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Islamic Radicalisation in North and West Africa

Drivers and approaches to tackle radicalisation

Rapid literature review
October 2013

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About this report

This rapid review provides a short synthesis of some of the most recent, high quality literature on the topic of Islamic radicalisation in North and West Africa. It aims to orient policymakers to the key debates and emerging issues. It was prepared for the European Commission's Instrument for Stability, © European Union 2013. The views expressed in this report are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of GSDRC, its partner agencies or the European Commission.

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1. Overview

This paper synthesises literature on Islamic radicalisation in North and West Africa, with a particular focus on the drivers of radicalisation and evidence on approaches that have attempted to tackle radicalisation. There is significant debate in the academic literature concerning the definition of ‘radicalisation’. For the purposes of this report, the definition of Islamic radicalisation adopted is ‘a political rupture with the nation state in order to establish the early Islamic *califat* by violence’.¹ The two main ideological perspectives relevant in the region are Jihadism, which advocates political violence; and Wahhabism, or Salafism Wahhabism, which advocate fundamentalism and non-violence.²

There is a broad and growing body of literature which explores the drivers and processes of radicalisation in a variety of country contexts. While much of this concentrates on ‘home grown’ radicalisation – i.e. that which occurs among Europeans in Europe – there is growing attention being paid to radicalisation in other contexts, particularly in North and West Africa. Though the socio-political and historical realities of states here vary significantly, it is possible to discern some similarities in, and characteristics of, drivers of Islamic radicalisation in the region. Evidence indicates that socio-economic factors – while in themselves not key determinants of radicalisation – add fuel to the process. The experience of many countries in North and West Africa demonstrates that a combination of poverty, political and cultural marginalisation, low educational attainment, a lack of opportunities (particularly for young people), and the collapse of traditional Islamic organisations is a potent combination. Other important regional drivers include the history of authoritarianism, the post-revolution political climate, increased funding for Salafist Wahhabi groups from outside sources, and the resonance of international issues that relate to the Islamic world (such as the Iraq War).

Given that there is no single driver of radicalisation, the issue of how to address this phenomenon in North and West Africa, and elsewhere, is complex. There are a range of approaches that have been used in various countries, most of which tend to be led by national government. Examples of programmes include:

- **Religious rehabilitation:** This is an important component of de-radicalisation efforts as it helps to delegitimise the actions of radical groups and refutes theoretical and ideological justifications. Programmes that focus on religious rehabilitation have had variable success in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Yemen and Jordan.
- **De-radicalisation in prisons:** Prisoners can play a crucial role in de-radicalisation efforts. Programming in a prison environment can range from religious dialogue with credible interlocutors, to providing inducements and support mechanisms for socio-economic reintegration.
- **Internet-based de-radicalisation:** The internet is a key component of modern processes of radicalisation, however, as yet, few strategies have targeted online radicalisation. An example of an approach that does is the *Al-Sakina* programme based in Saudi Arabia.

¹ Dr Salma Belaala.

² A summary of key definitions is provided in Appendix 1.

Drawing from the available literature, recommendations presented for de-radicalisation or counter-radicalisation programmes include:

- Provide support to **strengthen the capacity of the domestic state** in order to create an economic and social climate beneficial to the people.
- Pay attention to context and **tailor de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation approaches** to the specific local cultural, historical and political circumstances.
- **Interlocutors**, particularly moderate Islamic preachers, have a crucial role to play in de-radicalisation efforts. They should be highly knowledgeable and well respected among the community within which they work.
- Evidence indicates that some of the more effective de-radicalisation strategies **incorporate an aftercare element** in their programming. This can range from scheduled counselling sessions to daily text message reminders. Families have an important role in monitoring against recidivism and so should also be incorporated in de-radicalisation efforts.
- **Support classical Islamic culture:** Experts recommend supporting the integration of classical Islamic culture within civil society to counter radicalisation.

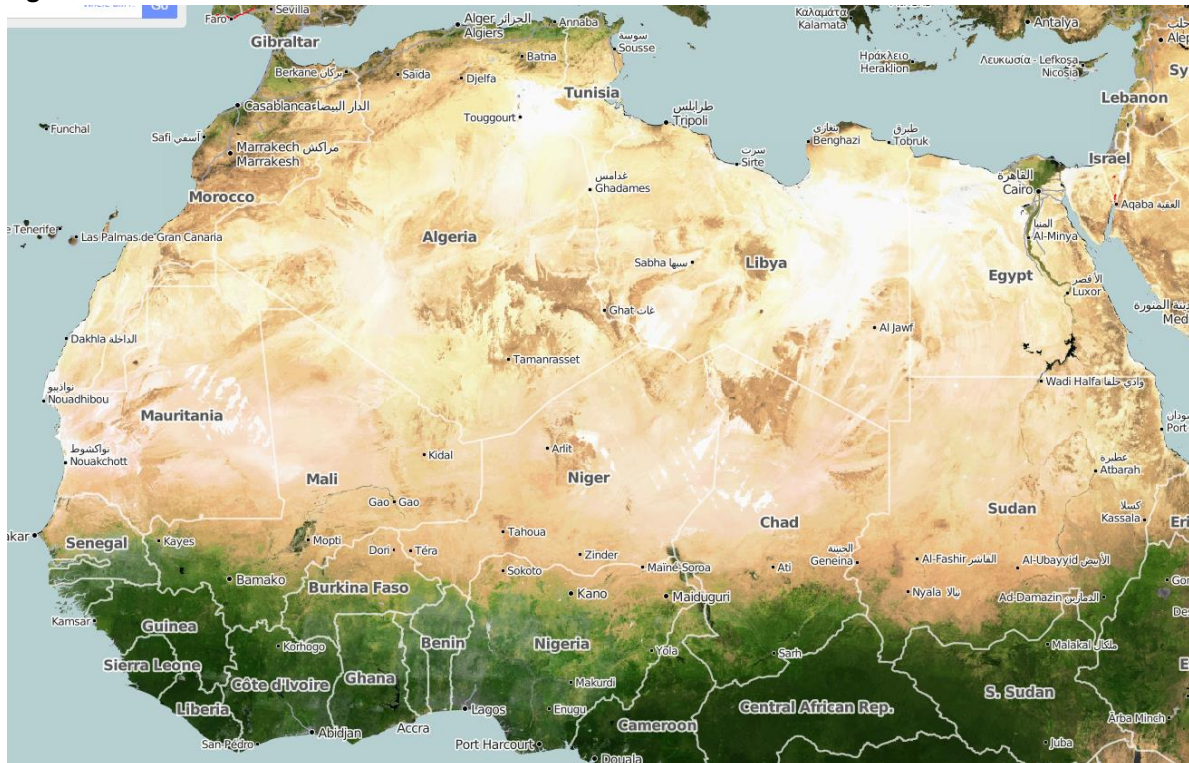
2. Understanding radicalisation in North and West Africa

North and West Africa have been identified as important sites of Islamist radicalisation,³ particularly since 2001 (Gow & Olonisakin, 2013, p. 1). Prior to this, experts indicate terrorist and radical activity here was largely localised and contained (CSIS 2010). Today, extremists have developed into ‘complex organisations that combine religious ideology with criminal networks, operating both locally and globally’ (CSIS, 2010, p. 1). There are various factors which have increased the region’s susceptibility to radicalisation. Decades of conflict have left the area vulnerable to cross-border instability, while socio-economic marginalisation adds fuel to radicalisation processes. The region’s substantial mineral wealth contributes an additional dynamic – the Gulf of Guinea for example is of strategic interest in global energy politics, while research indicates that terrorist groups have links with uranium control in Niger (Gow & Olonisakin, 2013, p. 2).

The key ideological positions relevant to Islamic radicalisation in the region are Wahhabi Salafism and Jihadism (Belaala, 2011). Jihadism is an Islamist approach that advocates the use of violence in the pursuit of goals, while Wahhabi Salafism is an extreme fundamentalism that is influenced by Saudi Wahhabism and rejects the use of political violence (Wolf, 2013, p. 569).

³ There is substantial debate among scholars concerning the definition of radicalisation. For the purposes of this report, the definition of radicalisation adopted is ‘a political rupture with the nation state in order to establish the early Islamic *califat* by violence’. For additional definitions of key terms see Appendix 1.

Figure 1: North and West Africa



Source: www.openstreetmap.org © OpenStreetMap contributors, Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 license

Key actors in the region include Al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat (GSPC), the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (Majao), and Ansar Din. Though in the main an Algerian organisation, AQIM has pushed south into some sub-Saharan states such as Mauritania, Niger and Mali (CSIS, 2010). Experts indicate it has diversified its activities to be involved in various types of criminality, including drug trafficking (CSIS, 2010, p. 4).

In an analysis of violent Islamist activity in Africa, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset (ACLED) notes that both the frequency of such events and the countries in which operatives are active have increased (Dowd, 2012). Violent actions include: political violence (terrorism, individual killings); violence against civilians (journalists, cultural elites, western targets); and violence which targets political institutions.

3. Drivers of radicalisation

There is a growing body of literature which explores the drivers of Islamic radicalisation in North and West Africa. Much of this draws from detailed field research using qualitative methodologies (See for example: Gow, Olonisakin, & Dijkhoorn, 2013). Evidence indicates that radicalisation has developed according to the specific historical and socio-political realities of states in the region (Pargeter 2009, p. 1032). Despite the significant variation, however, there are some commonalities among the literature on drivers of radicalisation.

Historical antagonisms and the role of authoritarianism

Pargeter (2009, p. 1032) contends that Islamic radicalisation in North and West Africa must be placed 'within the broader historical context of political and cultural resistance by certain peripheral regional elements to a delegitimised and stagnated central authority'. Though the recent revolutions have changed the dynamics of governance in North Africa, the **history of authoritarianism** has been identified as a key contributing factor in the development of some radical movements here. Citing evidence from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, Storm (2009, p. 998) finds that authoritarianism contributed to a 'vicious cycle of repression and radicalisation'. Violations of civil and political rights, combined with the repression of opposition forces, limited the options available to citizens and contributed to the attractiveness of radical elements (Storm, 2009, pp. 999-1000). In the case of Tunisia, Torelli, Merone, & Cavatorta (2012) and the International Crisis Group (ICG, 2013) find that Tunisian Salafism – despite being presented by some as a 'foreign import' – has domestic roots in the authoritarian secularist Ben Ali regime. Here, it emerged as a 'response to the repression inflicted on Islamists' (ICG, 2013, p. i). Such evidence, however, does not preclude the possibility of Islamist radicalisation occurring under other political circumstances. In a study of Algeria, Belaala (2008, p. 15) finds that local jihadism in suburbs in Algiers emerged during a period of democratic transition.

Drawing from regional data, Pargeter (2009) finds **localised historical antagonisms** have been contributing factors to radicalisation across the region. Many of the areas that are particularly receptive to Islamic radicalisation have strong **histories of rebellion and resistance** against colonialism that are often part of the local identity. This trend is particularly pronounced in Libya – where the Eastern regions have traditionally been central areas of opposition – yet also observable in Tunisia, Algeria (Belaala 2008) and to a lesser extent in Morocco (Pargeter, 2009). Relatedly, many of the areas that are particularly receptive to radicalisation have been those that previously struggled to deal with the **secularisation** tendencies of post-independence states and which have a **high propensity for social conservatism**, as in the case of Libya and Morocco (Pargeter, 2009, p. 1039).

Political climate

The **political context** of various North African countries has provided opportunities for radical Islamist elements to organise and promote their doctrines in ways that were often not possible during previous authoritarian rule (ICG, 2013). The fall out of crises in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt have provided a political vacuum that is fertile for Islamic radicalisation. **Disillusionment with the existing political system** and perceptions of the 'hypocrisy' of state actors have contributed to the growth of radical Islamist movements across the region (Marks, 2013, p. 11). Literature indicates that Wahhabi Salafism has gained ground in Algeria, for example, due to a number of factors which include the disappointment of Algerians with the violence of the recent past and the dominance of the National Liberation Front (Boubaker, 2011). In Nigeria, bad governance, allegations of corruption, and an **unstable political climate** have provided an environment in which radicalisation has opportunities to 'thrive' (Alao, 2013, p. 130). In addition, experts indicate that violent radicalisation can also come from a political movement, for example among the supporters of the Armed Islamic Movement in Algeria (Martinez, 1995).

Socio-economic factors

The link between poverty and radicalisation has been broadly discredited (Marks, 2013; Kreuger, 2007; Sageman, 2004). However, evidence indicates that radical Islamists have been able to exploit **economic marginalisation, high levels of poverty** and a lack of **access to basic services** to attract followers. Evidence from Morocco (Alonso & García Rey, 2007), Libya (Pargeter, 2009), Ghana (Aning & Abdallah,

2013), and Nigeria (Alao, 2013) shows that economic and social inequalities (whether perceived or real) have helped fuel discontent and create conditions that are conducive to the spread of terrorism (UNCTITF, 2008, p. 12).

In Tunisia, for example, impoverished areas in south and central regions, as well as 'poverty belts' that surround urban areas, have a particularly high rate of Wahhabi ultra-conservatives (Torelli et al., 2012; Wolf, 2013, p. 569). Evidence indicates that areas of radicalisation are often economically underdeveloped compared with more prosperous regions (Marks, 2013; Merone & Cavatorta, 2012; Pargeter, 2009). This is illustrated in Morocco where Jihadist organisations have gained a foothold in urban slum areas which are predominately populated by neglected migrant communities (Belaala, 2004).

Empirical research shows that Islamist groups have been able to court support and implant themselves within local communities through providing a **service delivery role** – filling the vacuum created by poor public services and weak state capacity (ICG, 2013). In Tunisia and Morocco they have become key economic and social actors, with a range of roles including mediating local conflicts, administering issues and martial disputes, and helping in the provision of schooling (Alonso & García Rey, 2007; ICG, 2013, p. iii).

Low levels of educational attainment, when combined with other drivers of extremism, can be an important feature of radicalisation, particularly among young people. Drawing from empirical research in Mauritania, Boukhars (2012, p. 20) finds that lack of access to education disproportionately affects those already poor and marginalised, and can exacerbate feelings of anger with a central authority. Relatedly, **low levels of employment** have been noted as a contributory factor to radicalisation among both young and old (Marks, 2013; Merone & Cavatorta, 2012; Pargeter, 2009).

Marginalisation of young people

Political marginalisation of young people is **multi-dimensional** and **widespread** across North and West Africa. In various countries, young people across the political spectrum have reported feeling disenfranchised from the government and neglected and 'deceived' by political leaders (Marks, 2013, p. 110). Evidence from a range of countries indicates that radical groups have **significant youth support**. Wahhabi Salafism has attracted a young demographic 'disappointed with the Islam of their elders' (Boubaker 2011, p. 67), while 'Jihadism' has been presented as 'an inspirational opportunity for youths to fight for something larger than themselves and inject a sense of higher purpose into their lives' (Marks, 2013, p. 111; See also: Alonso & García Rey, 2007). The rise of Wahhabi Salafism in Tunisia, for example, has been linked to the 'political and social expression of a class of largely disenfranchised youth' (Marks, 2013; Merone & Cavatorta, 2012, p. 14).

Experts indicate that when young people have limited opportunities and restricted economic means, the appeal of radical Islamist elements can grow. Poor education, **youth unemployment** and a lack of opportunities for young people add fuel to the radicalisation process. Research cited by International Crisis Group (2013, p. 6) identifies that the mobilisation of disenfranchised young people contributes significantly to the growth of radical Islamist groups.

Drawing from empirical research in Algeria, Boubaker (2011) provides some insights into the process of radicalisation among young people. The author finds, for example, that AQIM have been able to attract recruits by seizing 'upon the unfilled desires of young Algerians' (Boubaker, 2011, p. 60). Young people

have been radicalised and **recruited in mosques** based on their desire ‘to do something’ then sent to radicalising training camps where they have little option but to carry out their ‘mission’ (Boubaker, 2011).

The **internet** is also an important feature of modern radicalisation processes, particularly among those under 35 (Conway & McInerney, 2008; Hearne & Laiq, 2010). Empirical studies in North Africa and elsewhere have identified the importance of YouTube and similar video-sharing websites in increasing access to Jihadi material (Boubaker, 2011; Conway & McInerney, 2008). The internet can facilitate network formation and thus enhances the platform available for radicalisation (TTSRL, 2008). **Online imagery, jihadi chat rooms**, and religious **television channels** from the Gulf are important components in these modern processes of radicalisation (Boubaker, 2011, p. 61; Wolf, 2013). The significance of imagery is shown by a suicide attack by a 15 year old boy in Algiers in 2007 (Boubaker, 2011, p. 61). Attacking an army barracks, the student named himself Abou Moussaab al-Zarqaoui, after the media visible leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq (Boubaker, 2011, p. 61).

International events, funding and the role of migrants

International issues that relate to the Islamic world have a resonance on radicalisation in North and West Africa, though experts caution these have a far lesser degree of influence than local political and economic issues (Alao, 2013). Key factors include:

- The Iraq war provided jihadis with ‘a new rallying cry and boosted recruitment’, and is said to have been key to the transformation of the Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat (GSPC) from a local organisation to an international one (CSIS 2010, p. 2).
- Drawing from evidence in Nigeria, Alao (2013) identifies the ‘desecration of Islam or the Prophet’ – for example the publication of the Danish cartoons – and perceptions of Muslim oppression globally as important contributors to radicalisation.
- Perceptions of Israel’s role in the Middle East have been an important unifying factor for radical movements (Alao, 2013).
- Jihadi movements outside the region have provided inspiration that has fuelled the radicalisation of individuals and groups (Alonso & García Rey, 2007; Boubaker, 2011).
- In Tunisia, research indicates that Salafists have collected photos of injured children in Iraq, Palestine and Syria to promote their message (Marks, 2013, p. 111).

Increasing outside funding for Salafism and Wahhabism has helped to support radicalisation. In Morocco (Alonso & García Rey, 2007) and Mauritania (Boukhars, 2012), Saudi Arabia has provided funding for Islamic institutions that promote Wahhabi Salafism. In Algeria, the promotion of Salafism was strengthened during the 1980s with the arrival of young Algerians from teacher training in Saudi Arabia (Boubaker, 2011, p. 66). Maintaining close ties with religious institutions in Saudi, these preachers became key figures in the Algerian Islamist movement (Boubaker, 2011, p. 66). Similar trends are observable in West Africa, where research shows the majority of radical clerics were either trained (through scholarships) or influenced by teachings from outside countries (Ismail 2013, p. 242). International assistance for radicalisation here has come from Iran, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and is predominately channelled through radical literature and scholarships for young people to study abroad (Alao, 2013).

Decline of traditional Islamic organisations

Rather than being indicative of a resurgence of local religious tradition, experts indicate that radicalisation reflects a **decline of traditional Islamic organisations** and **local traditional Islamic identity**. During periods of authoritarianism, traditional Islamic organisations – which broadly speaking taught traditional approaches which are more tolerant and accommodating of other religions/communities – declined. The authoritarian states' rejection of both religion and Islamism had a negative impact on traditional bodies and created a vacuum that provided an opportunity for radical Islamist preachers to exploit (expert comment). Drawing from experience in Morocco, Belaala (2004, p. 3) finds that Takfirist Salafism has been a product of the disintegration of traditional Islam combined with some communities' perceptions of their exclusion from modern society. Similar views have also been identified in Algeria (Belaala, 2012).

Radicalisation in prisons

Prisons play a significant role in the narratives of radical and militant movements and have been identified as 'breeding grounds' (ICSR, 2012) and 'incubators' (Christmann, 2012) for radicalisation. The vulnerability of the prison environment, combined with over-crowding and inadequate staffing levels amplify the conditions that lend themselves to radicalisation (ICSR, 2012; Mulcahy, Merrington, & Bell, 2013). In Nigeria, for example, evidence indicates that Boko Haram has radicalised and recruited members through prisons.⁴ Upon leaving prison, **radicalised ex-prisoners** can have a significant influence on the wider community (Wolf, 2013, p. 569). In the case of Tunisia, Wolf (2013, p. 569) finds that the release of high profile ultra-conservatives and militants – who were imprisoned under the former regime – was one of the key factors that has led to the increasing influence of Salafists.

Local culture and community

Some academic literature emphasises the community that radical Islamist groups offer followers as an appealing dimension of radicalisation. Boubaker (2011, p. 67), for example, contends that Wahhabi groups are welcoming to all people and provide them with **membership in a community**: 'By going to the right mosque or visiting the right internet sites, adherents gain friends, get married, and get help in finding an apartment or starting a business' (Boubaker, 2011, p. 67). The collapse of local culture in rural areas also plays an important role in the process of radicalisation. Belaala (2009) finds that jihadism is an ideological response to the collapse of local culture and a lack of political belonging to the national modern identity.

Inter-religious rivalries

Drawing from empirical research in five West African states, Ismail (2013, p. 240) finds evidence that inter-religious rivalry has been a contributing factor to the radicalisation of some Muslim groups. The growth of evangelical Christian churches and the 'proselytisation activities' of their movements have been perceived as a 'challenge' to Islam that warrants a response from Muslims (Ismail, 2013, p. 240). As the evangelical Christian doctrine advocates a breakaway from orthodox Churches, so the response of some Muslim communities has been to pursue 'a return to puritanical Islam' (Ismail 2013, p. 240). In

⁴ See: <http://www.issafrika.org/iss-today/understanding-the-dynamics-of-islamic-radicalism-in-nigeria-is-key-to-bringing-boko-haram-to-book>

Nigeria, rivalry between Muslim and Christian groups – which is textured by ethnic divisions – has led to several violent clashes in Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi and Jos (Ismail 2013, p. 240).

4. Evidence on approaches to tackle radicalisation

There is a growing recognition among scholars that de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation programmes can be a more effective way of tackling extremism than purely militaristic approaches (El-Sai'd & Harrigan, 2012; IPI, 2010). While de-radicalisation refers to policies and approaches that aim to de-radicalise groups and individuals, with the aim of re-integrating them into society and preventing further violence (El-Sai'd, 2012b), counter-radicalisation is a term used to describe approaches that intend to prevent the emergence or rise of violent radicalisation in society.

There is a broad body of literature that explores the theory and implementation of strategies to tackle radicalisation. While much of this tends to focus on de-radicalisation efforts in Europe and America, there is emerging literature on programmes from Asia and North Africa.⁵ Most of these tend to be country-based approaches that are driven by national or local government.

Given the multiplicity of drivers of radicalisation, the issue of how to address this phenomenon is similarly complex. In a review of national strategies to target radicalisation, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (UN-CTITF) identified nine types of national programmes: prison programmes; education; promoting inter-cultural dialogue; tackling economic and social inequalities; global programmes to counter radicalisation; the internet; legislation reforms; developing and disseminating information; and training and qualifying agencies involved in implementing counter-radicalisation policies (UN-CTITF, 2008).

Experts recommend that de-radicalisation approaches should tackle, amongst other dimensions, the socio-economic and political problems in which radicalisation thrive. Marks (2013, p. 114), for instance, argues that de- and counter-radicalisation efforts should involve 'structural solutions' which seek to mitigate the conditions of socio-economic marginalisation, including, for instance, civilian oversight of internal security forces and transparency in the rule of law.

Religious rehabilitation / Religious dialogue

Religious rehabilitation is an important component of de-radicalisation for two reasons: first, it helps to delegitimise the actions of radical groups and terrorists; and second, it is necessary to refute the theoretical and ideological justifications of such movements (El-Sai'd, 2012b, p. 14). One of the best known examples of this type of intervention is the Saudi Arabian religious dialogue programme. Targeting prison detainees, this gives the opportunity for **moderate religious scholars** and prisoners to debate and discuss a range of issues including interpretations of religion, jihadism and relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims (El-Sai'd, 2012b, p. 14). Drawing from experience here and elsewhere, El-Said (2012b, p. 14) emphasises that Islamic scholars involved in these types of programmes should be knowledgeable and highly respected within their community. In Indonesia, a central component of de-

⁵ A second edition of Dr Hamed El-Sai'd's publication 'De-radicalising Violent Extremist: Counter Radicalisation and De-radicalisation Programs and their Impact in Muslim Majority States' is currently under review. When published, this will include case studies on de-radicalisation from African countries, such as Sudan and Mauritania, for the first time.

radicalisation efforts involves working through **networks and individuals with religious credibility** (Ranstorp, 2009). Though Saudi Arabia was able to attract a sufficient number of scholars with these credentials, other religious dialogue programmes in Malaysia, Yemen and Jordan struggled due to their inability to attract suitable religious leaders.

A number of countries in North Africa and elsewhere have attempted to contain the influence of radical preachers through **direct state oversight**. Morocco, for instance, has introduced comprehensive counter-radicalisation measures that have included an extensive and wide-ranging religious reform programme (El-Sai'd, 2012a). The aim of such reforms is to counter the appeal of violent ideology through strengthening the official religious establishment, including the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MRA), the Supreme Council of Scientists, and the *al-Muhamadiya* Foundation (El-Sai'd, 2012a, pp. 30-31). Mosques have become the only official places of worship and placed under the control of MRA, which also has a role in preparing the content of Friday sermons (El-Said, 2012a, pp. 30-31). The Government also provide funding to produce literature and work with the media to help disseminate moderate religious knowledge (El-Sai'd, 2012a, p. 31). Though some experts caution that it is too early to judge the effectiveness of Morocco's counter-terrorism measures, others contend that these efforts have had negative effects. In particular, it is argued that authorities have failed to incorporate the active Moroccan civil society effectively (El-Sai'd, 2012a, p. 33). Drawing from international experience in de-radicalisation, CSIS (2010, p. 6) note that it is difficult to strike the right balance of government involvement in the religious sphere. They caution that overt government **interference in shaping religious messages can backfire** and lead to criticism of the government (CSIS, 2010, p. 6).

Improved governance and social welfare

Propagating and demonstrating good governance and inclusive institutions is important for challenging the rhetoric and appeal of radical groups (Schmid, 2013). While the link between poverty and radicalisation is disputed, there is substantial evidence that radical Islamists have exploited weak economic conditions and high unemployment to attract followers (See: Alonso & García Rey, 2007; Pargeter, 2009; Aning & Abdallah, 2013). Tackling the economic environment that fuels radicalisation is therefore an important component of de-radicalisation strategies. This has been recognised by the Government of Pakistan which in 2011 adopted a 14-point anti-terrorism strategy that acknowledged economic development as key to stabilising conflict regions and preventing terrorism (Mirahmadi, Maehreen, & Zaid, 2012, p. 21). To contribute to this goal, the government has been pursuing more favourable trade agreements with India and the United States (Mirahmadi et al., 2012, p. 21).

Approaches to address youth radicalisation

There are a variety of approaches that have attempted to address youth radicalisation. Some of the longer term efforts to counter radicalisation have focused on schools – particularly religious schools – and universities (Ranstorp, 2009, p. 6). Multi-cultural youth and student camps have enabled participants to discuss different perspectives on religion and engage with tolerant preaching imams and religious institutions (Ranstorp, 2009, p. 6). In Pakistan, the military have established a number of de-radicalisation centres which aim to rehabilitate young men who have been recruited by the Taliban (Mirahmadi et al., 2012). Participants are offered counselling and religious re-education, as well as vocational training to help them secure employment (Mirahmadi et al., 2012).

In Southeast Asia, working with musicians has become a popular way of communicating a de-radicalisation message, particularly to young people. Lyrics promoting tolerance and discussing violence and terrorism have aimed to counteract radical Islamist preaching (Ranstorp, 2009, p. 6).

De-radicalisation in prisons

As well as being important sites of radicalisation, evidence indicates that prisons can play a crucial role in de-radicalisation processes (El-Sai'd, 2012b). Drawing from evidence of de- and counter-radicalisation approaches in 15 countries, the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR, 2012, p. 1) finds that prisons can be 'incubators for peaceful change and transformation'. Approaches to address radicalisation here tend to be collective or individual.

Collective de-radicalisation attempts to bring about a process in which 'large numbers of terrorists – typically, the vast majority, if not all, of the members of an armed group – [change] their attitudes toward the use of violent means in the pursuit of extremist aims' (ICSR, 2012, p. 40). Experience in Algeria, Egypt and Israel indicates that this approach can be successful, however **the circumstances in which it is likely to succeed are limited**. Evidence indicates that the radicalised group should have three characteristics to increase the chance of success: the existence of strong and authoritarian leadership; the existence of hierarchical command and control structures; and, most importantly, an environment in which leadership perceives that there are weaknesses in an armed campaign (ICSR, 2012). Provided such conditions are in place, government can play a role in facilitating de-radicalisation efforts by supporting dialogue between leadership and grassroots members, easing repressive measures for those who join the process, and providing inducements and support mechanisms for socio-economic reintegration (ICSR, 2012, p. 39). Two prominent case studies of prison-based collective de-radicalisation efforts that have been successful are the disengagement of the Egyptian Islamic Group (IG) in Egypt and the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) in Algeria (ICSR, 2012, p. 42).

Individual de-radicalisation can be an alternative strategy in a prison context and involves targeting individuals for disengagement. Such programmes have been used in countries including Afghanistan, Indonesia, Yemen and Saudi Arabia (El-Sai'd, 2012a). Drawing from experience in these and other contexts, the ICSR (2012, p. 47) finds that programmes are too context specific and locally customised to be effectively compared. Nevertheless, some of the components that underlie the more effective individual de-radicalisation approaches include: a mix of prison programming that incorporates religious re-education and training; the existence of credible interlocutors who can relate to prisoners' particular needs; and consistent efforts to build social networks outside of prison that support the transition towards de-radicalisation (ICSR, 2012, p. 47). In addition, inducements were found to have a role in individual programming, though these in themselves were not found to be decisive (ICSR, 2012, p. 57).

Public awareness campaigns

Practitioners in the field of de- and counter-radicalisation emphasise that information campaigns should be highly accessible and target grassroots levels (Ranstorp, 2009, p. 7). To this end, radio stations are often a more effective means of reaching densely populated rural areas (Ranstorp, 2009, p. 7). In Saudi Arabia, a public information campaign was put in place that aimed to counter radicalisation by highlighting the effects of violence on victims (Fink Chowdhury & Hearne, 2008, p. 6). In Pakistan, civil society organisations have organised a variety of public rallies, conferences and seminars to prompt awareness of the threat of extremism (Mirahmadi et al., 2012).

Internet-based de-radicalisation

While the internet is an important tool in modern radicalisation, so far few de- and counter-radicalisation programmes have included an online component. One of the few approaches that does is the *Al-Sakina* programme, based in Saudi Arabia (Hearne & Laiq, 2010). Launched by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs in 2003, *Al-Sakina* focuses on individual interventions through online chat rooms. The process involves appointed groups of academics and intellectuals visiting websites popular with Islamic radicals and challenging extreme interpretations of Islam (Hearne & Laiq, 2010). *Al-Sakina* also holds a comprehensive online database of religious texts, research and education materials related to jihad, political violence and radicalisation. To target younger audiences, the organisation uses social media and produces video materials in English and Arabic (ISD, 2013). Other examples of internet-based de-radicalisation are the UK's 'Radical Middle Way' project – which provides a website where young Muslims can access a range of views and opinions – and a series of seminars in Nigeria, which have sought to build the capacity of law enforcement agencies on countering radicalisation through digital technologies (UN-CTITF, 2008).

Lessons from the literature

Drawing from the available literature, some of the key recommendations for de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation strategies are:

- **Pay attention to context:** Drawing from experience of de-radicalisation programmes in Muslim majority states, El-Sai'd (2012b) observes that there is no 'one size fits all' formula to tackling the issue of radicalisation. The author finds that strategies that were successful in one place should not be transplanted elsewhere, and that approaches should be tailored to the various legal, political, social and cultural systems in place (El-Said, 2012b; See also Hearne & Laiq, 2010).
- **Interlocutors are important:** Literature repeatedly identifies the need for de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation approaches to engage with moderate Islamic preachers. For the purposes of religious dialogue and rehabilitation, preachers can have a crucial role to play. Experience indicates that religious leaders should be highly knowledgeable and broadly respected among their community if de-radicalisation efforts are to be successful. In addition, it can be useful to have former extremists involved in disengagement programmes as they may have a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the individual and credibility among participants (ISD, 2012).
- **Incorporate aftercare into programmes:** Some of the most effective de-radicalisation programmes are those that include a follow-up or after care component (Hearne & Laiq, 2010). Follow-up activity can range from a scheduled programme of frequent meetings with a counsellor, to daily text messages reminding participants of key messages. Hearne and Laiq (2010, p. 12) emphasise the important role family play in aftercare programmes as a 'cheap and effective monitoring mechanism which can protect against recidivism'.
- **Programmes should be holistic and use a variety of complementary approaches:** Evidence indicates that a variety of complementary approaches – rather than a single approach – is often the most effective means of countering radicalisation. Relatedly, literature recommends that programmes should cover a variety of areas, rather than focusing on one particular aspect, for example ideology or social support (ISD, 2012).

- **Use incentives with care:** Incentives can be a useful way of enticing people away from radicalism, however literature notes that they must be used with care. Hearne and Laiq (2010, p. 12) caution that if used without ‘buy-in’ from societies, incentives can be viewed as a ‘reward’ for criminals.
- **Programmes are effective when they are voluntary:** Drawing from 13 brief case studies, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue finds that personal, voluntary, commitment leads to greater success (ISD, 2012).
- **Work with NGOs:** Experience from Bangladesh shows that programmes can be more effective when they are run independently of government through networks of NGOs. It was found here that NGOs have more authority and legitimacy to work on radicalisation (ISD, 2012).
- **Support classical Islamic culture:** Experts recommend supporting the integration of classical Islamic culture (Islamic humanities) within civil society to counter radicalisation.
- **Support a strong developmental state:** Evidence indicates that the strength and developmental capacity of states impacts on the experience of radicalisation in society. States that can control the economy, encourage job creation and manage relations between ethnic groups are less likely to experience terrorism and better able to respond to events if they do. Though the link between poverty and radicalisation is largely discredited, strong development states are able to counter some of the appeal of radical groups concerning economic mismanagement, corruption and deprivation (El-Sai’d, 2012b, p. 12).
- **Work with the local community:** Working with communities and civil society can enhance trust and help counter extremist ideologies. Communities can help to facilitate the sharing of information and also have an important role to play in monitoring and observing any violent extremist tendencies (UN-CTITF, 2008).

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Appendix 1: Key definitions

Salafism: Definitions and understandings of Salafism are broadly debated by specialists. In its modern meaning, Salafism refers to ‘conservative Sunni Muslims who seeks to apply literalist interpretations of scripture based on the example set by the Prophet and his companions’ (ICG, 2012). Salafists movements have been divided into two categories: ‘**Scientific (or Scripturalist) Salafists**’ are influenced by Saudi Wahhabism, reject the use of violence, and preach a ‘pure version of Islam’; and **Jihadi Salafists** who are noted to advocate the use of violence in the pursuit of their goals (Wolf, 2013, p. 569). Salafists have come to attention in a number of countries in North and West Africa, including Tunisia (See (ICG, 2013).

Wahhabism Salafism: Wahhabism is a branch of Sunni Islam that is predominately preached in Saudi Arabia. It is an orientation within Salafism that is considered ultra-conservative and rejects traditional Islamic legal scholarship.

Jihadism: Jihadism refers to ‘the peripheral current of extremist Islamic thought whose adherents demand the use of violence in order to oust non-Islamic influence from traditionally Muslim lands en route to establishing true Islamic governance in accordance with *Sharia*, or God’s law (Brachman, 2009, p. 4).

Radicalisation: There is much dispute over the definition of radicalisation. For the purposes of this report, the definition of radicalisation adopted is ‘a political rupture with the nation state in order to establish the early Islamic *califat* by violence’.⁶

De-radicalisation: De-radicalisation refers to policies and approaches that attempt to de-radicalise groups and individuals with the aim of re-integrating them into society or, at least, dissuading them from further violence (El-Said, 2012b; UN-CTITF, 2008).

Counter-radicalisation: Counter-radicalisation is a term used to describe measures and approaches that are implemented with the intention to prevent the emergence and rise of violent extremism/radicalisation in society. It is used to broadly refer to a combination of social, political, legal, educational and economic reforms designed to deter disaffected individuals from becoming terrorists (UN-CTITF, 2008).

⁶ Dr Salma Belaala