann 2020, 28), while the Extremism Risk Guidelines (ERG22+) is used in England and Wales. Despite their regular use, the tools have not been validated (i.e. tested to ensure they measure relevant factors) and there is limited evidence of what are the most salient risk and resilience factors (Sarma 2017). As such, there is considerable uncertainty over whether assessors are measuring the most important factors, although there are signs of promise (Powis et al. 2019). There is also a lack of evidence of whether an "actuarial" (i.e. statistical evaluations) or "clinical" (i.e. unstructured evaluations) approach is most effective. While there is an emerging consensus in the literature has been that Structured Professional Judgement (SPJ) is required (which involves a combination of actuarial and clinical elements) (see, for instance, Richards 2018), this also has not been evaluated.

Evidence Gap 8: It is unclear whether participation is more effective if it is voluntary or compulsory. Even though detainees are typically involuntarily held

in custody, programmes can give them the option of participation. Voluntary participants in PAIRS: "In general, voluntary participants willingly follow the program and see it as helpful: one interviewee used the phrase "a lifeline". Nevertheless, some of them make the most of the help offered to find accommodation or a job while avoiding close relationships with staff members who handle the psychological or ideological aspects" (Hecker 2021, 40). Compulsory participants in PAIRS: "This latter group attended meetings under duress but maintained an indifferent, not to say hostile, attitude throughout. As several professionals involved with PAIRS emphasised, it takes a long time to win participants' trust and acceptance" (Hecker 2021, 39).

Evidence Gap 9: Though several programmes incorporate forms of financial assistance, their effectiveness is unknown. Saudi Arabia's programme gives participants a monthly post-release stipend, which lasts for a year, and can also pay for their education and facilitate marriages. The Mishal programme in Pakistan and Malaysia's programme similarly support released detainees financially by providing grants if they are looking to start a business, with officials paying close attention to cases where the detainee was a family's sole breadwinner (Fink & El-Said 2010, 11). Yemen's programme gave released detainees 20,000 rials to help them post-release, yet the combination of their inadequate education levels and the country's dire economic situation meant that many could not secure jobs (Ibid, 15). In turn, many then re-joined Al-Qaeda, which paid them a monthly salary. Yemen's financial assistance programme failed, therefore, because it did not work in tandem with other post-release measures. However, beyond the Yemeni situation, no study has systematically evaluated financial initiatives to establish whether they have been effective and, if so, under what circumstances.

Methodology

Systematic search

The systematic search was conducted on Google Scholar and ProQuest, using a keyword search string.[3] This generated 9,447 results, of which 26 met the inclusion criteria and were included in the study.

Hand search

A hand search was conducted on relevant extremism and terrorism-centric journals, including: Terrorism and Political Violence, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, Perspectives on Terrorism, CTC Sentinel, Critical Studies on Terrorism, and Journal for Deradicalization. A further search was conducted in the grey literature: Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST); International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR); Royal United Services Institute (RUSI); International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) – The Hague; and National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). Once a relevant study was identified, a forwards and backwards snowballing approach was conducted, to identify further studies. The hand search generated an additional nine studies.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for studies in this review

On several occasions, data was reused for multiple publications. In these cases, only the latest or most thorough study was included, and the remaining or earlier studies were excluded.[4] Studies which only provided a summary of their findings, and did not publish the entirety of the research, were also excluded. While there is a burgeoning literature that describes how violent extremist offenders are managed (for instance, see the chapters in Hansen & Lid 2020 for a worldwide view, Basra & Neumann 2020 for the European situation, and Khalil et al. 2019 for a country-specific focus), these were excluded if they did not contain a systematic evaluation of interventions or if they were only descriptive in nature. Probation interventions were only included if they had a significant prison-based element. Non-prison based initiatives, such as the voluntary Serendi programme in Somalia (Khalil et al. 2019) were also excluded.

	Inclusion	Exclusion
Date	Studies since 2000	Studies before 2000
Language	English	Non-English
Geographies	Worldwide	N/A

	Inclusion	Exclusion
Intervention target population	Individuals/groups held in custody due to suspicions of, or convictions for, involvement in violent extremism or terrorism-related activity.	N/A
Study design	Quantitative (RCTs/experimental, quasi-experimental, statistical analysis and descriptive statistics); Qualitative (interviews, focus group discussions, case study, ethnography/observation); Mixed methods	Literature review
Intervention type	Placement regime Educational/vocational courses Financial assistance Mentoring Monitoring Placement regime Practical support Psychological support/counselling Religious counselling/education	Risk assessments Non-interventions Preventative (or pre-criminal) interventions
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal article Book Book chapter Think-tank report Government evaluation NGO evaluation	Opinion pieces/editorials Newspaper articles

Quality assessment

Assessing quality of evidence

Quality assessment was guided by the principles of research quality outlined in DFID's 2014 How To Note.[5] The assessment used and synthesised six criteria employed by researchers for the Conflict Prevention Rapid Evidence Assessment commissioned by DFID in 2016.[6] The decision was taken to use these principles as they are flexible and applicable to both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Studies were not discounted simply because they did not conform to certain methodological standards, as one of the central objectives of this review is to identify effective and promising interventions.

Principles for quality assessment	Questions	Score 1= major concerns 2 = some concerns 3= no concerns
Conceptual framing	Does the study acknowledge existing research? Does it outline its assumptions? Does the study pose a research question or outline a hypothesis?	
Transparency	Is it clear what the geography/context is in which the study was conducted? Does the study present or link to the raw data it analyses? Does the study declare sources of support/funding? How clear is the study about the quality (and limitations on quality) of the primary data, how clear is it about sampling decisions and site selection, etc.?	
Appropri-ateness of method	Does the study identify a research design and data-collection and analysis methods? Does the study demonstrate why the chosen design and method are well suited to the research question?	
Validity	To what extent is the study internally valid (valid in terms of where the research was done)?	
Cultural/ Context sensitivity	Does the study explicitly consider any context-specific cultural factors that may bias the analysis/findings? Is the study transparent in how it integrates or deals with cultural-specific factors (values, norms and practices)?	
Cogency	To what extent does the author consider the study's limitations and alternative interpretations of the analysis? Are the conclusions clearly based on the study's results (rather than on theory, assumptions or policy priorities)?	

5. DFID (2014) *How to Note: Assessing the Strength of Evidence, March 2014.* London: DFID.
6. Cramer, C., Goodhand, J. and Morris, R. (2016) *Evidence Synthesis: What interventions have been effective in preventing or mitigating armed violence in developing and middle-income countries?* London: Department for International Development.

Assessing impact of intervention

The impact or effectiveness of interventions were assessed using the table below. Again, this is based on the criteria employed by Cramer, Goodhand and Morris.

Impact of Intervention	
Effective	Intervention had positive impact on managing extremist offenders, or facilitating their disengagement/ deradicalisation, that could be causally attributed to intervention or that intervention contributed causally to outcome.
Promising	If intervention only had impact on intermediate outcomes, or if intervention had positive impact on one outcome but not on others (if mixed – provide details).
Ineffective	Intervention had no positive impact on managing extremist offenders, or facilitating their disengagement/ deradicalisation (and if had harmful impact).
Inconclusive	Evidence that intervention was inconclusive.

Studies included in the Review of Evidence

#	Study and Year	Country	Type of intervention	Evidence quality	Effective-ness
1	**Hecker 2021,** Once a Jihadist, Always a Jihadist? A Deradicalization Program Seen from the Inside	France	Religious counselling; Mentoring; Educational/vocational; Practical support	High	Promising
2	**Weeks 2021,** Lessons Learned from U.K. Efforts to Deradicalize Terror Offenders	UK	Mentoring	Medium	Inconclusive
3	**Chantraine & Scheer 2020,** Performing the enemy? No-risk logic and the assessment of prisoners in "radicalization assessment units" in French prisons	France	Risk Assessment; Placement Regime	Medium	Inconclusive
4	**Dhami et al. 2020,** Disengaging and Rehabilitating High-Value Detainees: A Small Scale Qualitative Study	Australia; Sri Lanka; Indonesia	Interviews	Medium	Inconclusive
5	**Muluk et al. 2020,** Insights from a deradicalization program in Indonesian prisons: The potential benefits of psychological intervention prior to ideological discussion	Indonesia	Psychological support / Counselling; Religious counselling	Medium	Promising
6	**Surmon-Böhr et al. 2020,** The Right to Silence and the Permission to Talk: Motivational Interviewing and High-Value Detainees	UK	Interviews	High	Effective
7	**Clubb et al. 2019,** Revisiting the De-Radicalisation or Disengagement Debate: Public Attitudes to the Re-Integration of Terrorists	UK	General deradicalisation	High	Effective
8	**Vellenga & De Groot 2019,** Securitization, Islamic chaplaincy, and the issue of (de)radicalization of Muslim detainees in Dutch prisons	Nether-lands	Religious counselling	Low	Inconclusive
9	**Ehiane 2019,** De-radicalisation and Disengagement of the Extremist Group in Africa: The Nigerian Experience	Nigeria	General deradicalisation	Low	Inconclusive
10	**Weeks 2018,** Doing Derad: An Analysis of the UK System	UK	Mentoring	Low	Inconclusive
11	**Cherney 2018,** Evaluating interventions to disengage extremist offenders: a study of the proactive integrated support model (PRISM)	Australia	General deradicalisation	Medium	Promising
12	**Bin Ali 2018,** Militant revisionism in Egypt: the case Al-Gamaa Al-Islamiyya and Al-Jihad Al-Islami	Egypt	Religious counselling	Low	Promising

#	Study and Year	Country	Type of intervention	Evidence quality	Effective-ness
13	**Cherney 2018,** The Release and Community Supervision of Radicalised Offenders: Issues and Challenges that Can Influence Reintegration	Australia	Other (family assistance)	Medium	Promising
14	**Van der Heide & Schuurman 2018,** Reintegrating Terrorists in the Netherlands: Evaluating the Dutch approach	Nether-lands	Psychological support; Educational/vocational courses; Religious counselling	High	Promising
15	**Cherney 2018,** Supporting disengagement and reintegration: qualitative outcomes from a custody-based counter radicalisation intervention	Australia	Religious counselling; Psychological support; Practical support; Educational/vocational courses	Medium	Promising
16	**Webber et al. 2018,** Deradicalizing detained terrorists	Sri Lanka	Educational; Mentoring; Practical support; Psychological support; Religious counselling	Medium	Effective
17	**Hiariej et al. 2017,** Reducing the Recruitment and Recidivism of Violent Extremists in Indonesia	Indonesia	Vocational courses	Low	Inconclusive
18	**Butler 2017,** Using Specialised Prison Units to Manage Violent Extremists: Lessons from Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland	Placement regime	Low	Ineffective
19	**Sumpter 2017,** Countering violent extremism in Indonesia: priorities, practice and the role of civil society	Indonesia	Placement regime	Medium	Promising
20	**Azam & Bareeha 2017,** Mishal: A Case Study of a Deradicalization and Emancipation Program in SWAT Valley, Pakistan	Pakistan	General deradicalisation	Medium	Promising
21	**Barkindo & Bryans 2016,** De-Radicalising Prisoners in Nigeria: developing a basic prison based de-radicalisation programme	Nigeria	General deradicalisation	High	Promising
22	**Bastug & Evlek 2016,** Individual Disengagement and Deradicalization Pilot Program in Turkey: Methods and Outcomes	Turkey	Educational/vocational courses; Practical support; Psychological support;	Low	Promising
23	**IPAC 2016,** Update on Indonesian Pro-ISIS Prisoners and Deradicalisation Efforts	Indonesia	General deradicalisation	Low	Promising
24	**Schuurman & Bakker 2015,** Reintegrating jihadist extremists: evaluating a Dutch initiative, 2013–2014	Nether-lands	General reintegration	High	Inconclusive
25	**Sukabdi 2015,** Terrorism Indonesia: Review on rehabilitation and deradicalization	Indonesia	Detainee desires	Medium	Promising

#	Study and Year	Country	Type of intervention	Evidence quality	Effective-ness
26	**IPAC 2014,** Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia: Need for a Rethink	Indonesia	Placement regime	Low	Inconclusive
27	**Hettiarachchi 2013,** Sri Lanka's Rehabilitation Program: A New Frontier in Counter Terrorism and Counter Insurgency	Sri Lanka	Educational; Mentoring; Practical support; Psychological support; Religious counselling	Medium	Effective
28	**Rubin 2011,** Non-Kinetic Approaches to Counter-Terrorism: A Case Study of Egypt and the Islamic Group	Egypt	Religious counselling	Low	Promising
29	**Stone 2011,** Thinking Strategically About Terrorist Rehabilitation: Lessons from Iraq	Iraq	Placement regime; Monitoring	Medium	Promising
30	**Istiqomah 2011,** De-radicalization program in Indonesian prisons: Reformation on the correctional institution	Indonesia	Psychological support; Religious counselling	Low	Inconclusive
31	**Fink & El-Said 2011,** Transforming terrorists: Examining international efforts to address violent extremism	Egypt; Jordan; Malaysia; Morocco; Saudi Arabia; Yemen	Religious counselling; Mentoring; Educational/vocational; Practical support; Financial assistance	Low	Promising
32	**Johnston 2009,** Assessing the effectiveness of deradicalization programs for Islamist extremists	Yemen; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; Indonesia	Religious counselling; Mentoring; Educational/vocational; Practical support; Financial assistance	Low	Promising
33	**Abuza 2009,** The rehabilitation of Jemaah Islamiyah detainees in South East Asia: A preliminary assessment	Indonesia; Singapore; Malaysia; Philippines	Religious counselling	Low	Inconclusive
34	**Boucek 2008,** Saudi Arabia's "Soft" Counterterrorism Strategy: Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Aftercare	Saudi Arabia	Educational/vocational; Financial assistance; Psychological support; Religious counselling	Medium	Promising

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