

## ICSR Paper Identifies Key Factors for Effective De-Radicalisation Programmes

ICSR's latest paper – 'De-Radicalising Islamists: Programmes and Their Impact in Muslim Majority States' – identifies key factors that make de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation programmes more effective.

Written by Professor Hamed El Said, it examines the approaches of eight Muslim-majority states that have developed 'soft' strategies to counter and prevent jihadist radicalisation.

The study has found that the factors which contribute to the effectiveness of such programmes include:

- **National consensus** – Lack of popular and political support has denied Jordanian de-radicalisation efforts the social underpinning that contributes to their relative success in Saudi Arabia. In Yemen, initial support for de-radicalisation has ebbed away, while in Algeria it has remained relatively strong.
- **Committed national leadership** – Enthusiastic leadership by national governments can provide 'soft' counterterrorism policies with impetus; inject them with confidence; build trust in their purpose; and – in doing so – create and maintain the needed national consensus.
- **Civil society** – The engagement of civil society can provide new ideas and reinforce the state's actions by empowering local communities and associations, especially those that are vulnerable and hard to reach for the government.
- **Non-religious programming** – Religious dialogue alone will not eliminate violent extremism. Programmes must not ignore the social, economic and political factors that contribute to radicalisation and consider them in their mix of programming.
- **Cultural awareness** – De-radicalisation programmes must be consistent with, and derive from, each country's mores, culture, rules and regulations, and take account of what is acceptable and not acceptable in their societies.

El Said shows that each programme has different approaches and objectives – often depending on the nature of a particular society and the terrorist threat with which it has been faced:

- Countries like Morocco and Bangladesh, for example, have focused on countering and preventing further radicalisation, whereas Saudi-Arabia and Yemen have emphasised rehabilitating and counselling those who have become radicalised.
- Saudi Arabia has developed well-structured official programmes, while many others, including Jordan, have relied on individual and civil society based initiatives.
- Some countries, such as Egypt and Algeria, have gone through processes of collective de-radicalisation (whereby an entire group denounces violence), whereas others deal with individuals on a case by case basis.

This diversity in approaches, El Said argues, is one of the various programmes' greatest sources of strength. However, this also makes it difficult to measure success and produce valid comparisons. One size, he concludes, does not fit all.

The research for this paper was made possible through funding by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was also facilitated by, and coordinated with, the United Nations al-Qaeda/Taliban Monitoring Team.

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Related ICSR publications:

Peter Neumann, 'Prisons and Terrorism: Radicalisation and De-radicalisation in 15 Countries' (London and College Park: ICSR and START, 2010). To download, [click here](#).

Omar Ashour, 'Votes and Violence: Islamists and the Processes of Transformation', ICSR Developments in Radicalisation and Political Violence, November 2009. To download, [click here](#).

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