WESTERN MODELS OF DERADICALIZATION

This chapter reviews five case studies that recur as the principal historical examples of deradicalization processes in the modern era: Germany, Japan, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Bosnia. These cases—and the lessons derived from them—have underpinned many of the proposals advanced for the "day after" in the Gaza Strip, formulated in the period immediately following October 7. In all of these cases, deradicalization processes were constructed around externally driven ideological change led by outside actors (the occupying powers) and included extensive institutional reform and security stabilization. Collectively, these cases exemplify a Western model of deradicalization, in the sense that the states that designed and implemented them were Western (most notably the United States).

GERMANY: COLLAPSE AND REPROGRAMMING OF POLITICAL CULTURE[2]

Period: Post–World War II (1945–1950s)

Context: Germany's unconditional surrender created an opportunity for a comprehensive "reprogramming" of both society and the state. The Nazi regime was dismantled, and the Allied occupation enabled external control over the reconstruction of Germany's political and ideological systems.

Key Processes:

- **Education:** Teachers identified with the Nazi regime were removed, and tens of thousands were rapidly trained in pedagogy aligned with democratic norms. As early as 1945, thousands of new teachers were trained to fill the gaps left by the denazification process. Curricula emphasized civic

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2   Germany's test-case is based on: Orbach et al. (2024), Armelin (2024), GHDI (1945), Kater (1987), Koehler (2017), Taylor (2011).

responsibility, historical reckoning, and critical thinking, including Holocaust education and the rejection of racial ideology.

- **Media:** A supervised media system was established to replace Nazi propaganda. Press and radio licenses were granted to individuals not identified with the Nazi regime, and content was oriented toward fostering democratic discourse, freedom of expression, and tolerance—helping pave the way for postwar demilitarization.

- **Judicial and administrative system:** Senior Nazi officials were prosecuted at Nuremberg, while at lower levels portions of the civil service were selectively retained to preserve administrative functionality. Courts and government ministries were restaffed under Allied supervision, and the legal framework was reshaped to align with new democratic norms.

- **Economic reconstruction:** The Marshall Plan made it possible to stabilize basic public services and rebuild institutions, thereby mitigating the social conditions that had previously fuelled extremism. Economic recovery, in turn, strengthened the legitimacy of the reconstituted state.

JAPAN: INSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITY ALONGSIDE IDEOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION[3]

Period: 1945–1952

Context: As in the German case, Japan's surrender was unconditional. Unlike Germany, however, the core governing structure—the imperial institution—was preserved. This symbolic continuity was leveraged by the occupying authorities, under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur, as a catalyst for far-reaching ideological and institutional reform.

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3   Japan's test-case is based on: Orbach et al. (2024), Sumimoto (2000), Truman (1945), Thomas (2014), Breen & Teeuwen (2010).

Key processes:

- **Constitutional reform:** A new constitution (1947) enshrined principles of pacifism (Article 9), civil liberties, and parliamentary governance, and redefined the emperor's powers so as to render the position purely symbolic. At the same time, the preservation of the imperial institution helped Japanese society accept these changes.

- **Religious reform:** The new constitution declared freedom of religion and abolished State Shinto as the official religion, thereby helping to dismantle the fusion between religion and the state.

- **Demilitarization and civic education:** Militarist content was removed from school curricula, former military personnel were barred from teaching positions, and civics education programs were rewritten in line with democratic norms.

- **Judicial and governance systems:** Japanese institutions—ministries, courts, and the civil service—were structurally preserved and operated under the authority of the occupation administration. This approach maintained state functionality, which was gradually "realigned" with the new constitutional order.

IRAQ: EXCLUSION AND BACKLASH[4]

Period: Post-2003

Context: Following the US-led invasion, the coalition dismantled the Ba'athist regime without establishing a transitional framework capable of preserving institutional continuity or conferring legitimacy on the changes. The de-Ba'athification process removed tens of thousands of civil servants and military personnel, creating a profound governance vacuum.

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4   Iraq's test-case is based on: Orbach et al. (2024), Armelin (2024), DAI (n.d), Glazzard (2023).

Key processes:

- **Public administration and security:** The Iraqi army was dissolved, and state institutions were purged of Ba'ath Party members without professional vetting or rehabilitation. This created a severe security vacuum, intensified sectarian polarization, and facilitated the rise of militias.

- **Governance reform:** Late and poorly coordinated decentralization efforts left local authorities weak and produced a central government perceived as sectarian and ineffective. Corruption and ambiguous authorities undermined basic service provision and eroded public trust.

- **Religious and sectarian institutions:** Intensifying polarization and the absence of a moderate religious authority created fertile ground for the penetration of extremist narratives, including transnational global jihadist ideologies.

- **Education and civil society:** Efforts at civic education were fragmented and limited; there was no nationwide curricular reform comparable to those implemented in Germany and Japan. Civil society organizations operated unevenly and lacked the capacity to bridge the crisis of legitimacy.

AFGHANISTAN: FRAGMENTATION WITHOUT TRANSFORMATION[5]

Period: Post-2001

Context: Following the overthrow of the Taliban, a broad state-building effort was launched and components of DDR were implemented, but no comprehensive deradicalization strategy was introduced. These processes also failed due to Afghanistan's complex and internally divided tribal structure and the lack of legitimacy of the US-backed government.

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5   Afghanistan's test-case is based on: Orbach et al. (2024), Auld (2015), Sahar & Kaunert (2022).

Key processes:

- **DDR:** Financial incentives were offered to encourage fighters to disengage from militant frameworks, but without tools for ideological change or long-term pathways for integration into normative civilian life.

- **Education:** Most madrasas operated outside effective oversight; state schools suffered from shortages of teachers and pedagogical guidance; and religious content continued to reflect problematic ideological orientations.

- **Religious institutions**: The state exercised limited control over mosque networks and the appointment of imams, while conservative Islamist organizations expanded their influence on campuses and within society.

- **Governance and justice**: Corruption and state weakness enhanced the legitimacy of Taliban non-state courts, which were perceived as more accessible and fair than formal state institutions.

- **Civil society and media:** NGOs and media outlets promoting new norms operated primarily in urban centers. In rural areas, non-state actors filled the vacuum, provided services, and shaped local identities largely beyond the reach of the state.

BOSNIA: PRESERVATION OF EXISTING NARRATIVES AND ETHNIC SEGREGATION[6]

Period: Since the Dayton Accords (1995 onward)

Context: The Accords brought an end to the war but institutionalized deep ethnic division through territorial and group-based power-sharing mechanisms.

Key processes:

- **Institutional design:** Under the supervision of the Office of the High Representative and the European Union, a new institutional infrastructure

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6   Bosnia's test-case is based on: Armelin (2024), Belloni (2001) Jeremic & Jayasundara-Smits (2022), Kappler & Richmond (2011), OSCE (2009), Simović & Adžajlić-Dedović (2023).

was established (a rotating presidency, a central bank, and a constitutional court). However, power-sharing mechanisms preserved entrenched elites and limited intercommunal integration.

- **Education**: Schools remained segregated; divergent curricula embedded competing historical narratives; and integration initiatives were largely donor-funded and fragmented.

- **Justice and governance**: Formal reforms were widely perceived as externally imposed, and public trust in them remained low.

- **Civil society and culture**: Civil society organizations largely operated within the same ethno-sectarian frameworks that structured formal politics. Initiatives such as testimony-telling and truth-sharing projects achieved only limited success in bridging societal divides.

THE WESTERN MODEL AS INSPIRATION FOR DERADICALIZATION INITIATIVES IN THE GAZA STRIP

In the aftermath of October 7, a number of proposals and initiatives for the deradicalization of Palestinian society were published (by INSS, FDD, JINSA, Mitvim, Dayan center, among others). These proposals draw directly on the Western case studies discussed above, and they share many similarities with respect to their core operational principles:

- **The dismantling of Hamas's governing authority, the disarmament of Hamas and other terrorist organizations, and the demilitarization of the Strip** are intended to demonstrate the failure of the violent option and to create the conditions necessary for the emergence of a governing and ideological alternative to Hamas.

- At the same time, these proposals emphasize **maintaining administrative continuity** through a temporary Palestinian technocratic administration operating under the supervision and assistance of external actors other than the United Nations, including, of course, Israel.

- Emphasis on **structural reforms within systems of governance**, with particular emphasis on the education, media, and judicial sectors.
- Simultaneous investment in the **training and development of local leadership**, oriented toward norms and values of political moderation.
- **Articulation of a positive political horizon** as an essential national-level incentive for political and societal rehabilitation. The various initiatives diverge regarding the envisioned end state of this political horizon, ranging from proposals advocating the establishment of a Palestinian state "at the end of the road" to those favoring more limited forms of sovereignty ("autonomy") on security grounds.
- Rapid action, based on the assumption that the window of opportunity for meaningful change is narrow.
- However at the same time, making civilian reconstruction and the transfer of authority to local governance structures contingent upon meeting de-radicalization benchmarks and indicators, rather than predetermined timelines.

LIMITS OF THE WESTERN MODEL

The Western model serves as a source of inspiration—and in some cases a foundational reference—for various deradicalization initiatives proposed for the Gaza Strip, for several reasons: the availability and accessibility of information about it; its historical successes (most notably in Germany and Japan, and to a more limited extent in Bosnia); normative affinity with the values underpinning it (legal frameworks, structural reforms, and democratic norms); and the systematic manner in which it has been implemented (through structured work plans and measurable benchmarks).

However, the cases of success occurred in states with political and cultural backgrounds markedly different from that of the Gaza Strip. Germany had a prior democratic tradition, and both Germany and Japan possessed strong

state institutions that could be "repaired" rather than built from scratch. In these cases, extremist ideology could be replaced without negating national identity—unlike the Palestinian case, in which national identity is deeply intertwined with the ethos of struggle and resistance against Israel.

It is also important to note that the two Muslim-majority case studies examined reflect failures of deradicalization processes. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, alienation toward a non-Muslim occupying power, deeply rooted religious ethoses, and strong local identities competed with the narrative underpinning deradicalization efforts.

BEYOND THE WESTERN MODEL

In these respects, the Gaza Strip more closely resembles Iraq and Afghanistan (the unsuccessful cases) than Germany and Japan, the successful ones. Gaza lacks a legacy of modern democratic institutions that can be restored, and like Iraq and Afghanistan it is embedded in a Middle Eastern Muslim cultural context characterized by deep suspicion toward external intervention. At the same time, Gaza does not suffer from the tribal and ethnic rivalries present in those two cases, which further complicated efforts to promote moderation and deradicalization.

This assessment points to the need for a different paradigm, one that relies on Arab–Muslim intermediaries perceived as credible, the construction of governance mechanisms deeply embedded in the local cultural context, and ideological reform anchored in Islam itself. The next chapter therefore examines deradicalization models implemented by various regimes across the Arab world, which leverage religious authority and mechanisms of social control—approaches that offer potentially relevant directions for application to the Gazan context.