Mentoring Terrorism Offenders in the United Kingdom:

Mentors, Offenders, and Structure

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Basis of Research

- European Union grant to University of St Andrews, Scotland
- Victim/Perpetrator Cycle
- 2 Years/ 4 Locations/ 3 Themes
- Principle researcher for the UK

Mentoring Structure

- Part of the Prevent Workstream
- Bifurcation of Prevent
  - Pre and post conviction
  - Managed through Police and Probation
- MAPPA requirement
- Initial assessments begin in prison

MAPPA

- Six basic license requirements
- MAPPA add ons
- MAPPA for terrorism

"…they said 'we want you to see a de-radicaliser. Somebody who works with us to derad… I want you to see him at least once a week.' They was up front with me. They said 'he's somebody who is there to nurture and de-radicalise somebody that we believe has been involved in acts of terrorism, acts of violence, or acts of religious extremism."

Mentors

- Approximately 50 approved mentors
- Selection process largely ‘values’ based
- 21 mentors interviewed
  - 18 male, 3 female
    - 15 current or former approved
    - 2 going through approval process
    - 4 independent
  - 21-56 years old (median age 42)

Origins

- Typically 2nd or 3rd generation immigrants
  - Indian sub-continent (Pakistan Bangladesh)
  - Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa, Yemen
  - Not particularly religious

    "It wasn't a very strict Muslim household but I was taught my religion from an early age in Arabic from home… My mother taught me the Qur'an"

  - Reversion/conversion

Personal Journeys

- Previous interaction with mentors
- Radicalisation/violence

"…it is a noble cause, it is something not just noble in earthly terms, it is religiously noble as well. God loves that you fight on his side and protect the oppressed…I fought in Afghanistan several times. I fought in Kashmir, and I fought in Burma so my relationship with jihad in the armed kind of realm, has been for about 15 years"

Resilience

"I tried to heed the kind of call and follow the ways that this particular brand was propagating… I found it very difficult because I kept struggling with the conflicts within the kind of life I was leading and the life that I was supposed to be leading…"

- More religion
- Intrinsic rather than facilitated de-rad

Pathway to Mentoring

- Legitimate actors
  - Community commitment
  - Religious responsibility
  - Social justice
  - Not restorative justice
  - No sense of victimisation

- Illegitimate actors
  - Government
  - Money

Extremists

- Six individuals interviewed
  - Aged 21-40 (median age 30)
  - History of terrorism related arrests and violence
- All were born in the UK
  - South Asian, sub-Saharan Africa origins
  - Mixture of Muslim and Christian households

"I was brought up in a fairly regular practicing Muslim family and as you know, in the UK, when you're brought up and you have such a place where there's so much evil that you can commit, so Muslims in the UK tend to fall into a lot of sins and sometimes you forget your identity."

Reversion/Conversion

- Identity/peer influence/intellectual/foreign policy

"I came across a lecture in the mosque. Sheikh [REDACTED] was giving a lecture in [INDISCERNIBLE] mosque in north London… The first time I heard him, I was surprised… Addressing real problems in society in politics and addressing it in a way that was very rationally acceptable and very academic as well. That really appealed to me… the things he was discussing went so deep into explaining how society works and how society should work, giving viable solutions, it went beyond anything that I'd studied at school…"

Mentor/Extremist Interaction

- All extremists were critical

  "His name is [REDACTED], former Imam of [REDACTED] Mosque… I only saw him once… He certified me as de-radicalised. He saw me before the last parole hearing, the parole judge wanted to get understanding of the extent of my radicalisation and so he's the very best at de-radicalising"

  "… generally all the people who come out on probation, they don't change anything by going to these people. They go to them, they jump through the hoops, and they play along, but in reality as soon as their license is finished, it's see you later, business as usual…"

Success

- Time, multi-faceted, holistic, personal commitment

  "Well, the intervention itself I'd say was about a year. Only because…the more, I mean I'll be speaking with [REDACTED] today for example. This is five years later"

- Truths
  - Derad is not radicalisation in reverse
  - Derad is not about desistance or refraining from activism
  - Derad is not about derad

Empirical Truths About Derad

- There is no one route into, through, or out of extremism/terrorism;
- There is a fairly regular theme of victimisation present
- The effectiveness of any counter-narrative is largely reliant on the trust of the communicator and trust is largely dependent on whether the communicator has something to gain from the interaction;
- That success might be measured through the reduced risk of re-offending
- That radicalisation has been perceived as the major problem rather than focusing on violent radicalisation which is the bigger issue
- That it is more effective to prevent violence early on rather later in the radicalisation process
- Little is known about what deradicalisation actually means
- Emotional arousal plays a key role

(Horgan, Taylor, Bjorgo)

Accepted Myths About Derad

- Disengagement is not always accompanied by fundamental changes in attitude
- De-radicalisation may also refer to any initiative that tries to achieve a reduction of risk of re-offending through addressing the specific and relevant disengagement issues

  (Horgan, Taylor, Bjorgo)
- Radicalisat

Challenges/Controversy

- Radicalisation is not understood
  - Good versus bad radicals
- Definitions
  - Radical- "…the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism" (CONTEST, 2011, pg. 36).
  - Extremism- "…vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs" (Prevent Strategy, 2011, p.108).

Challenges/Controversy

- CVE
  - Focus has to be on violence extremism not simply radicalisation
  - Radicalisation is not about adopting an ideology
  - Prevention or pre-emption?
  - Communities are key
  - Capabilities vary
    - Requires the right people, the right spectrum of capabilities, the right support, and matching mentors and mentees appropriately

Questions?

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