

Providing Support On-Time: Need to Establish De-Radicalization Hotlines

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Abstract : Peacekeeping is a collective responsibility of governments, law enforcement agencies, communities, families, and individuals. Moreover, the complex nature of peacekeeping activities requires a holistic and collaborative approach where various community sectors work together to form collective strategies that are likely to be more effective than strategies designed and delivered in isolation. Similarly, it is important to learn from past programs to evaluate the initiatives that have worked well and the areas that need further improvement. Review of recent peacekeeping initiatives suggests that there have been tremendous efforts and resources put in place to deal with the emerging threat of terrorism, radicalization and violent extremism through number of de-radicalization programs. Despite various attempts in designing and delivering successful programs for deradicalization, the threat of people being radicalized is growing more than ever before. This research reviews the prominent de-radicalization programs to draw an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Some of the weaknesses in the existing programs include. Inaccessibility: Limited resources, geographical location of potential participants (for offline programs), inaccessibility or inability to use various technologies (for online programs) makes it difficult for people to participate in de-radicalization programs. Timeliness: People might need to wait for a program on a set date/time to get the required information and to get their questions answered. This is particularly true for offline programs. Lack of trust: The privacy issues and lack of trust between participants and program organizers are another hurdle in the success of de-radicalization programs. The fear of sharing participants information with organizations (such as law enforcement agencies) without their consent led them not to participate in these programs. Generalizability: Majority of these programs are very generic in nature and do not cater the specific needs of an individual. Participants in these programs may feel that the contents are irrelevant to their individual situations and hence feel disconnected with purpose of the programs. To address the above-mentioned weaknesses, this research developed a framework that recommends some improvements in de-radicalization programs. One of the recommendations is to offer 24/7, secure, private and online hotline (also referred as helpline) for the people who have any question, concern or situation to discuss with someone who is qualified (a counsellor) to deal with people who are vulnerable to be radicalized. To make these hotline services viable and sustainable, the existing organizations offering support for depression, anxiety or suicidal ideation could additionally host these services. These helplines should be available via phone, the internet, social media and in-person. Since these services will be embedded within existing and well-known services, they would likely to get more visibility and promotion. The anonymous and secure conversation between a person and a counsellor would ensure that a person can discuss the issues without being afraid of information sharing with any third party - without his/her consent. The next stage of this project would include the operationalization of the framework by collaborating with other organizations to host de-radicalization hotlines and would assess the effectiveness of such initiatives.

Keywords : de-radicalization, framework, hotlines, peacekeeping

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