"Hearts, Hands and Heads":
Exploring the Relationship Between Disengagement and Deradicalization Through Counter Violent Extremism Project Implementation in Indonesia

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Abstract

Terrorism experts continue to debate how and why people become radicalised and commit violence.[4] Significantly less emphasis and coherence of thought has been deployed to understand those processes in reverse. From the perspective of counterterrorism practitioners within both government and civil society, the question has tended to bifurcate around two contrasting conceptual approaches: should the focus be on 'deradicalization' (an internal or philosophical outcome seeking change in beliefs, values and attitudes) or 'disengagement' (a social or temporal outcome seeking change in behaviours away from violence)? This article seeks to contribute to the debate about how disengagement functions and stands as a practical and effective counterterrorism methodology, and is based on detailed analysis of field work and project implementation in Indonesia.[5] This article and the methodologies implemented and tested are grounded in previous research on disengagement of Indonesian jihadists and countering violent extremism (CVE) projects conducted by several of the authors over many years, and extends and codifies the findings of a valuable body of earlier academic literature.[6]

Keywords: terrorism, countering violent extremism, disengagement, deradicalization, returnees, Indonesia

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[4] See in particular recent thinking put forward by Khalil & Dawson 2023; also Hwang & Schulze 2018.
[5] The data for this article is based on a project supported by the US Department of State, Global Engagement Centre (GEC) over the period 2018-2020.
[6] For example, see Hwang 2017.

Introduction

Debates among preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) scholars and practitioners revolve not only around which causes of violent extremism are most salient, but also how best to conceptualise or systematise the analysis of those drivers. With regards to the latter, various models have emerged, including the widely used 'push and pull' factors, variations of the 'push and pull' model such as 'structural motivators, individual incentives and enabling factors',[7] and community level versus individual level,[8] among others. On the opposite end of the spectrum, another layer of the debate with significant practical implications for the design of P/CVE interventions focuses on the distinction between 'disengagement', which emphasises behavioural change, and 'de-radicalisation', which focuses on change at the level of beliefs/ideology.[9] For P/CVE practitioners, this rich debate poses the question of where to start when working with 'at risk' individuals,[10] violent extremists or terrorism convicts. The very relationship between attitudes and behaviour has been questioned by leading scholars in the field.[11]

According to the Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders,[12] the first step towards designing rehabilitation programs is to define their goals: is the goal deradicalization or disengagement? The likelihood of success of deradicalization or disengagement programs also differs,[13] at least theoretically (see Table 1).

Table 1: Disengagement versus Deradicalisation

Program	Pros	Cons
Disengagement	More likely to be successful, since changing someone's mind is more difficult to achieve.	Does not guarantee success in the long run, as stressful events may cause relapses towards violent attitudes.
Deradicalisation	More likely to be a stronger insurance on future behaviour.	Rarely achieved and measuring success is quite difficult.

These positions are not entirely new, nor has a clear definition been agreed upon. In the past, counter-terrorism approaches – especially those used by some national governments during the response to emergency situations created by international

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[7] Khalil & Zeuthen 2016

[8] Schomerus et. al. 2017

[9] For example, Neumann (2013) argues that the principal conceptual fault-line is between notions of radicalization that emphasise extremist beliefs ('cognitive radicalization') and those that focus on extremist behavior ('behavioural radicalisation'). This is reinforced by Githens-Mazer (2012).

[10] 'At risk' is a short-hand term used by P/CVE practitioners to describe people that have been exposed to radicalism and are living in a situation or condition that may potentially push them further towards violent acts, driven by their radical beliefs. This also include former terrorists in danger of being attracted back to their previous violent ways.

[11] For example: Horgan & Taylor 2011

[12] GCTF 2016

[13] GCTF 2016: 3

terrorist groups in the twentieth century[14] – are closer to the definition of disengagement, rather than deradicalisation. However, while increasing trans-nationalism and globalisation have intensified cross-border radicalisation and terrorism, efforts to counter radicalisation and terrorism remain limited by traditional state boundaries. The rise and fall of ISIS is a prime example of such a dilemma. Home countries of ISIS fighters who fought in Syria now have to deal with the crimes committed on foreign soil by a trans-national movement, yet the tools to deal with them are either outdated or still quite new.

The notion of disengagement was introduced by John Horgan (2009),[15] who argued for two shifts in leaving groups to be understood, from profiles to pathways and from root causes to route qualities. Horgan argues that the predominant CVE approach has relied on the micro-level psychological profile or the macro-level root causes of extremism (e.g., economic, sociological, political, cultural). These are notions that have largely been rejected in recent terrorism research.[16] While Horgan agrees that there are distinct traits among those who become drawn to violence extremist groups, such as psychological disaffection with society at large or membership of a particular class/ethnic background, he makes the case that these cannot be seen as singular causes, as they apply to far more individuals who do not take up terrorism than to those who do.

Instead, Horgan argues that more attention should be paid to the pathways into or out of violence and the qualities that characterise these routes. This shift moves away from trying to diagnose individual pathologies or structural determinants of violent extremism, and hopes to grasp the more complex constellation of factors that define people's movement into and out of networks. Scholarship on disengagement has also made the valuable observation that individuals are not simply involved in formal groups; rather, they tend to have links to social networks and are often involved in recognisable sub-cultures.[17]

The process of disengagement does not necessarily indicate that an individual rejects the political project of their former group nor some kind of broader reformation. Rather, it focuses on behavioural change and ceasing to participate in active violence.[18] Considering this analysis, the framework emphasises the importance of understanding disengagement as a social process embedded in a particular context and social network.

This paper focuses on Indonesian returned foreign fighters, a large cohort who present an ongoing and concerning problem in Southeast Asia.[19] Indonesian violent extremist networks play a significant role in Southeast Asia in in fostering violent movements throughout the region, particularly in Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines.[20] Furthermore, Indonesian fighters have participated in conflicts across the globe, ranging from conflict in Afghanistan in the 1980s to Syria today. Even now, many of the Indonesian fighters traveling to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in

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[14] These groups are listed in nationally and/or internationally designated terrorist groups lists, which include groups designated by national governments and inter-governmental organizations.

[15] Much has been written about the topic since then, including works by Githens-Mazer (2012); Neumann, P. (2013); and Khalil et. al. (2019).

[16] Horgan 2009: 3; also see: Githens-Mazer (2012); Neumann, P. (2013); and Khalil et. al. (2019).

[17] Bjørgo 2008

[18] Horgan 2008; Fink & Hearne 2008; Hwang, Panggabean, & Fauzi 2013

[19] Sumpter, 2017

[20] Hwang, 2018

recent years have taken on important roles in regional networks,[21] including serving as military trainers, financiers, recruiters, and advisors, as well as participating in violence and attacks. Additionally, their previous experience in conflict zones enhances their capacity to commit acts of violence and can provide a focal point for mobilizing those who failed to undertake *'hijrah'* to Syria.

The primary data used for this paper was collected during disengagement activities conducted in Indonesia from 2019 to 2020. The activities are predominantly mentoring activities of former terrorist fighters who have completed their prison sentences. This paper summarises how a disengagement program was conducted in Indonesia and analyse its strengths and limitations within the long process of deradicalizing and reforming former terrorist fighters.

Methodology: The Mentoring Process towards Disengagement

Due to the large number of former fighters repatriating, the process by which members of jihadi groups leave armed networks is central to much of the current work on CVE. While there are competing models for understanding this process of leaving a violent extremist network, one of the most prominent and promising is that of disengagement.[22] John Horgan and Mary Beth Altier define disengagement as:[23]

> "the process of ceasing terrorist activity. [...] Individuals may disengage from terrorism without necessarily 'de-radicalising' and abandoning their violent ideology. Disengagement can be an individual or a collective process. The decision to disengage may be voluntary or involuntary."

This paper uses data from a mentoring project implemented in Indonesia between 2018 and 2020. The mentoring project adopted the framework of disengagement that emphasises the social process of leaving a group first before the later deradicalisation of theological and political beliefs. The intervention adopted a mentoring model that used by a multi-step process purposefully designed to achieve a series of sequential changes in an individual's movement away from any violent extremist network. Based on recent field work experience and project implementation in Indonesia, this article seeks to contribute to the rich theoretical and practical debate about disengagement and de-radicalisation methodologies in the field of CVE.

While beginning with - and primarily focusing on - disengagement, the approach examined in this article encompassed both behavioural and ideological change. It began by building trust with clients and proceeded to assist clients to channel their energy positively and in accordance with prevailing community norms. In turn, this helped to address the individual's ideology/belief structure and support ideological transformation. The measurement tools, findings and lessons learned from this project, which had a significant contemporary research component and were further enhanced by grounded in previous

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[21] Barrett et al, 2015
[22] Horgan 2009
[23] Horgan & Altier 2012: 86

research conducted on the disengagement of Indonesian jihadists,[24] offer valuable insights on the non-linear interaction between disengagement and de-radicalisation.

For this study, the focus is on the mentoring dynamic between a mentor with credible voice from within the project, ABS, a reformed terrorist convict who is now a peace activist in Indonesia, and his mentoring clients, WD and SM, both returned ISIS fighters. This case was chosen because the individuals' experiences highlighted the non-ideological reasons for leaving the violent extremist pathway, such as the importance of social bonds and negotiation of new socially grounded identities. This case study provides a sound basis for exploring the dynamic relationship between disengagement and deradicalisation. It is not meant to be generalisable but should provide markers of the limits of mentoring methodologies in disengagement and deradicalisation processes. This case demonstrates the critical role of a mentor in helping clients to gradually leave violent extremist networks *without* first addressing underlying ideological beliefs.

The research that formed the basis for this paper observes the ethical principles of psychologists and the code of conduct as laid out in the 2017 American Psychological Association. While secondary data was obtained from publicly available sources, primary data obtained from interviews and internal documents of participating organisations was obtained by strictly observing the principles of free, prior and informed consent. All names mentioned in this paper are aliases or acronyms, with only the authors maintaining full knowledge of their true identities. All necessary security precautions have been taken to omit any information that may be advantageous to any third party related to counter-terrorism.

Background: Aspirations to Build an Islamic State in Indonesia

Islamist extremism has long posed a challenge to the modern Indonesian state. In the first half of 1945, at the dawn of Indonesia's declaration of independence, secular nationalists and Christian leaders agreed that Indonesians should believe in God but refused to allow Islamic groups to retain seven words in the Constitution – *dengan kewajiban menjalankan syari'at Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya* ("with the obligation for Muslims to implement Islamic law"). This phrase was originally included in an initial draft of the Indonesian Constitution called *Piagam Jakarta* (the Jakarta Charter), but it was excluded when independence was declared on 17 August 1945.[25]

Thwarted from declaring Indonesia an Islamic state, leading Islamic clerics nonetheless issued a *fatwa* (religious edict) declaring a holy war against the Dutch when the former colonial masters returned at the end of World War II.[26] Interestingly, it was Indonesia's largest traditionalist, and most tolerant, Islamic movement, Nahdladtul Ulama (NU), that in 1945 issued the *Resolusi Jihad* (Jihad Resolution), a *fatwa* declaring that war to preserve independence was *jihad fi sabilillah* (struggle in the path of Allah) and *fard al-ain* (obligatory for all Muslims).[27]

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[24] For example: Hwang 2015
[25] Anshari 1976; Elson 2009
[26] Fogg 2019
[27] Said 2016

This history still resonates to this day among violent extremist groups that believe the struggle to free Indonesia from enemy forces has not ended. One such group was Darul Islam (DI, 'Abode of Islam'), whose founder, Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosuwirjo, mounted a rebellion in 1948 against the Indonesian government as the war of independence against the Dutch entered its final year.[28] Despite believing in Islamic mysticism, like many traditional Muslims in West Java at the time, Kartosuwirjo introduced his followers to concepts of *takfir* (the declaration of a Muslim as apostate) and *hijrah* (the Prophet Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina to establish a secure base), paired with jihad as *fard al-ain* (personal duty).[29] The following year, the self-declared Imam of Darul Islam proclaimed his base in West Java as Negara Islam Indonesia (NII, 'Islamic State of Indonesia').[30] Although the rebellion sputtered to an end with Kartosuwirjo's capture by the Indonesian army in 1962 and his subsequent execution, his death did not kill the dream of an Indonesian caliphate among its supporters.[31]

Almost fifty years on, ISIS now dominates the headlines and the global jihadist imagination. In this context, old NII networks have been quietly recruiting through small discussion groups (*taklim*), donations, and pledges of allegiance (*ba'iat*) to support the Islamic State project in Syria. With the collapse of the ISIS caliphate, however, large numbers of foreign fighters have been returning to their home countries, with more than 700 originating from Indonesia.[32] Concern over reintegration and the potential threat posed by returning fighters has become an important political and security issue.

Within Indonesia, there are a range of active groups. These include Al-Qaeda-inspired groups, such as Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), and groups who overtly support ISIS, such as Jamaah Anshorut Daulah (JAD). Groups inspired by ISIS have been particularly influenced by recent returned foreign fighters. For example, at least one of Indonesia's homegrown ISIS supporter groups, the Jamaah Anshorul Khilafah (JAK) cell in Bekasi, part of Greater Jakarta, sent two of its members to Marawi, the Philippines, in 2016 to escalate conflict there.[33] JAK has also begun rebuilding contact online with Indonesian foreign fighters in Southern Philippines with the intention of joining them. The cases presented in this paper are important due to the historical significance of these groups and their ongoing role as foreign fighters.

Worst-Case Scenario: Carrying the Fight Home

This section illustrates the risk of returning Indonesian foreign fighters who have not been properly monitored or handled. In the Indonesian context, at least one returned fighter, 43-year-old recruit SP, became involved in terrorism after returning from abroad. SP travelled to Syria in early 2013 using money he borrowed from a bank but returned to Indonesia in July 2013 after a disappointing six-month stint with the Free Syrian Army (FSA). The FSA put SP, their only Indonesian, through 12 days of physical and firearm drills before

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[28] Soebardi 1983
[29] Haron & Hussin 2013
[30] Dijk 1981
[31] Sofwan 2017
[32] Amar 2021
[33] Various discussions with members of Densus 88 and BNPT. Also see: Arianti & Taufiqurrohman 2020

equipping him with an AK-47 assault rifle. SP was disappointed, however, as he did not have the chance to do much fighting for the FSA and was confronted with the fact that many members of the FSA were non-Muslims. Worse still, those who said they were Muslims, as SP paraphrased, "didn't really perform Islam and even drank beer". He also witnessed the FSA engaging in criminal activities to raise funds. When SP, who had financed his own journey to Syria, began looking for opportunities to meet 'Islamic' fighters from the al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS, the FSA expelled him.

Upon his return home to North Sumatra, SP was hailed a *mujahid* (holy warrior) by close friends who knew he had been to Syria and heard about his exploits. SP pretended he had been with ISIS and decided to recruit his friends to the jihadi cause by showing them videos of ISIS 'victories'. By June 2017, he had recruited three people, chosen targets, and developed a plan. They decided to steal weapons from the police to attack Chinese heritage residents of Medan, North Sumatra's capital city, in response to the blasphemy case involving Jakarta Governor Ahok,[34] and to kill soldiers because the Indonesian government was planning to send them to Marawi to fight ISIS.[35] Thus, in the early hours of 25 June 2017, on the last day of Ramadan, SP closed his food and drink store, and with juice-seller AR (a.k.a. Bewe), walked into the North Sumatra Provincial Police Headquarters in Medan and stabbed an Indonesian police officer to death as he slept in his guard post. They then set the post on fire before AR was shot and killed by police. SP was wounded and arrested.

The North Jakarta Court sentenced SP to 19 years in prison on 16 May 2018, nearly a year after the attack. Now serving his sentence at Nusa Kambangan maximum security prison, SP is unrepentant. Prior to being moved to Nusa Kambangan, SP was also among the 155 inmates involved in a May 2018 riot at the Mobile Brigade (Brimob) detention facility in Depok that led to the killing of five members of police counter-terrorism unit Detachment 88. SP is considered by terrorism experts in Indonesia as the first terrorist fighter to have launched an attack in Indonesia after returning from Syria.[36]

While he is no terrorist mastermind or ideologue, SP makes an interesting case study. SP personifies the convergence of three radicalisation trajectories: the legacy of Darul Islam/NII, the lure of ISIS via the Internet, and the return of foreign fighters from Syria. The Syrian conflict has provided Indonesian violent extremism recruiters a *casus belli* for action, but the prime driving force for these three streams is the long-cherished dream of an Islamic caliphate in Indonesia.

The Indonesian government claims not to have accurate numbers of Indonesian nationals who became combatants in Syria. But according to the Coordinating Minister of

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[34] Ahead of the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, political rivals of incumbent candidate Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (a.k.a. Ahok) aligned themselves with Islamic extremists to exploit religious and racial intolerance, resulting in Ahok being accused of blasphemy in October 2016. He then lost the election to former Education Minister Anies Baswedan. He was sentenced to two years in prison for blasphemy.

[35] This was a hoax news perpetrated by anti-government radicals. Despite alleged requests from the Government of the Philippines, the Indonesian government has never sent any soldiers to the Southern Philippines throughout the Marawi crisis. The Marawi crisis was a five-month-long armed conflict in Marawi, Lanao del Sur, Philippines, that started on 23 May 2017, between Philippine government security forces and militants affiliated with ISIS, including the Maute and Abu Sayyaf Salafi jihadist groups. The battle also became the longest urban battle in the modern history of the Philippines.
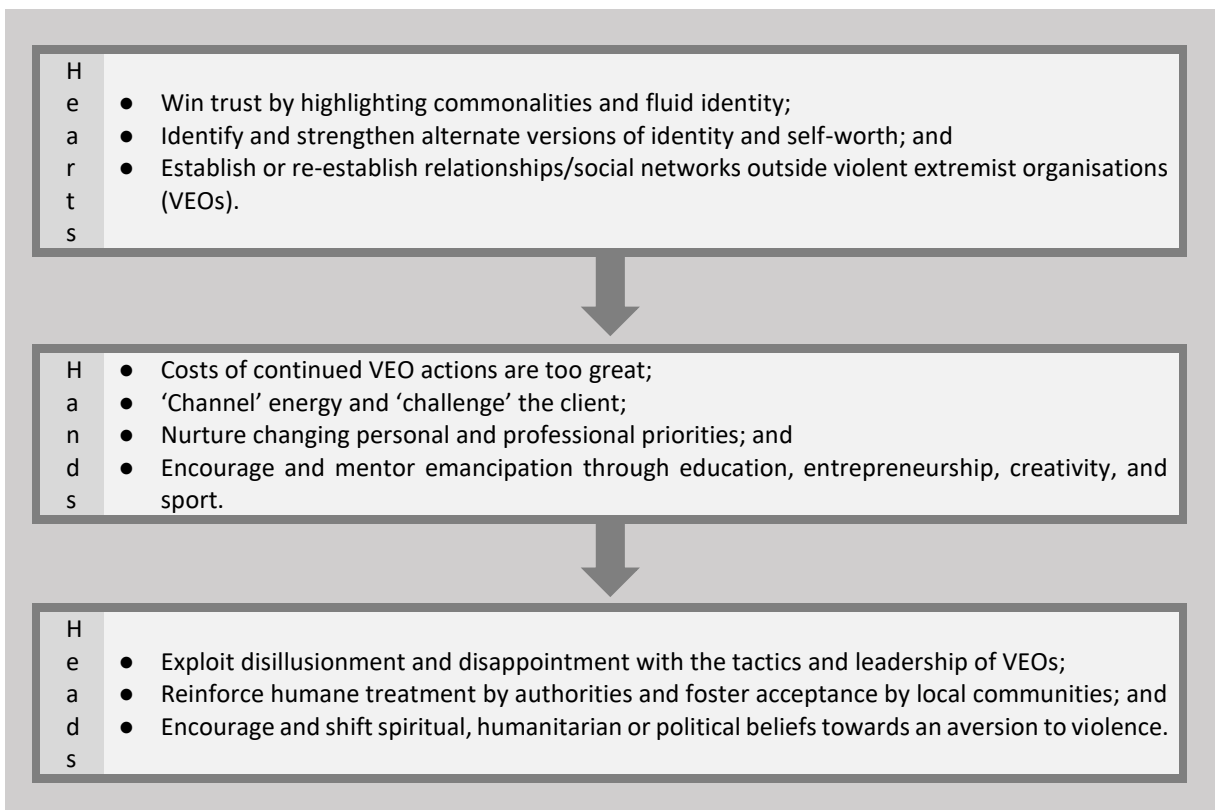
[36] Various statements in the media at the time. Specifics not mentioned for confidentiality purposes.

Politics, Law and Security, as of February 2020, the government had identified and located 228 citizens, with the whereabouts of another 461 unknown.[37] Since SP's attack, several more former combatants have been arrested in Indonesia, indicating that a clear strategy to disengage this group is urgently needed.

The Mentoring Project

The Indonesia mentoring project was based on the premise that developing a healthy relationship between extremist individuals with people outside of their usual radical networks was key to their disengagement. For this reason, family and community play an important role in assisting individuals wishing to leave extremist groups. The project developed a specific geographic and thematic infrastructure using a special methodology developed as a mentoring system. First, social activists in the targeted region were recruited as mentors. These mentors helped the project to approach at-risk individuals, establish regular communication, and assist them to disengage from their radical networks. The process of mentoring of former members of violent radical groups, or their families, took place from early 2019 to May 2020, when health restrictions implemented to manage the then global pandemic made the very personal work of the program untenable.

Diagram: The Hearts-Hands-Heads Methodology

Hearts	● Win trust by highlighting commonalities and fluid identity; ● Identify and strengthen alternate versions of identity and self-worth; and ● Establish or re-establish relationships/social networks outside violent extremist organisations (VEOs).

Hands	● Costs of continued VEO actions are too great; ● 'Channel' energy and 'challenge' the client; ● Nurture changing personal and professional priorities; and ● Encourage and mentor emancipation through education, entrepreneurship, creativity, and sport.

Heads	● Exploit disillusionment and disappointment with the tactics and leadership of VEOs; ● Reinforce humane treatment by authorities and foster acceptance by local communities; and ● Encourage and shift spiritual, humanitarian or political beliefs towards an aversion to violence.

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[37] Jennett 2020

The purpose of this mentoring was to assist clients to *disengage* from violent extremist organisation (VEO). Mentoring activities used a new methodology that the authors developed titled 'Hearts, Hands and Heads' (See Diagram). The methodology was based on existing earlier academic research on disengagement among Indonesian jihadists[38] as well as drawing on years of data and insights gathered by the authors through practical implementation.[39] The project gathered eight prominent individuals from Jakarta, East Java, and Central Sulawesi as mentors. The mentors came from various backgrounds and included a lecturer, a researcher, a writer, and a former convicted terrorist.

The mentor project carefully selected mentors based on two criteria. First, their experience in mentoring members of radical groups or at-risk individuals. Second, their knowledge of violent extremism. In order to maximise the impact of mentoring activities, the project equipped the mentors with tools such as security and safety guidance, mentoring modules, assessment forms, assignment letters, and networks of local civil society organisations (CSOs). During implementation, the project held two capacity building workshops in Jakarta as well as providing regular training and development by a project manager and a lead mentor in the project's locations.

The mentoring process aimed to provide supporting activities for the mentors to function optimally. These activities included technical mentoring, a case management system, multi-stakeholder network-building, and other private activities. On-site mentoring was implemented from mid-2019, conducted in a participatory and interactive manner through discussions, observations, and accompaniment with the mentors. All data arising from interactions was carefully recorded and validated.

Throughout the mentoring program, mentors accompanied a total of 18 clients (13 men and five women). The clients were convicted terrorists serving prison terms, convicted terrorists who had finished their prison terms, former members of radical groups, and individuals who had exhibited violent radical tendencies, such as intolerance to difference to the point of promoting acts of violence and becoming at risk of committing them. The mentors regularly visited each client in their living areas, which can be permanent residence or temporary residence (prison). The mentors also engaged related stakeholders in their activities, including the police, prison officers, academics, private businesses, local CSOs, and other stakeholders in a position to support the client to disengage completely from their violent extremist networks.

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[38] Hwang & Huda 2015; Huda 2021, 20023

[39] The specific approach and detailed methodology outlined in this paper was developed by Dr Noor Huda Ismail and Malcolm Brailey based on many years of joint experience and practical implementation of counter terrorism (CT), counter violent extremism (CVE) and reintegration programs in many countries, and also their very personalised life mentoring support to former terrorists in Indonesia. The 'Hearts, Hands and Heads' phrase was first used in the public domain by Noor Huda Ismail in an online article titled "Alternative Ways of Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia" in https://ari.nus.edu.sg/app-policybrief-noor-huda-ismail/ but was earlier developed and enunciated in many private engagements, in particular workshops and discussions with participants of the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Justice (AIPJ) program funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Confronting the Past

WD was 22 years old when he became one of the first generations from Indonesia to wage jihad by joining ISIS in Syria in June 2013. As with most young recruits, he did not seriously think through of his decision, but instead following the call of his fervour to combat injustice committed in the civil war in Syria. WD is a sensitive person, easily moved by humanitarian issues. He received incomplete or one-sided online information about the Ambon conflict and the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, all of which moved him towards taking action to defend his religion on behalf of Muslim brotherhood.

WD was born in Bangil, East Java, on 17 June 1991 as the fifth of six children. He was desperate to go to Syria after meeting Abu Jandal, an ISIS recruiter from Pasuruan living in Malang, East Java. The process was fast. Merely a week after the meeting, WD left for Syria in September 2013. Two weeks after arriving in Syria, WD and about nine other Indonesian citizens, led by Abu Jandal himself, were sent to a military camp. The fighters were armed and trained before being sent out to the battle front. In fact, WD was almost included in a group of 'bombing martyrs' or suicide bombers, but his mission was cancelled. Instead, he was transferred to the hospital to become an evacuation officer. While serving at the hospital, he witnessed children and civilians who were victims of the atrocities of the civil war, which severely traumatised him. Even today, WD still has trouble sleeping, haunted by what he saw.

Faced with this war-time situation, in early 2014, WD decided to return to Indonesia. Attempting to return to normal life, he married a woman from Indramayu, West Java, in 2015, but the next year, he was arrested by police Detachment 88. WD was convicted of being involved with ISIS and sentenced to five years in prison. While in prison, his extremist views did not initially change. WD initially refused to make a pledge of allegiance to the Republic of Indonesia; he claimed that his safety was threatened by several ISIS terrorist inmates.

However, WD then experienced a turning point. He found out that those who threatened him displayed morals and behaviour that were contrary to what they had preached. Realising this, he pledged his allegiance to the Republic of Indonesia and followed the in-prison deradicalisation program. WD received remission for good behaviour, his sentence reduced to three years and nine months, and was released on 2 October 2019.

Moving Forward

Before joining a community of ISIS supporters, SM (37), was a member of Indonesia's largest moderate Islamic organisation, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in East Java. As a young man, SM was actively involved in NU, but he felt he was being constantly confronted by a 'glass ceiling' because he doesn't come from 'blue blood' NU family: "NU is very hierarchical organisation. If you don't have any familial links to religious institutions like the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school in Indonesia), don't ever expect that you can have leadership role in the organisation." After graduating from high school, SM began studying law at a local university in 2000. To channel his passion for Islamic activism while studying, he joined the Islamic University Student Association. Through the organisation, SM was

quickly promoted to the leader of the Association. This activism gave him a sense of meaning: "I felt useful and respected in this organisation because I can channel my passion for political Islam."

After graduating from university in 2004, a friend asked SM to attend an Islamic sermon at a local mosque by a then-senior leader in Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI or the Indonesian Mujahidin Council, a jihadi organisation led by radical cleric Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, the spiritual leader of Jemaah Islamayiah). The sermon effected SM tremendously: "In that sermon, the *ustad* explained about the need for Muslims to embrace the teaching of Tauhid, the Oneness of God and the Laws of Allah; Iman – faith- and the meaning of jihad which is to fight in the defence of Islam. I was familiar with those religious terms but he came up with a very different interpretation that inspired me." When there was a split within MMI, Ba'syir left the organisation and established a new jihadi group, Jamaat Ansharut Tauhid (JAT). SM followed him.

In the new organisation, SM began arguing with other members of JAT on the use of violence. SM argued that the enforcement of Islamic law must be carried out with the support from the public through healthy discussion and dialogue: "But every time I proposed my concept, they disagreed because they only wanted to use force." As a result, SM was excluded from JAT leadership opportunities. SM sympathised with JAT's goals and regularly participated in religious study but was judged by other members for his choice of clothing (jeans and shirts), which more closely resembled a campus activist than the untarnished whites of a committed jihadi. His failure to adopt appropriate gendered behaviour (clothing, admiration for violence, etc.) led to him being branded a 'half-hearted' brother by other JAT sympathisers and cadres. Finally, SM left JAT because he did not see any 'concrete action' by JAT to respond to Muslim issues.

After leaving JAT, SM met with Ali, another former JAT member in Malang. Ali informed him that he had begun attending an Islamic study group run by an ISIS recruiter. After listening to Ali talk about helping the oppressed Muslims in Syria, SM became interested in joining his group. At the end of January 2014, Ali came to SM's house and asked for funding to leave for Syria. SM provided the money and they headed to the house of an ISIS recruiter. Upon arriving, the recruiter asked SM, "Why don't you come as well? This is a humanitarian mission. We must help our oppressed brothers and sisters. Moreover, you will get paid and always can come back home once the mission has been accomplished." Though SM hadn't expected to be given such an offer, he was, in his own words, "very intrigued to go, especially when the recruiter said that this is a humanitarian mission and I can always come back." This appealed to SM and he agreed to join them. Within two months, SM left for Syria (via Malaysia and Turkey) together with Ali, the recruiters, and a group of other recruits. Once SM arrived at the ISIS camp in Tal Abyad, Syria, he quickly realised that the recruiter had lied to him about the nature of their 'humanitarian mission': "I did not know that I had to join a military training in the camp. I had to learn how to use an AK-47 and throw grenades by those ISIS' Arab military trainers. I also did not feel comfortable to see the brutality of the group. They killed anyone who opposed them."

Although SM agrees with the idea of defending the oppressed, he was disillusioned by their lies and use of 'un-Islamic behaviours' such as beheadings. More importantly, he

also felt guilty for lying to his parents and wife regarding his departure to Syria: he had deceived them by saying he would not be part of the conflict. Recalling this brought him to tears during the interview with the authors. After six months, SM decided to travel back to Indonesia: "It wasn't easy to get my passport back. I told them that I will bring my family to Syria to support the caliphate project by saying that the caliphate needed more citizens to sustain its longevity. Finally, they let me go home. I was very fortunate." A few months after returning to Indonesia, he was shocked when a video of the man who recruited him was circulated on social media, challenging the Indonesian armed forces and police. This worried SM and he became concerned that security forces might begin hunting for anyone who had left for Syria. His prediction came true, when several of his friends who had been to Syria were arrested by the police. After a short period of hiding, SM returned home but was arrested in June 2017.

SM's experience in Syria seriously challenged his utopian vision of the network. While SM had never planned to be a foreign fighter, his experiences in military training and the violence that followed shocked him. While serving his three year prison term, SM began to challenge the claims that the ISIS was a glorious legitimate caliphate and told prisoners about what he had experienced. Following his release from prison, SM needed time for adaptation back to normal life, work, his family household, local community, and Indonesian society.

The Mentor

It was at this crucial time that SM and WD met 36-year old ABS, a reformed convicted terrorist who worked with the P/CVE NGO, Kreasi Prasasti Perdamaian (KPP), as one of its mentors. Although not a fighter returned from Syria, ABS has an extensive track record of terrorist activity. ABS used to send people to train with ISIS in Syria, was a major fundraiser for terrorist activities, and had purchased weapons and worked as a bomb-making instructor. Therefore, ABS is seen as a 'credible voice' needed for reaching out to terrorist convicts.

ABS first became acquainted with the term jihad in 1995 when he studied at the Tenggulun Al Islam Islamic Boarding School, Lamongan, East Java. The school is owned by the family of Amrozi, the mastermind behind the 2002 Bali Bombings. After graduating, ABS still regularly attended the school's discussion groups. Gradually, he began to identify himself on the internet as a terrorist. He accessed teachings and information related to ISIS through mailing lists, mIRC, and a special website for jihadist forums. Armed with this online knowledge, ABS entered the world of radicalism, which helps connect would-be jihadists with ISIS. He provided shelter for those who were leaving for Aceh or Afghanistan and was a tutor for those who want to learn how to make bombs.

In 2014, ABS was arrested for helping to provide weapons in planning an attack operation in Poso, Central Sulawesi. He was sentenced to four years and 10 months in prison. During his imprisonment at the LP Salemba Class II A Correctional Institution, Central Jakarta, ABS was confronted with the fact that his actions were not supported by many people. His desire to gain solidarity and become a hero did not appear to have been successful. As a result, he slowly began to open up and make friends with other prisoners. ABS was released early in October 2017 after receiving a remission for good behaviour.

After a long process, ABS was later recruited to become a mentor in the KPP mentoring project.

The 'Hearts, Hands and Heads' Methodology in Practice

Among those assigned to ABS's care was SM, who had just been released from prison after serving his sentence, and WD, who was still in prison at the time. During mentoring, ABS initially implemented the first principle of the mentoring method mentioned earlier, the 'heart' principle, which involves winning the trust of the client. To do so, he introduced himself as a former convicted terrorist who managed to start a new life. More relevant than comparing SM's and WD's ideologies was to ensure that the two knew that ABS *understood* how they felt and demonstrated genuine empathy. This way, ABS could earn their trust, based on a similar life trajectory as former convicted terrorist.

It is difficult to measure the results of the mentoring project. One can argue that SM's and WD's deradicalisation may have already begun while they were in prison *before* they were introduced to the project, in which case the project aimed to sustain and expand this deradicalisation process after their release. It is important to note that facing the realities of the rejection of extremist views by their host-communities significantly helped to push both SM and WD to reconsider their ideological beliefs. They gradually realised the importance of peace by re-examining the concept of jihad, which, in the interpretations they had previously absorbed, they considered synonymous with war. They came to understand that jihad has many forms, including acts of charity such as helping the poor and orphaned children.

Unlike SM, ABS had been mentoring WD since the latter was still in prison. ABS became a confidante to WD, so much so that WD regularly shared his experiences in attempting to leave the extremist network. ABS strengthened WD's resolve by emphasizing the importance of maintaining close ties with his family, especially his parents. ABS also connected WD with other convicted terrorists who were also in the process of reform, which gave him an alternative social network, an important step after prison release.

Following his clients' release from prison, ABS embarked on the second step of the mentoring process, which involves the 'hands' principle, or building the client's social skills and introducing new social networks. In this context, ABS encouraged SM to develop his business aspirations through making and selling candies and snacks. Due to this relationship, SM has been actively invited to tell his story on preventing extremism through media opportunities. SM also strengthened his business through the public launching of his products, assisted by local officials. The launch event was attended by government employees as well as local business leaders. Similar to SM, WD began helping to market food products made by an orphanage in Malang.

ABS also assisted SM and WD to restore their reputations in their communities by introducing them to local police and involving them in joint assistance activities. This opened up opportunities for SM and WD to become acquainted with community leaders, find new social networks, and even gain platforms to channel their interest in public speaking. SM's commitment to the project came through a desire for public recognition (which he didn't find in NU) and the desire to do good (through humanitarian work). WD also benefited; he was able to pursue new activities as a photographer and videographer

at the Malang City Trade and Cooperative Office, enabling him to gradually move on to build a new life.

Finally, knowing that SM and WD had established new social networks beyond violent extremist circles, they required practical skills and changed mindsets to truly become positive family and community members. ABS embarked on the last principle of the mentoring process, the 'heads' principle, which involves revisiting their old ideology. In this regard, ABS asked SM to participate in social activities, such as P/CVE discussions with university campuses, local CSOs, and village organisations. Through this public engagement, ABS encouraged SM and provided him the opportunities to become a guest speaker at various P/CVE activities, including with the national counter terrorism agency.

Meanwhile, with WD, ABS continued to engage him in occasional ideological discussions in order to both monitor WD's progression and keep him from straying back into his old radical mindset. The effort seems to have been successful. Bitter from being threatened by his old radical network, WD came to regularly criticise various Islamist groups that he called "too extreme" in various discussion forums. As a Muslim, it had truly shocked him that, despite his experience in Syria, he was still denounced as a *kafir* (non-believer) by fellow jihadis.

WD is now following a different path of *jihad,* one which focuses more on humanitarianism. He dreams that one day he can establish his own foundation to help orphaned children, because his experience in Syria has shown to him that orphans are the most vulnerable victims of war and violence.

Conclusion

Some might argue that 'radical' or extremist ideas (usually religious in nature) alone do not constitute a problem for society from a security point of view. Therefore, terrorism prevention – be it deradicalisation or disengagement – should focus only on actions that combine radical ideas with the specific commission of or planning for acts of violence. Policymakers and politicians tend to favour traditional deradicalization programs, since no margin of error is allowed in the public domain of national security, and the phenomenon of terrorism far outweighs the level of risk-acceptance. However, as this paper and research has shown, disengagement is in fact more likely to be successful in tandem with deradicalisation.

Changing someone's attitudes – which is what deradicalisation efforts really aim to do – is more difficult to achieve up-front and by itself. True deradicalisation requires a sincere change in mindset and worldview. Disengagement can help achieve this through behavioural change and genuine (observable and measurable) social impact. Disengagement may not guarantee success in the long run, as particularly stressful events over the course of one's life might rekindle one's harboured violent attitudes. However, the authors argue it is an important prerequisite and precursor to a genuine deradicalisation process.

We acknowledge there are limitations to the social disengagement process, mainly that it requires close, personal and continuous engagement, thus possibly making it expensive and impractical to apply the method on a larger scale. Full government support is the only way this method could be applied en masse. The method may also require

adjustment to deal with returnees who are not disillusioned with their experiences and remain fully committed to their violent ideologies.

There are several key points to highlight from the social disengagement activities presented in this paper. First, if neither deradicalisation or disengagement are conducted, any radical or extremist person is a potential terrorist waiting to be activated by the right trigger. It took SP four years between returning to Indonesia and launching his attack on police.[40] In other words, there was plenty of time for anyone to reach out and disengage him. He also demonstrated that a successful terrorist attack does not necessarily require firearms or explosives, but merely good planning, targeting, and, most importantly, the will to act. Disengagement activities are therefore crucial to buy time before proper deradicalisation is in place. Without it, any radical, ex-terrorist, ex-terrorist convict, and even their family members, is at a higher risk of engaging in ideological violence.

Second, in the view of the authors, ideological intervention should be the last step in the process. The Hearts, Hands and Heads method was designed to be used sequentially for good reason: without first securing an emotional bond, any other activities, including in the ideological sphere, are vulnerable to acts of bad faith and absence of sincerity. There are also risks associated with the absence of genuine emotional commitment to change. For instance, other activities, especially economic ones, may be used to support violent extremist activities. With genuine commitment, sometimes the ideological change may happen spontaneously by itself without any further intervention necessary. The method accepts that the processes of disengagement and deradicalisation may therefore happen simultaneously. The case of WD is a good example, as he was once a true believer in the ISIS ideology, which changed as he witnessed first-hand the impact of a *jihadi* war on the innocent. The mentoring process took advantage of these emotions to re-focus WD's religious zeal. While he may still hold some radical ideals, violence is no longer part of his future plans.

Third, the role of family and alternative networks is crucial to both disengagement and deradicalisation activities. In-prison deradicalisation activities are often made difficult because the networks there are limited and unhelpful in moderating individual ideology. If anything, the networks within prisons most likely make things worse, which is why the Indonesian government is still implementing the 'one-man-one-cell' policy for convicted terrorists, which is designed to isolate terrorist prisoners and prevent them from forming groups that may help strengthen terrorist sentiment. Disengagement, especially post-prison release, has the advantage that it can tap into a wider range of network options, which do not necessarily have to be ideological. A formerly convicted terrorist can form new relationships with business, artistic, sporting or academic communities, or any other network that does not focus on politics and religion. For example, ABS helped to reconnect SM and WD with their families and local communities, as well as introducing them to alternative networks to help build their private businesses. More engagement with family and alternative networks means more personal investment in staying disengaged. Once the disengagement process is solidly underway, then the former convict can safely participate in the more serious deradicalization process, with far less risk of relapse. In fact,

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[40] SP escaped the net of returnee arrests by the police's Detachment 88 counter-terrorism unit because he had no prior record and was one of the early returnees.

both ABS and SM have often been asked by law enforcement authorities to talk about their reform experiences as part of the more formalized deradicalization process of other terrorist prisoners.

In Indonesia, the threat of terrorism persists in many manifestations, including from foreign fighter returnees. Not all of those who returned from Syria automatically become domestic recruiters or fighters. Many – like SM and WD – were disillusioned by what they saw in Syria and may potentially reconsider their ideological choices. Disengagement should prioritise targeting this at-risk group. Not only because they can relapse into their old terrorist activities, but also because they can spread their cause and recruit more effectively than those that has never been to Syria or other conflict zones. With the proper implementation, disengagement can help to prevent terrorism in Indonesia from turning into a vicious cycle.

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