INTELLECTUAL AND MOTIVATIONAL INTERVENTION APPROACHES

The cognitive and societal components of the processes of radicalisation and de-radicalisation are described in the literature as intellectual and motivational elements

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INTRODUCTION

Radical ideology is usually a result of somebody joining a radical group, not the cause for them joining that group. With regard to radicalisation toward violence, extreme ideology is the symptom rather than the cause of the problem. Policy and practice of counter-radicalisation, de-radicalisation and disengagement efforts, therefore, should address ideology but also seek to identify and cope with the cause of the radicalisation.

Radicalisation is a social and psychological process that takes place over time. An individual often begins this process as a way to fill real or perceived social voids. As the progression of the process of radicalisation leads to social appreciation from a new social group and the formation of new relationships, a person's beliefs and ideology can develop to align with those of their new network in order to maintain their social status. In most cases, radicalisation does not lead to violent extremism or terrorism, but all who participate in violent extremism or terrorism have gone through the process of radicalisation. Therefore, de-radicalisation programmes that address radical ideology and social voids in concert are more comprehensive than those that only address the ideological component.

INTELLECTUAL VERSUS MOTIVATIONAL COMPONENTS

In the literature, Kruglanski and Fishman (2009) describe this approach as using *intellectual and motivational components*. The intellectual component refers to ideological content, arguments and counter-arguments; and the motivational component refers to practical capability and reason to embrace a new outlook on personal significance, such as material support, vocational training and family assistance.

According to Kruglanski and Fishman, radicalisation and de-radicalisation are similar processes that lead to different ends. Both processes are guided by motivational and intellectual elements, and involve engaging in dialogue, befriending new people, and addressing social, financial and psychological needs in an effort to gain the trust of another.

A main hurdle for policy makers and practitioners involved in counter-radicalisation, de-radicalisation and/or disengagement efforts is confronting the fact that associating with radical groups can seem like an attractive solution to common social vulnerabilities. The group dynamic of an extremist group can provide social networks and support systems, self-esteem, sense of purpose and belonging, etc. It is then the policy makers' and practitioners' task to make the decision not to join a radical group seem more sensible and appealing than the decision to join a radical group.

PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

Intellectual and motivational intervention approaches employ what the literature refers to as *push and pull factors* of society (Bjorgo and Carlsson, 2005). These supersede the perceived group dynamic benefits of radical groups and form reasons for radicalized or radicalizing individuals not to participate in violent extremist and/or terrorist activities.

Push factors are doubts that make leaving the radical group feasible – *intellectual challenges* to the extremist ideology harboured by a radical group. Push factors may include pressure from outside the group such as negative social sanctions; feelings of dissatisfaction within the group such as losing faith in the ideology of the movement; becoming disillusioned with the activities of the group; losing one's hierarchical position within the group; excessive pressure and exhaustion of holding a leadership role in the group, etc.

Pull factors are the incentives that make (re)integrating into society a viable option – *alternative motivations* to fill the gap(s) that led the person to radicalize in the first place. Pull factors may include desires for aspects of a 'normal' life that are either not available or difficult to attain as part of an extremist group such as: longing for the tranquillity of life outside the group like not having to always look over one's shoulder; outgrowing the need for a thrill, which originally drew them to extremism; wanting to have a viable chance in the job market and similar future prospects; wanting to start a family, etc.

Bjorgo and Carlsson point out that personal identity is the most crucial element in drawing someone to the process of radicalisation – not ideology – and radical groups incorporate this into their narrative. For example, many racist perpetrators use racism as an expression (outcome) rather than a motivation (input). An intervention that addresses the push and pull factors of society in a way that radicals see them as outweighing those of a radical group therefore focuses on the cause of the problem—social voids—as well as the symptom—radical ideology.

Such a comprehensive approach is more likely to be a long-term solution than only addressing the ideological aspect of radicalisation, because it actually helps the individual achieve their desired goals.

METHOD

In democratic societies the aim of de-radicalisation programmes is not to change people's opinions or feelings, but rather to prevent the violent expression thereof. The SAFIRE project set out to improve the fundamental understanding of the process of radicalisation in order to advance policy, practice, and further research.

Part of providing a more nuanced perception of the process of radicalisation was exploring radicalisation as a process; factors that contribute to this process; and past and existing de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation and disengagement programmes. This painted a clearer picture of the state of de-radicalisation practice and theory at the outset of the SAFIRE project, to be used as a starting point for our further contributions to the literature on the process of radicalisation and programme design.

While democratic societies generally agree that radicalisation is a concern with regard to the safety of societies, there is not one definition of radicalisation on which everybody agrees. There are myriad definitions of radicalisation in the literature, which in part emphasize the disparity between radicalisation in and of itself and radicalisation that leads to violence. Comprehending these distinctions shaped our research and should also shape the efforts that aim to counter radicalisation so that they can protect the safety of societies while preserving individuals' right to free thought.

Furthermore, viewing radicalisation as a process and not a one-time decision is a necessary starting point for designing de-radicalisation programmes that are more likely to have a positive influence, so that such efforts may have long-term rather than short-term effects. Understanding radicalisation as a non-linear process was a crucial starting point for SAFIRE. That is to say that it is not the case that A leads to B, which leads to C, which leads to radicalisation. SAFIRE project activity was guided by the premise that radicalisation is a complex process dependent on multiple factors.

This set a platform for the preliminary SAFIRE research to explore, among other topics, components of the process of radicalisation; factors that may draw people to radicalism; approaches that may increase the chances of a positive outcome of a de-radicalisation programme; and different classifications of de-radicalisation programmes. While these are different matters under the umbrella topic of de-radicalisation, they each acknowledge the impact of an individual's circumstance on their process of radicalisation. De-radicalisation programmes should not approach participants as a member of this group or a supporter of that ideology. Radicals should be approached as individuals who have their own reasoning and motivation for the decisions they have made, and who have their own goals they are trying to achieve.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Although de-radicalisation is a relatively young field of study and practice, some consistent concepts have emerged regarding the design and implementation of counter-radicalisation programmes. An example of one such concept is acknowledging and defining the difference between intellectual and motivational intervention approaches.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BOTH INTELLECTUAL AND MOTIVATIONAL INFLUENCES

Intellectual and motivational influences are part of both the radicalisation and de-radicalisation processes. In both processes, the individual must have the opportunity for engagement: the motivational component that gives them a practical means by which to participate in and gain from the community; as well as the capacity to make a decision about the engagement: the intellectual component that makes sense of and gives credit to the cause (Horgan and Braddock, 2010). Programmes affiliated with counter-radicalisation, de-radicalisation or disengagement therefore need to tap into both intellectual and motivational sources of influence to make the push and pull factors of not being associated with a radical group stronger than those of being associated with a radical group.

Intellectual and motivational approaches to de-radicalisation are each valuable, but neither is independently comprehensive. If a person becomes disenchanted with the ideology of a radical group but does not have opportunities or incentives to facilitate the transition out of the radical network, they are unlikely to do so. If family assistance and vocational training are made available to someone who believes that extremism is the best way to achieve their goals, they are not likely to change their situation.

The role of ideology

It is important to address both intellectual and motivational components of the process of radicalisation regardless of which extreme ideology the individual identifies with because ideology is frequently not the central factor that draws people to extremism. As previously mentioned, in most cases of radicalisation, extreme ideology is a result of joining a radical group rather than the reason for joining the group. For example, most youth who commit racist acts do so to show off, to live up to group expectations, to prove loyalty, or to get attention – not necessarily because they believe in any particular cause. Rather, racist activity by youths is often motivated by a mixture of non-political factors and loosely formed, undeveloped xenophobia and racist slogans (Bjorgo and Carlsson, 2005). De-radicalisation programmes that only address the extreme ideology therefore miss the source of the process of radicalisation.

There are also many categories of radicalisation—differing ideologies in the name of which people plan and/or commit acts of extreme violence. De-radicalisation programmes need to be able to be customized to each individual. This includes both broadening the approach in recognition of the fact that ideology is not the only contributing factor to the process of radicalisation, as well as addressing the specific motivational elements that relate to the individual.

Providing tools

Extremism is a tool. It is used as a means to an end, and that end depends on the individual. Therefore, providing an individual with new tools to reach that same end, highlighting the ineffectuality of extremism as a strategy, and conveying the message that extremism hinders their likelihood of reaching those objectives, has a chance to achieve positive results (Kruglanski and Fishman, 2009).

Incorporating both intellectual and motivational elements into the design of a programme provides a more comprehensive approach that acknowledges the complexity of the process of radicalisation. One of the main findings of the SAFIRE project is that there is not one distinct path that defines the process of radicalisation. There are many possible contributing factors that can be identified, but there is no checklist or particular order that applies to everyone. Radicalisation is a process that differs for each individual depending on their circumstances.

Different levels

While knowledge and understanding of the complementary nature of intellectual and motivational intervention approaches is imperative for first-line workers and other micro-level personnel in the field of counter-radicalisation, this information is most actionable on the macro and mezzo levels, such as policy makers and programme designers, respectively. Macro-level actors in the field of counter-radicalisation such as policy makers can interject this knowledge about the influence of intellectual and motivational components on the processes of radicalisation and de-radicalisation into national social and security policy discussions. Radicalisation is often discussed as a concern from the perspective of law enforcement and national security, but the influence of social circumstances in the process of radicalisation is much less frequently acknowledged. Social factors that influence the process of radicalisation should be discussed in conjunction with radicalisation as a security concern. Additionally, more resources can be dedicated to preventative efforts against violent radicalisation, which implement knowledge about intellectual and motivational components of the process.

Mezzo-level actors in the field of counter-radicalisation such as programme designers and directors can implement this knowledge of the complementarity of intellectual and motivational approaches to the framework of their programmes in order to provide a more comprehensive and personalized approach.

Furthermore, mezzo-level actors could use this knowledge of intellectual and motivational approaches to incorporate training for the micro-level workers in their organization—the people who work one-on-one with potentially radicalizing and/or radicalized individuals on a regular basis.

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of an intervention relies largely on the ability of the practitioners and the participants to communicate and relate with one another. Stigmatizing a person who is radicalised or radicalising toward violent extremism can be counter-productive and drive them to recidivism and further toward extremism. Training intellectual and motivational intervention approaches could provide micro-level workers with the understanding and capability to better treat the participating individuals with respect; to identify the root cause of those individuals' radicalisation; and to have a logical discourse about ideology.

De-radicalisation policy and practice need to keep the individual at the forefront of the discussion because the processes of radicalisation and de-radicalisation are unique for each person, dependent upon their circumstances. Making use of motivational and intellectual approaches in concert allows both cognitive and societal aspects of an individual's process of radicalisation to be addressed. That allows for a more nuanced understanding of the individual's decisions – those made in the past as well as those they will have to make in the future – and more personalized guidance.