CHAPTER 15

Homeland Security and the Inmate Population: The Risk and Reality of Islamic Radicalization in Prison

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Since 9/11, commentators and policy makers have expressed alarm about an emerging threat within the prison systems of the West—a threat of terrorist attacks carried out by radicalized inmates released into society. Prisons are said to be a "fertile ground for extremists" (Mueller, 2006), to offer a dangerous "intermingling" of terrorist networks and criminals (Cuthbertson, 2004, p. 15), to constitute part of an "international network of subversion, conversion, and recruitment. (Kushner, 2004, p. 41)

These concerns reflect a fear that prison inmates are particularly vulnerable to *radicalization*, a process through which individuals are exposed to, and ultimately adopt, a violent ideology justifying attacks against the state (Brown, 2009). Of course, many kinds of extremists can be found in the prison system—White supremacists, animal rights liberationists, and anarchists, to name a few. But the central concern, at least for many commentators, has been the threat of Islamic radicalization.

This may be understandable. For many, the dangers posed by Islamic terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and its associates seem far greater than any other extremist ideology. Islam is widely seen as having a particular appeal to inmates, confirmed by seemingly high rates of conversion, and thus giving Islamic radicals an entry to this literally captive audience. Radicalized prisoners, moreover, are seen as particularly dangerous agent of terror. Rupp (2006) writes, as citizens or long-term residents of the state, these individuals are intimately familiar with Western culture and

can easily blend into the fabric of society. The fear, as one paper put it, is of "an Islamic fifth column" (p. 9).

If these fears are understandable, the public clamor over the threat of radicalization also raises its own set of concerns. This is a subject, after all, where the danger of stereotyping and overreaction seems especially high. Indeed, prison radicalization raises a host of sinister specters that play into the public's deepest and most terrifying fears.

The threat of terrorism, of course, continues to pervade the consciousness of the West's populace. But in this context, that fear is married to several others. There is the fear of prisons, which are often perceived, in the United States at least, as nearly ungoverned places of criminality (Clarke & Soria, 2010). There is the fear of gangs, which are seen as coercing individuals into illicit conspiracies. And there is a fear of Muslims, who continue to be viewed, at least by certain segments of the populace, as foreign, potentially dangerous, and not entirely trustworthy.

The issue of prison radicalization thus brings together this multiplicity of perceived threats—terrorists, prisons, gangs, and Muslim extremists—to form a mixture that can easily overflow into unthinking hysteria. Overreaction is particularly problematic in this context because efforts to monitor, disrupt, or control the conduct of Muslim inmates may implicate and perhaps trespass religious freedoms. In that way, hysteric and stigmatizing reactions can fuel radicalization among prisoners and their followers, contributing to the threat rather than managing it. In this combustible situation, it becomes particularly important to examine dispassionately the objective evidence about the risk of prison radicalization, in order to ensure that restrictions placed on Muslim prisoners are carefully justified.

This chapter makes a first step in that endeavor, exploring what we know about the risk of Islamic radicalization in prison and the kinds of policies that have been implemented to respond to that risk. Although the principal focus of this study is the United States, the approaches of several European nations—the U.K., France, Spain, and the Netherlands—are considered where relevant.

Our conclusion is a largely negative one: We know very little about the degree of risk posed by radicalization in the prison system. Much of the talk about the risk of radicalization is simply talk, unsupported by research or evidence. Indeed, the truly remarkable thing is how little is known about even the most basic details of the issue such as the number of Muslims in the prison system or their demographics. This is certainly not to suggest that the danger of Islamic radicalization in prison is nonexistent. It simply means we don't *know* if the risk is significant. It also means that the current claims that prison radicalization has reached a crisis stage are grossly premature and, at this point, mere speculation.

A similar conclusion can be made about the current policy response of governments to the perceived risk. Commentators have listed a range of options for responding to the threat of radicalization, including increased screening of Muslim chaplains in prison, restrictions on religious literature available to inmates, and the segregation of radicalized offenders. Although some of these changes may seem commonsensical, and all appear well-intentioned, there remains a significant lack of careful thinking about the rationales for many widely shared prescriptions. Just

as troubling, some worry that no attempt has been made to coordinate the policy prescriptions, resulting in unintended, and in certain cases counter-productive, consequences.

Our ultimate conclusion is that a broad-based commitment is needed on the part of Western governments to gather evidence about the real risks of radicalization in prison and to formulate a coordinated response after that evidence has been gathered. This will require a national commitment on the part of the United States in particular, which has lagged behind Britain and other nations in collecting this kind of information. In light of the powerful emotions that are provoked by the fear of prison radicalization, the failure to move ahead with that kind of research effort will mean that policy will inevitably be carried along not by reason, but by the political passions inevitably at play.

To avoid misunderstanding about the scope of this analysis, three caveats must be mentioned before starting.

First, the focus of this chapter is the risk of radicalization among *Muslim* inmates. This focus does not deny that other individuals might also be at risk of radicalization. Indeed, some commentators suggested that other groups such as white supremacists pose a greater risk to the United States at least. Our analysis focuses on Islamic radicalization primarily because that has been the central concern of commentators and the public in recent years, and also because this topic raises difficult and unique issues regarding religious freedom and its possible connection with the broader fight against international terrorism. We recognize that simply by selecting Muslim radicalization as our topic, the analysis could be misinterpreted as implying that a heightened and special risk flows from this group of inmates. We hope that the substance of this chapter makes clear that we do not assert such a claim, and that we remain entirely agnostic as to the relative dangers of different inmate groups.

Second, throughout the chapter, we use the term *Islamic radicalization* to refer to extremists of Islamic orientation having a violent ideology oriented against the state. This term, however, should not be taken to mean that a single ideology is behind the radicalization of Muslim inmates. Rather, as others have pointed out (Hamm, 2007, p. 20), the forms of Islam in prison are manifold, including traditional forms of Sunni and Shia religious doctrine, as well as forms of Islam that are unique to prison (such as the so-called "prIslam"). Some of these variants are more traditional, structured, and formalized; others are contemporary, informal, and unstructured. We use the term *Islamic radicalization* simply as a convenient phrase to refer to any form of Islam that adopts the kinds of ideology that might justify violence against the sovereign nation.

Third, and finally, this chapter focuses principally on the risk of radicalization among ordinary inmates in prison. Excluded from this category are the groups of prisoners that have been convicted of terrorist offenses and are currently being held in military or civilian prisons. In the United States, for example, several hundred individuals are currently being held in Guantanamo Bay or in special prison facilities called Communications Management Units. The treatment of these inmates warrants more attention and further study. However, since these policies raise their own distinct and particularly complex questions, we do not address them here, except as they relate to the radicalization of "ordinary" criminals in prison.

The discussion proceeds in two parts. Part one examines what sorts of information exist regarding prison radicalization. It summarizes the few pieces of objective evidence that exist about terrorist plots that have been hatched in prison, and it brings together general statements from experts and commentators about the danger of prison radicalization. Although some risk certainly exists, this section argues that very little is known about the true nature and magnitude of the danger. However frequently made, claims about a crisis are based on largely unsupported assertions.

Part two focuses on how governments in the United States and other Western nations have responded to the still ambiguous risk of radicalization in prison. This part focuses on several key initiatives, including attempts to screen Muslim leaders and to isolate high-risk individuals. The analysis suggests that policies implemented so far seem reasonable, though the lack of coordinated response has led to some troubling and unintended effects.

I. RISK, RHETORIC, AND RADICALIZATION

Prison inmates are widely seen as being unusually susceptible to radicalization. That vulnerability, commentators suggest, reflects several features of the prison experience itself. Inmates, on entering the prison, are disoriented and disempowered, experiencing personal vulnerability both from prison guards and from threatening prison gangs. Fears about their personal security may make inmates open to groups offering protection. Feelings of loss and disorientation may lead to a period of reflection and reexamination. Inmates may feel drawn to belief systems, like certain forms of Islam, that offer them a feeling of importance and an identity that can give meaning to their life challenges (Brandon, 2009; Hannah, Clutterbuck, & Rubin, 2008)

Of course, a greater openness to a religion, like Islam, is not itself a cause for alarm. The concern is that the same vulnerability that leads individuals to Islam will lead them down a path to radicalization. Commentators recognize that only a small portion of Muslim inmates take that last step toward extremism. The question is: *How great is that danger?* The answer to this question, as becomes disturbingly clear from available documentation, is that we do not know how great the risk is. Even more so, we *cannot* know how great the risk is.

Simply stated, only the barest amount of data is available to assess the risk of radicalization. Incidents of radicalization and recruitment are difficult to recognize—let alone acknowledge—by prison authorities, and no integrated documentation efforts exist across prisons to keep track of such incidents. As a result, it is almost impossible to make an accurate assessment of how serious the problem is, under what circumstances inmate radicalization is likely to occur, or how often terrorist organizations try to and succeed in recruiting inmates into their cohorts.

The following sections explore what little is known about radicalization in prison, and what the evidence suggests, if anything, about the seriousness of the

threat. We begin by surveying the few notable and documented cases where individuals have been radicalized in prison and then sought to carry out, or succeeded in carrying out, a terrorist attack.

The Hard Evidence of Radicalization

To date, the number of documented cases of prison radicalization is quite low. According to Jenkins (2010), from September 11, 2001, though the end of 2009, "46 publicly reported cases of domestic radicalization and recruitment to jihadist terrorism occurred in the United States" (p. 9). Based on our survey of the available documentation, only 1 out of those 46 is known to have been operationalized *in prison.*

This is the case of Kevin James, who adopted a radical version of Islam while serving time in a California penitentiary (Hamm, 2009, pp. 668–669). During the 1990s and early 2000s, James recruited other inmates to his brand of Islam, called Jam'iyyat Ul-Islam Is-Saheeh (JIS). In prison, James ultimately hatched a plan to use several newly paroled inmates to attack army recruiting stations and the Israeli consulate in Los Angeles. The plan unraveled and the entire group was arrested after one of the parolees accidentally left his cell phone at the scene of a robbery. James himself was convicted in 2009. The JIS case remains the only documented instance in the United States of a terrorist plot being organized in prison (Hamm, 2009).

To be sure, Europe has experienced additional cases, with more deadly results. Most notably, several individuals who masterminded the 2004 Madrid bombing were radicalized in prison. The mastermind of the plot, Jamal "el Chino" Ahmidan "embraced jihadist principles while serving time for immigration fraud in a Spanish detention center in 2002 (Rotella, 2004). Jose Emilio Suarez Trashorras, who also took a lead role in the plot, was "indoctrinated into radical Islam in a Spanish prison," as well (See Carlile, 2006; Rotella, 2004; Hamm, 2009, p. 668; Rupp, 2006, p. 20).

In addition to the Madrid bombing, several less well-known cases of radicalization have also occurred in European prisons. In Spain, Mohamed Achraf (also known as Abderrahmane Tahiri), convicted in 2007 of being a member of a terrorist organization, recruited others while incarcerated in Salamanca prison. In France, Safé Bourada was convicted in 2008 for planning terrorist attacks in France. Among those convicted with him were other former convicts who he had met while incarcerated (Combelles Siegel, 2006; Brandon, 2009). In Britain, Muktar Said Ibrahim, the leader in the failed "second-wave" attack on the London transport system in 2005 served time in a juvenile institution in the mid-1990s. Some reports suggest that Ibrahim was radicalized there and may have used his time to recruit others into his plot (Travis, 2005; BBC News, 2005). The RAND Corporation suggests that the Madrid bombing, along with some of the other examples, demonstrates "that contemporary violent Jihadists can and will seek out new recruits in the prison environment" (Hannah et al., 2008, p. 49).

These cases, though troubling, are relatively few in number. But do they fully account for the number of terrorist attempts originating in prison? One might argue

that several other terrorist offenders should be included in this list. These are individuals who converted to Islam in prison, but only became radicalized after their release. A well-known example is Michael C. Finton, who converted to Islam while serving in an Illinois prison from 1999 to 2005 (for robbery and battery). No clear evidence exists that Finton was planning a terrorist attack at that time. However, in 2008, Finton traveled to Saudi Arabia. He was arrested the following year on terrorist charges after he parked a van that he thought was loaded with explosives outside a federal courthouse in Springfield, Illinois—the explosives were fake and were provided by an undercover FBI agent.

In a separate incident in 2009, four men were arrested in the United States and charged with various terrorist offenses after seeking to buy weapons from an FBI informant. The *New York Times* reported that all the men had served time in prison, and at least two of the men appeared to be prison converts (Walkin, 2009). At the same time, the terrorist plot appears to have been formed at a mosque in Newburgh, New York, after their release from prison (Hernandez & Chan, 2009). The implication, as James Brandon (2004) puts it, is that "prison radicalization does not mean that terrorist plots are being routinely hatched in prison" (although this has occasionally happened). More often, however, it leads to inmates adopting Islamist ideologies that may ultimately lead to terrorism after their release (p. 4).

These cases heighten concerns about prison radicalization. The worry is that, even if terrorist plots are not themselves hatched in prison, the prison experience might prime individuals to be receptive to radical ideologies *after* their release.

Whether prison really predisposes individuals to embrace radical ideologies after release remains uncertain. Nonetheless, even taking the postrelease cases into account, the documented cases of prison radicalization do not, by themselves, suggest a crisis. Yet, it is also impossible to discount the possibility of a serious threat either. The problem is that one cannot know whether the documented cases represent the full extent of the threat, or whether they are just the tip of an iceberg. Given this uncertainty, it makes sense to look at other sources of information to see if they offer additional evidence of a broader radicalization risk.

Radicalization and the Limits of Risk Assessment

One approach is to undertake a preliminary risk assessment of this inmate population—to look at features of the Muslim inmate population that might offer some indications of the magnitude of the radicalization threat. To start such an analysis, certain basic facts would be obvious and essential such as facts about the size and characteristics of the Muslim population in prison. How many Muslims are in the prison system? What is their age, background, belief system? What are their views about the government and society at large? One would expect such information would be readily available. However, for the United States at least, that expectation would be mistaken. Even the most basic facts about the Muslim inmate population in the U.S. are unknown.

Consider the total number of Muslims in the prison system. While it is widely believed that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the system, precise figures are

not available and up to date for the United States. Approximately 6% of the roughly 150,000 inmates serving time in the federal prisons in 2004 were said to "seek Islamic services," according to the chief of the bureau's chaplaincy service (Office of the Inspector General [OIG], 2004a, p. 5). Several states have provided estimates as well. For examples, according to published reports, "Muslims make up about 18 percent of the 63,700 inmates in New York state prisons; 18 percent of the 41,000 state prisoners in Pennsylvania" (Zoll as cited in Hamm, 2007, p. 20). And roughly 6% of South Carolina's prison population was Muslim in 2009 (Gelinas, 2010). However, no reliable nationwide estimates currently exist.

France faces a somewhat similar situation. France does not allow its governmental institutions and agencies to collect data on race, religion, or ethnicity, which makes establishing such numbers very difficult. Nonetheless, widely quoted experts reports that "Muslims make up an astounding 80 percent of the nation's prison population (Khosrokhavar, 2004; Hamm, 2007, 2009). This number is shockingly high, especially given the fact that Muslims make up only 8% of the French population. How is the 80% figure, then, determined?

Ultimately, the figures seem to be based on secondary indicators such as observations regarding the complexion and names of inmates, their dietary practices, and whether inmates attend religious services (Khosrokhavar, 2004). Even though questions exist concerning the accuracy of these figures, the numbers are fervently copied in other publications, and several authors express fear that French prisons are hotbeds of radicalization. In 2005, the French counterterrorism agency dismantled a terrorist network of which several members had met—and were allegedly radicalized—in prison (Combelles Siegel, 2006). Quantitatively however, the threat appears to be rather limited. The French prison system contains approximately 60,000 inmates, of which only 99 are being held for terrorism-related offenses (Combelles Siegel, 2006).

Britain, in contrast to the United States and to France, has made recent efforts to collect nationwide figures for its Muslim inmate population. In 2010, the British Ministry of Justice (MoJ) undertook a comprehensive nationwide assessment of Muslims in its prison population. In that study, the Ministry concluded that, "There are around 10,300 Muslims in prisons in England and Wales" up from 9,975 in 2008. "Muslims now constitute the third largest religious group in prison, after those with no religious affiliation and Christians" (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons [HMCIP], 2010). That constitutes roughly 12% of the prison population. Worryingly to some, the percentages have been increasingly steadily, up from 5% of the prison population in 1994 and 8% in 2004 (HMCIP, 2010). For comparison, Muslims made up 2.7% of the general population in 2001.

Of course, any accurate assessment of the risk of radicalization requires much more detailed information than the total number of Muslim inmates. At a minimum, a useful risk assessment must also look at the demographics and beliefs of the Muslim inmate population. But again, such information is nearly wholly lacking.

To give a notable example, commentators have repeatedly cited one subgroup of Muslim inmates for special attention—prison converts to Islam. The concern is that this group poses a particularly high risk for radicalization. Given that concern, one

would expect some assessment of the numbers of converts in the prison system. And in fact, commentators have suggested that yearly conversions to Islam in local, state, and federal correctional institutions range are significant. Dix-Richardson (2002) asserts that converts to Islam total 30,000. Waller (2003) contends the number of Muslim inmates increases by 40,000 per year, with the majority of the growth occurring through conversion. These are dramatic estimates, which suggest that as many as 300,000 have converted to Islam in prison since 9/11 (Hamm, 2007). Unfortunately, the source for these estimates is wholly unclear.

Dix-Richardson's estimate, for example, is drawn from a single sentence in a 1999 book by Jane Smith, entitled *Islam in America*. In that book, Smith writes, "while exact figures are again hard to determine, it is estimated that more than 300,000 prisoners are converts to Islam, and that the rate of conversion may be more than 30,000 per year" (p. 165). Smith herself offers no citation in support of that figure. The source for Waller's estimate of up to 40,000 converts per year is similarly uncertain.

Another common claim about converts is the widely repeated statement that 80% of all conversions in prison are conversion to Islam (Rupp, 2006; Wilner, 2010). This figure has been cited so many times in the U.S. press that it has taken on the semblance of established truth. Yet, once again, the figure appears to be based largely on the testimony of J. Michael Waller, without further empirical support (Waller, 2003).[1]

In short, for the United States at least, even basic facts about the Muslim inmate population are unavailable. But collecting such information is obviously just the start of a more sophisticated risk assessment effort. It is not enough to know, for example, how many Muslim converts are in the prison system. We need to have a broader understanding of the political, religious, and ideological views of inmates in the prison system, and an assessment of other risk factors for radicalization.

Much of what passes for understanding today is anecdotal. For example, one senior official within the FBI notes that some inmates "either feel discriminated against in the United States or feel that the United States oppresses minorities and Muslims overseas. The feeling of perceived oppression, combined with their limited knowledge of Islam, especially for converts, makes this a vulnerable population for extremists looking to radicalize and recruit" (Van Duyn, 2006, p. 24). Up to now, studies that delve in depth into the social and psychological makeup of Muslim inmates are scarce. Given the lack of information about the numbers, demographics, and beliefs of the Muslim inmate population, it can hardly be surprising that our understanding of radicalization in prison, an exceptionally complex and dynamic process in itself, is even more limited.

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[1]Other nations in the West do not seem to have much more accurate numbers. Britain, for example, also lacks concrete data about the number of converts in its prison system. But at least to its credit, the Ministry of Justice has acknowledged as much and spoken of the need to expand its analysis of its Muslim inmate population. In a preliminary survey of 164 Muslim prisoners, Britain indicated that 30% "had converted to Islam (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2010). The ministry also provides some preliminary data on the makeup of this group. As they observed, the converts—like the Muslim prisoners in general—indicated "over-representation of black Muslim prisoners compared with black Muslims in the community. . . . This was reflected in our sample of converts of whom 65% (n=32) were black, 18% (n=9) white and 16% (n=8) of mixed heritage. None were Asian. No definitive reason for this disparity emerged from our interviews." (Id at 31).

Risk and Rhetoric

Given the lack of information about even the most basic features of the Muslim population in prison, one might be surprised that influential researchers and security experts continue to make confident-sounding claims about the magnitude of the radicalization threat. A close look reveals how little evidence exists to support these specific claims. Consider two widely-reported assertions about the threat of Islamic radicalization in prison.

In testimony before the Senate in 2003, conservative writer and researcher, J. Michael Waller declared:

> Radical Islamist groups, most tied to Saudi-sponsored Wahhabi organizations suspected by the U.S. government of being closely linked to terror financing activities, dominate Muslim prison recruitment in the U.S. and seek to create a radicalized cadre of felons who will support their anti-American efforts. Estimates place the number of Muslim prison recruits at between 15–20% of the prison population. (p. 97)

Waller's estimate yields a shocking number of prison recruits. In a total prison population of nearly 1.6 million in 2010 (PEW Center on the States, 2010), this suggests that the number of radicalized felons in United States prisons is between 240,000 and 320,000. Given our previous observations about the dearth of objective evidence, one might not be surprised to discover that the basis for Waller's dire warning is wholly unclear. As Hamm (2009) writes,

> [Waller] offers no explanation for his numerical estimate; no case studies of radicalization and terrorist recruitment; no interviews with wardens, intelligence officers, chaplains or prisoners. In fact, there is no reason to believe that Waller has ever set foot inside a prison." (p. 681)

More recently, the British think tank, Royal United Service Institute (RUSI), made national news when it offered a dramatic warning that, "some 800 potentially violent radicals, not previously guilty of terrorism charges, will be back in society over the coming five to 10 years." RUSI's estimate was based on a 2008 news article, which states that "probation officers . . . believe that attempts have been made to convert one in 10 of the estimated 8,000 Muslims in the eight high-security prisons in England and Wales to the Al-Qaeda cause in the past two years" (Leppard, [2008] as cited in Clarke & Soria, 2010, p. 24–31). This figure, however, was subsequently rejected by a Ministry of Justice spokesman, who said, "There are only 6,000 prisoners in the High Security Estate, most of whom are not Muslim. The figure of 'one in ten of the 8,000 Muslims' in the High Security Estate is therefore unrecognizable" (Doyle, 2010).

The truth is, we do not know how great the risk is and, given our lack of data, we *cannot* know how great the risk is (see also Rupp, 2006, p. 6). This is not to say that the risk is nonexistent. The few documented cases of prison radicalization suggest that the threat is hardly imaginary. The vulnerability of inmates to new ideologies in prison seems commonsensical, if not yet fully proved. Additionally,

some evidence exists that Al-Qaeda has been, and perhaps still is, targeting inmates for recruitment (Rupp, 2006, p. 2; Cuthbertson, 2004; Brandon, 2009, p. 43; Hannah et al., 2008, p. 32).

Notably, in 2000, an Al-Qaeda training manual was recovered during a raid on a safe house in Manchester, England, in 2000. The manual "identifies Western prisoners as candidates for conversion to Islam because they may harbour hostility towards their governments" (Hamm, 2009, p. 671; Rupp, 2006, p. 2; Cuthbertson, 2004; Brandon, 2009, p. 43). More recently, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee reported that al-Qaeda has had some success in reaching out to inmates in United States. A committee report states that "a group of as many as three dozen former criminals who converted to Islam in prison . . . moved to Yemen" (U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 2010, p. 9). The ultimate concern is that at least some of these men might return to their home country to launch attacks against Western targets. This information is certainly worrisome and cannot be ignored. At the same time, without more specifics, it is difficult to assess the significance of these reports.[2]

Finally, apart from al Qaeda's possible activities, some anecdotal evidence exists that Muslim gangs may be gaining strength in prison and may be using that strength to coerce other inmates to convert (see for example, HMCIP, 2008, p. 43). The claim is that religious extremists congregate in gang-like formations, which systemically recruit fellow inmates and, in some cases, may have ties to terrorist entities (Hamm, 2009; Allen, 2006). Such extremist Islamist gangs, it is feared, might systematically use their connections within prison with ordinary criminal networks to plan and coordinate even more sophisticated terrorist attacks.

It is difficult to know the significance of these statements, and particularly whether they highlight isolated problems or something warranting broader concern. The few scholars or researchers who have actually studied the prison system from the inside—by interviewing prisoners, correctional staff, and Muslim chaplains—offer much more tempered and optimistic statements. Hamm (2007), for example, notes:

> There is no consensus on this issue; in fact, prison chaplains, along with a growing number of wardens and FBI agents, claim that there are few documented cases of U.S. inmates joining a terrorist group while in prison. This position has been succinctly summarized in Congressional testimony by Paul Rogers, Past-President of the American Correctional Chaplains Association. "Regarding reports of prisons being infiltrated by terrorists or terrorist organizations via prison religious programs," he said, "these have been blown way out of proportion." (p. 10)

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[2]On the other side of the ledger, one can imagine a number of reasons Al Qaeda might be reluctant to work with inmates or ex-cons: They are already in the US criminal database, may be informants and may suffer from other problems (like drugs or mental illness). Add to these considerations the difficulties in organizing and remaining undetected in a prison setting, it seems plausible that al-Qaeda's efforts to recruit cells in civil society might be a bigger concern (Hamm, 2007, p. 32).

Similarly, in the British Ministry of Justice, HMCIP is skeptical of claims that prison radicalization has reached a crisis stage:

> There was some staff concern about conversions in dispersal and young offender establishments, but this was rarely found elsewhere. Concerns about intimidation of non-Muslims, the emergence of gangs and conversions to Islam were often linked, but were backed by little evidence. . . . Similarly, in several young offender establishments, staff raised concerns over young people who had converted to Islam while in the establishment, although there was little suggestion of bullying or forcible conversions by Muslim gangs. (p. 29)

The report warned of a different danger—that through misunderstanding and over-reaction, the prison service might "turn inmates towards extremism." One official said that, "the service tended to treat all Muslim prisoners as 'potential terrorists' and, by doing so, was pushing young men to 'embrace extremism'" (HMCIP, 2010, p. 29).

In the end, we are left with some concern about the risk of prison radicalization, with no sense of the precise magnitude of the problem. Despite the lack of evidence, government policy makers must still decide what sort of response to make to the potential danger. Should the possibility of radicalization cause government officials to impose restrictions on the types of religious literature distributed in prison? Should individuals suspected of radical beliefs be segregated? Should Muslim chaplains be carefully screened and monitored? Can these steps be taken without infringing on religious freedoms?

Like many counterterrorism issues, then, the challenge is how to make policy decisions in a realm of deep uncertainty. Part two takes a closer look at how governments have, in fact, responded to the perceived crisis. In doing so, this Part provides a preliminary analysis on the coherence and appeal of the response.

II. RADICALIZATION AND RESPONSE

Despite the uncertainty about the magnitude of risk, Western countries have responded to the fears of prison radicalization with a range of policies. Broadly stated, these policies fall into two broad categories: (1) restrictive policies, which attempt to impose limiting conditions on inmates, and (2) ameliorative policies, which attempt to improve the conditions of imprisonment. The policies have not, however, been implemented in equal measure. Purposively or not, most countries have pursued a "security first" approach, in which the emphasis appears to be primarily on the first strategy, with somewhat less attention to the second.

Perhaps that is to be expected. One can see the choice between these two options as mirroring an old debate within the criminal justice system itself—between those advocating a punitive approach to crime, and those favoring a more rehabilitative, preventive approach. The United States has long favored tough-on-crime measures. With a few notable exceptions, the country has tended to follow that same strategy in its counterradicalization policy.

Restrictions, Resistance, and Radicalization

The first category of policy responses is restrictive in nature. To address the risk of radicalization, governments have implemented an array of restrictions on inmates and prison services. This section focuses on three notable restrictions—restrictions on Muslim chaplains, on high-risk prisoners, and on certain kinds of religious literature—that have been used or contemplated by prison authorities in the West.

1. Radical Imams

Some research suggests that social relationships are one of the major factors in leading an individual toward adopting an extremist ideology (Sageman, 2004). Radical religious leaders are viewed as particularly threatening since, as one commentator put it, inmates are "a captive audience" for these extremists to target (See Cuthbertson 2004, p. 18). In fact, an enormous amount of publicity has, since 9/11, focused on the threat of radical imams infiltrating the prison system.

This issue first broke into the public eye in 2003, when the *Wall Street Journal* carried an interview with Warith Deen Umar, formerly the head Muslim chaplain in the New York State prison system. Umar had retired with commendation several years earlier, but was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* in 2003 as affirming that, "[e]ven Muslims who say they are against terrorism secretly admire and applaud [the September 11 hijackers]." According to a subsequent report, Umar also stated that he "believed black inmates who converted to Islam in prison were logical recruits for committing future terrorist attacks against the United States" (OIG, 2004a, p. 35). The news article caused Governor Pataki to respond in a press release that Umar's statements were "outrageous and deplorable."

Umar's postretirement speech heightened fears that Muslim chaplains might be spreading extremist beliefs in prison. New York Senator Chuck Schumer expressed particular concern about Islamic groups that prior to 2001 had been used to certify and screen Muslim chaplains in the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) in the United States (Schumer, 2009). Schumer subsequently asked the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to "examine the BOP's process for selecting Muslim chaplains" (p. 1). The resulting report was highly critical of the bureau's approach, noting a series of "deficiencies in how the BOP selects and supervises Muslim religious service providers" (OIG, 2004a, p. 2). Among other things, the OIG criticized the BOP for performing inadequate supervision of religious services and religious leaders.

When the report was released, the bureau was already struggling with ways to screen and hire Muslim chaplains. Immediately after 9/11, the BOP froze hiring of new prison chaplains, and the controversy over Umar kept the ban in place. The result was that for years after 9/11, the bureau hired no new Muslim chaplains (OIG, 2004a, p. 36).

Some have argued that the danger posed by Muslim chaplains has been vastly overstated (Walkin, 2009; Rupp, 2006). Whether this is true or not, the U.S. government responded aggressively to the perceived threat. The question remains whether the response generated unintended, and possibly negative, consequences.

Perhaps most significantly, the new restrictions on prison imams means that BOP suffered from a "shortage of Muslim chaplains" (OIG, 2004a). Similar shortages have been reported in state prison facilities, as well. To address this shortfall, some prison systems have relied on volunteer chaplains or even turned to Muslim inmates to conduct services. In some cases, this appears to have made the problem worse than before.

One commentator, for example, noted that, "[o]ne state prison admitted 3,000 religious volunteers in a month, an impossible number for short-staffed prison officials to monitor effectively" (Straw, 2007: 517). Ballas (2010) in an FBI report notes:

> The shortage of qualified religious providers in prisons heightens the threat of inmate radicalization. Prisoners with little training in Islam have asserted themselves as leaders among the prison population, at times misrepresenting the faith. Prison Islam incorporates violent inmate culture with religious practice. Currently, little standardization or accreditation exists to identify persons qualified to teach Islam or lead its services in prisons. Wardens rely on local endorsing agencies or simply leave it up to inmates to choose. Prison authorities are not ensuring that religious leaders have adequate training or if they espouse radical theology. (p. 4)

According to another prison chaplain, in Hamm (2007),

> [w]e are called on by the administration to monitor [the volunteer] Muslim preachers who come into the prison. The problem is that many of these volunteers go over our heads to get credentials. Also, we get no gang intelligence down here [in the chapel]. There is no officer presence in the chapel. Yet we have to abide by the chaplain's code: We won't permit one religious group to speak negatively about another. (p. 86)

Some evidence exists that the shortage of prison imams may have even contributed to the development of the JIS terrorist plot in California prisons. In that case, the chaplain said, "inmates were disenchanted with the religious offerings they received from the institution. To avoid that problem again, we must offer inmates something they are not disenchanted with" (quoted in Hamm, 2007, p. 87). Hamm adds, "[v]olunteer clergy are not the solution to this problem because they cannot be controlled."

The challenge going forward is to ensure both that there are sufficient numbers of prison chaplains, and that these chaplains are also well-screened and vetted. Whether both goals can be met in the near term is uncertain. According to Vanyur (2007), every chaplain,

> Must meet all the requirements for employment as a Federal law enforcement officer, including a field investigation, criminal background check, reference check, drug screening, and pre-employment suitability interviews and screenings. . . . Our religious contractors and volunteers are also subject to a variety of security requirements prior to being granted access to an institution, including criminal background checks, law enforcement agency checks to verify places of

residence and employment, a fingerprint check, information from employment over the previous 5 years, and drug testing. . . . Information on contractors and volunteers (whether the contractor or volunteer is being considered to help provide religious services or not) is checked against databases supported by the FBI. (p. 65)

Whether the BOP continues to face shortages of Muslim chaplains, however, is unknown. If shortages persist in the federal or state system, the question remains whether it is better to have more imams entering prison without full screening, or to leave religious leadership to the inmates within the prison system.

2. Radical Inmates

In addition to fears of radical imams in the prison system, government officials have expressed concerns about charismatic inmates who seek to recruit other inmates into their ideology. To respond to these concerns, prison officials have imposed heightened restrictions—and in some cases extremely severe restrictions—on offenders deemed to be high-risk.

Identifying high-risk individuals is relatively straightforward when it comes to inmates who have already been convicted of terrorist offenses. The more challenging task is to identify inmates in the general prison population who might be seeking to radicalize others, or who might be vulnerable to the radicalizing influence of others. Doing so means developing stronger intelligence capacities in prison. At least in some states, those capacities seem to be woefully underresourced. In California, for example, there are 125 gang investigators for the more than 150,000 inmates in the prison system (Hamm, 2009). Lack of resources also means states must make hard choices about the kinds of intelligence activities deemed appropriate. For example, greater use of snitches in prison may provide intelligence benefits but may also alienate inmates who deem such efforts heavy-handed and duplicitous.

Even after high-risk inmates are identified, the question remains what to do with them. In the United States, the typical response has been to isolate these individuals, either in Guantanamo Bay or in special facilities called "Communications Management Units." Inmates sent to these facilities are subject to intensive monitoring and intrusive supervision (Vanyur, 2007). Needless to say, these programs have been the subject of controversy, with questions raised about whether the offenders sent to these facilities are the most dangerous, whether the conditions of confinement are humane, and whether appropriate procedures are in place to ensure a fair adjudication of individual cases.

Finally, in addition to these restrictions, some institutions have considered making institutional changes to the prison system to reduce the ability of extremist inmates to recruit other individuals. For example, one initiative in the Bureau of Prisons has "eliminated most institution-based inmate organizations with community ties to control the influence that outside entities have on Federal inmates" (Vanyur, 2007, p. 63). The British Ministry has "attempted to curb the growth of radical Islam by restricting communal prayers and the reading of the Koran during work breaks" (Leppard, 2008).

The Justice Department's Office of Inspector General (OIG) has expressed particular concerns about inmates leading religious services. Religious services are one of the few places where inmates can congregate together with relative ease. The OIG report in 2004 noted that supervision of religious services in BOP facilities was inconsistent, and in some cases "rely on chaplains to provide supervision" of inmates. Moreover, the report added, "it was apparent to us that at certain facilities the supervising correctional officers and the associate warden who oversees chaplaincy services were not familiar with chapel activities" (OIG, 2004a, p. 40). The central concern is that inmates might use the pulpit, in effect, as a platform for radicalization. As the OIG (2004a) stated:

> Inmates are radicalized primarily by other inmates. We do not believe that it is appropriate for inmates to assume leadership positions in BOP facilities, including the position of surrogate chaplain. We recommend that the BOP take steps to reduce inmate-led religious services. (p. 54)

The OIG (2004a) recommended increased supervision of religious services by correctional staff, and restrictions on inmates leading religious services, including use of audio monitoring where inmate-led services were necessary. Needless to say, these proposals must be implemented carefully and thoughtfully, as all have the potential, if imposed in an overly-broad or intrusive manner, to impinge on inmates' religious freedoms. Even if lawful, they can easily be viewed by inmates as impinging on those rights.

3. Restricting Literature in Prison

A third kind of restriction limits the kinds of reading materials available to inmates in prison. Although authorities have pursued various approaches, one particularly notable—and troubling—initiative was undertaken by the federal Bureau of Prisons in 2004. That year, the BOP decided it would sanitize its prison libraries to purge them of extremist literature. The bureau's initiative was in response to a highly critical report issued by the Department of Justice's Office of Inspector General that highlighted a series of shortcomings in the bureau's efforts to counter prison radicalization.

In addition to mentioning the bureau's lax screening of Muslim chaplains, discussed earlier, the report also highlighted the potential availability of extremist literature in the prison system. The OIG's 2004 report stated that:

> Supervision of chapel libraries is not as thorough as it should be. None of the chaplains at the facilities that we visited was able to produce an inventory of the books and videos available to the inmates, and it did not appear that these materials had been evaluated after the terrorist attacks of September 11. We recommend that the BOP undertake an inventory of chapel books and videos to confirm that they are permissible under BOP security policies. The BOP also should consider maintaining a central registry of acceptable material to prevent duplication of effort when reviewing these materials. (p. 55)

In response, the BOP indicated that it would examine library materials "for endorsement of violence [or] support for domestic or foreign terrorism" and that it would provide a list of materials appropriate for circulation, "which can be used for 'future library acquisitions." The review was to be completed by June 1, 2005 (OIG, 2004b, p. 17).

Initially, the BOP planned to review existing collections to determine which materials should be prohibited. However, according to news reports, the bureau quickly determined that this approach would be too burdensome (Banerjee, 2007). Instead, the bureau decided it would simply create a list of *approved* books, and that all books that did not appear on the list would be discarded. To avoid charges of discrimination, the lists would cover all significant religions, not just Islam.

To implement the project, the BOP called upon unidentified experts "to produce lists of up to 150 book titles and 150 multimedia resources for each of 20 religions or religious categories—everything from Baha'ism to Yoruba" (Goodstein, 2007). All other materials would be eliminated. At the same time, the bureau failed to allocate additional funds to buy books left on the list. The result was that "after the shelves were cleared of books not on the lists, few remained" (Goodstein, 2007).

One Muslim inmate in New York said that, after unapproved books were eliminated, the "only thing left on the sole shelf devoted to Islam was a Koran and a few volumes of sayings of the Prophet Muhammad" (Goodstein, 2007). A representative of a Jewish organization noted that the same prison had an "extensive library of Jewish religious books, many of them donated." After the plan was implemented, "[i]t was decimated. Three-quarters of the Jewish books were taken off the shelves" (Goodstein, 2007).

Others noted that the list of accepted materials seemed to favor certain viewpoints over others, perhaps reflecting the preferences of the list's author. Reviewing the materials, one Christian scholar concluded the lists "show a bias toward evangelical popularism and Calvinism," but apparently "lacked materials from early church fathers, liberal theologians and major Protestant denominations" (Goodstein, 2007). Two thirds of the titles on the list for Judaism were from the same Orthodox publishing house (ibid).

Once publicized, the plan triggered criticism from religious groups across the political and religious spectrum, including leading U.S. denominations (ibid). Lawsuits were also filed against the prison system claiming that the removal of reading materials absent any showing of a threat violated First Amendment guarantees of religious freedom.

The barrage of criticism seemed to take the Bureau of Prisons by surprise. Within months, the bureau declared that it would repeal its policy and return most of the materials to the prison libraries (Banerjee, 2007). Just to make sure the bureau was serious, Congress followed up with the passage of the Second Chance Act of 2007. The Act declared that the bureau must "discontinue the Standardized Chapel Library project, or any other project by whatever designation that seeks to compile, list, or otherwise restrict prisoners' access to reading materials, audiotapes, videotapes, or any other materials made available in a chapel library." The Act was signed into law by President Bush on April 9, 2008.

The ill-fated library project illustrates in rather sharp relief some of the common problems that arise when a prison institution responds to radicalization fears. Facing a possible, but not proven, concern about extremist literature in the prison system, the bureau implemented a highly intrusive and overly broad ban on religious materials, one that seemed to show little regard for the religious freedoms of individual inmates. The approach, as the head of one Christian group put it, was like "swatting a fly with a sledgehammer" (Goodstein, 2007).

Moreover, the BOP failed to ask even the most basic questions about the possible threat such as whether such materials were widely available in prison and whether they were influential. One prison chaplain questioned those basic assumptions, noting that "chaplains routinely reject any materials that incite violence or disparage, and donated materials already had to be approved by prison officials" (Goodstein, 2007).

The bureau also seemed to ignore approaches that were much more tailored, like creating a list of *prohibited* books rather than approved ones. One might even wonder whether the widespread removal of books might have actually proved counterproductive, leaving inmates angry, alienated, and bored. One final question is just as troubling: If the initiatives had not infringed the rights of mainstream denominations, would the repeal have been accomplished so quickly and easily?

Ameliorative Policies

The principal thrust of government efforts to date has been to counter the risk of radicalization by implementing restrictive policies. A different approach, however, is also feasible. Ameliorative policies focus primarily on alleviating the conditions of prison life that can make inmates more receptive to extremist influence. These ameliorative efforts range from extremely expensive and dramatic changes in the prison system, to more tailored, less ambitious reform proposals.

1. Improve Prison Conditions

Perhaps the most ambitious kind of proposal seeks to redress basic deficiencies in the conditions of prison life. Overcrowded prisons, poor health care, violence-prone facilities are all pandemic in parts of the U.S. prison system. A number of state correctional systems suffer from such widespread deficiencies that federal courts have intervened to mandate improvements.[3]

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[3]California is a particularly dramatic example. The prison system is wildly overcrowded, currently operating at nearly 200% of capacity. It is simultaneously underfunded and neglected, yielding a system where health care and other necessities are provided in a wholly inadequate manner according to a number of federal courts. Indeed, a two-decade long period of litigation culminated with dramatic interventions by the federal courts over the past few years. In 2005, the federal courts appointed a "receiver" to take over the prison medical system and to institute needed reforms. Then, this past year, the Supreme Court ordered the release of 30–40,000 prisoners (nearly one quarter of the entire prison system). *Brown v. Plata*, 131 S.Ct. 1910 (2011).

These kinds of humiliating and inhumane conditions are widely thought to contribute to an atmosphere that allows gangs and other violent extremists to flourish. Improving the prison environment and making prison life a less depriving experience for inmates could reduce the radicalization potential among Muslim and other categories of inmates (Hamm, 2009, p. 673).

The difficulty, of course, lies in developing an effective response. In some correctional facilities, problems of overcrowding and deficient services are so pervasive that any redress will require wide-ranging structural reform in the system. At a basic level, for example, any reduction in overcrowding calls for either a significant reduction in prison populations or a significant increase in expenditures for prison. The former is widely seen as politically infeasible, the latter financially impossible. Absent extraordinary political leadership, or continued intervention by the federal courts, little improvement can be expected in the near term.

2. Expand Rehabilitation Programs

If improving basic prison conditions requires wide-ranging reform, a second set of ameliorative efforts is more focused in its objectives. These efforts attempt to address the concern that inmates leave prison lacking even basic educational and vocational skills. Without basic skills, and with the added burden of a criminal record, inmates face serious obstacles in attempting to reintegrate back into society. Subsequent failure, and the resulting alienation from society, may contribute to the possibility of radicalization after release.

One response is to expand vocational and educational opportunities for inmates in prison. Another is to expand reentry programs for high-risk offenders to help them transition to a law-abiding life upon their release. The U.S. Bureau of Prisons appears to recognize the importance of these steps in the context of its counter- radicalization efforts. In testimony before Congress, one senior bureau official, Vanyur (2007) stated:

> In addition to managing and monitoring inmates who could attempt to radicalize other inmates, we help inmates become less vulnerable to any such attempts. Experts have identified the societal marginalization of inmates as a key factor in their becoming radicalized. Our agency provides inmates with a broad variety of programs that are proven to assist in the development of key skills, thereby minimizing the likelihood of the inmates being marginalized. The programs we provide include work in prison industries and other institution jobs, vocational training, education, substance abuse treatment, religious programs, and other skills-building and pro-social values programs. (p. 64)

Though not expressly formulated as a counterradicalization program, a number of states and locales have also implemented reentry programs to assist individual offenders integrate better into society after their release, as well (American Bar Association, 2008).

Nonetheless, despite these efforts, rehabilitation initiatives face significant political headwinds. Programs that offer social services, like vocational and educational opportunities, have been deemphasized over the past two decades, as the United States has embraced an increasingly punitive ideology. Recent budgetary pressures

have only exacerbated that trend. In a 2010 report, the Vera Institute of Justice found that 20 of the 37 states examined had cut rehabilitation programming in response to budgetary pressures, and nine decreased health services.

Britain appears more open to providing these kinds of rehabilitation programs. The Ministry of Justice acknowledges the importance of expanding educational and vocational training. Several local communities have developed innovative reentry programs, teaming up with local mosques to deal specifically with Muslim prisoners upon their release. For example, in the 2010 report from Ministry of Justice, HMCIP states:

> In Rochester, the chaplaincy team had set up an innovative work placement in the local mosque specifically for Muslim prisoners. It offered a frank account of life in prison to those in the community to promote understanding of prison life and to deter offending. (p. 44)

A similar program has been instituted in East London. Robin Tuddenham, the Group Director for Safer and Stronger Communities, in a report from the U.K. House of Commons, Communities and Local Government Committee 2010, described some of the lessons learned in that effort:

> You have to work very closely with the police on a risk-based approach to work with those individuals, particularly individuals coming out of prison. What I have been doing until recently in East London is developing a regional East London project for people coming out of prison who have been radicalized in prison. That is a real cause of concern. Their attitude to extremism and recruitment in prison is leading them to be very vulnerable coming into the community. I like to see it in terms of vulnerable people and the safeguarding work with particular individuals at risk. (p. 35)

Even in Britain, however, no nationwide effort has been made to evaluate these programs or to coordinate a response to inmates leaving prison. Do these programs work? How should they be structured? Should they be open to all inmates, or just to certain categories of high-risk offenders? All of those questions remain to be answered.

3. Improve Treatment of Inmates

The policies discussed thus far—improving the conditions of prison and expanding rehabilitation services—have long been part of progressive attempts to reform the prison system in the United States for all inmates. The final ameliorative proposal differs from these others because it focuses primarily on the treatment of Muslim inmates themselves. Specifically, the proposal addresses concerns that Muslim inmates may be subject to discriminatory or derogatory treatment from correctional staff, and that this conduct may fuel a movement toward extremism.

Mistreatment of Muslim inmates can occur for any number of reasons. Correctional staff, of course, reflects the values of society at large. To the extent members of the public hold negative stereotypes about Islam, one can expect similar views to

be held by members of the correctional staff as well. Maltreatment can occur, as well, because of ignorance about the religious principles and requirements of the religion.

These kinds of problems may be exacerbated by the institutional demands of prison bureaucracies. By their very nature, these bureaucracies emphasize security. As a result, inmates with special needs—such as special food and religious service requirements—can be viewed as problematic and burdensome. In 2010, HMCIP emphasized this point, noting concerns that some staff members focus "solely on Muslims as potential or actual extremists" (p. 5). These problems are heightened in prisons plagued by over-crowding and violence, where staff are understaffed and underresourced. Addressing these kinds of problems will require changes in the core structure of prison administra-tion, an extremely challenging goal even in less constrained budgetary situations.

Limited data exist in the United States on the degree of staff mistreatment of Muslim inmates. But Britain has collected self-reporting data from Muslim inmates which suggests that significant issues exist. According to the Ministry of Justice's 2010 report, HMCIP states:

> Forty-nine per cent of mixed heritage Muslims said they had been victimised by staff compared with 25% of mixed heritage non-Muslims. Thirty-eight per cent of black Muslims (compared with 32% of non-Muslims), 35% of Asian Muslims (compared with 24% of non-Muslims), and 29% of white Muslims (compared with 22% of non-Muslims) said the same. (p. 38)

The Ministry of Justice report concludes that part of the problem is due to a lack of training, and to staff's limited understanding of Islam. The result, says the Ministry, is not only a failure of religious sensitivity, but also threat to public safety. Lacking a basic understanding of religious practices, the staff remains unable to recognize and confront real risks where they exist.

Addressing concerns about staff treatment of Muslim inmates has typically focused on staff training, including educating staff about the religious requirements of Islam in general and about specific signs of radicalization in particular. The hope is that such efforts will sensitize staff to the special needs and demands of the Muslim religion. In the United States, efforts of this sort are inconsistent. A few states have publicized efforts to educate their staff about the basic principles of Islam (Gelinas, 2010). In addition, the Bureau of Prisons has emphasized the impor-tance of additional staff training on how to treat Muslim inmates. However, the focus of this training seems primarily directed at recognizing and managing signs of radicalization (Vanyur, 2010). Indeed, the Office of Inspector General (2004) has specifically warned that a lack of knowledge of Islam may hinder staff's "ability to recognize radical Islamist messages that are inappropriate in BOP facilities." Thus, the Inspector General's office continues,

> We believe that the BOP should provide basic training to its staff members who supervise Muslim religious services so that they will be familiar with accepted prayer and service rituals, understand Islamic terminology, and rec-ognize messages that violate BOP security policy. (p. 54)

The Ministry of Justice, HM Prison Service, appears more proactive in developing a coordinated response to the problem:

In 2007, the Prison Service embarked on a programme of training to help staff identify and respond to signs of radicalisation and, even though it recognised the risks of stereotyping, the effect has been to encourage a focus on Muslims as potential extremists. (p. 11)

In its recent report, the Ministry acknowledged that its efforts have not been fully adequate. But it affirmed the need for a national response to the problem:

It is essential that the National Offender Management Service develops a strategy, with support and training, for effective staff engagement with Muslims as individual prisoners with specific risks and needs, rather than as part of a separate and troubling group. Without that, there is a real risk of a self-fulfilling prophecy: that the prison experience will create or entrench alienation and disaffection, so that prisons release into the community young men who are more likely to offend, or even embrace extremism. (p. 5)

Whether Britain moves forward with such a plan remains to be seen.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The present chapter has examined the available data concerning the risk of radicalization among Muslims in Western prisons. The central goal has been to gain insight into the nature and magnitude of the potential threat, and to explore how various countries have responded to the perceived danger. This was done while addressing the needs of the Muslim inmate population along with their perceived radicalization propensity, and the challenges they present to the correctional facilities that houses them.

The analysis suggests that a lack of reliable information dominates research on radicalization in Western prisons. Very little is known about the degree to which radicalization occurs, about which segments of the prison population are potentially at risk, and about the severity of the threat of terrorist activity behind bars. In fact, most countries in the West know very little about their Muslim inmate population. Even basic facts, like demographic characteristics, are rarely collected. Based on the current state of the literature, it is simply impossible to make an accurate assessment of the risk of radicalization.

Similarly, there is no integrated effort at the national or international level to combat prison radicalization. In some cases, authorities have implemented—or at least considered—restrictive measures imposing limitations on available literature, increasing screening of prison imams, and isolating extremist inmates from other prisoners. However, a comprehensive rationale for implementing many of these policies seems often to be absent, as are regular evaluations of implemented policies.

The implication is that policy makers are operating with little empirical guidance as they attempt to develop a counterradicalization program in prison. As such, it is

often unclear whether or which interventions are necessary. Policy development, in short, is sometimes driven not by careful analysis, but to a large extent, by prevailing sentiments and emotions. Our goal is not to blame policy makers for ineffective policies, but to raise awareness of the need for an integrated effort—both in research and policy—in order to advance the understanding of and inform the response to the threat of prison radicalization.

There are, of course, a few limitations to this study. The views presented here are formed on the basis of open and secondary sources. Little access exists to primary data so that claims cannot be assessed on the basis of qualitative, let alone quantitative, primary data. This is a general problem in terrorism studies, where the lack of evidence and concrete, objective information implies that statement should not be accepted unchallenged. It underscores the critical need for additional empirical work in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

To address this information gap, substantial research needs to be conducted that involves both qualitative and quantitative data collection. To date, an abundance of questions remains unanswered.

Most prominently, insight is needed into the most basic facts. What are the main characteristics of our prison populations, not only in terms of demographics but also in terms of belief systems and convictions? In order to be able to gauge the risk of radicalization, researchers need to be able to assess the sociodemographic distribution of the inmate population and to examine which segments might be vulnerable to radicalization, and why. Obviously, this raises an abundance of questions about privacy and individual rights, and prison authorities might be reluctant to allow researchers into their prison to gather such information among the inmates. Although these considerations are perfectly legitimate, the problem is that without detailed information about the social and psychological well-being of prisoners, efforts to evaluate the risks posed by prison radicalization will remain practically impossible.

Moreover, fundamental research is required into the underlying processes of prison radicalization. To understand which inmates might be susceptible to radicalization or extremist influence, researchers need insight into the dynamic interplay between contributing factors operating at different levels: institutional, social, and individual. Only by understanding how the custodial setting interacts with the social and personal factors contributing to the radicalization process can attempts be made to predict who is at risk and who is not. How do these factors differ from different types of prison radicalization, including religious, nationalist, or supremacist variations? Which processes are responsible for the spread and contamination of radical beliefs among inmate populations?

A first hint at explaining the apparent ease with which extremist ideologies spread through prisons might be found in the presence—and specific characteristics—of social networks. Within a prison context, social relationships are particularly important in that they can fulfill a number of essential needs for inmates. For example, social networks can fulfill practical needs such as offering security and

protection, facilitating information gathering, or helping inmates obtain difficult-to-obtain goods, including contraband. In addition, social networks can fulfill social needs, including the need to belong, to gain social status, to receive affection, and to maintain self-confidence.

Researchers also need to understand the complex ways in which social networks relate to prison radicalization. For example, it is well known that social networks can have a positive effect on people's well-being. In a sense, social networks can function as a *buffer* against negative influences in prison. For instance, social networks might be able to counteract the radicalizing effect of experiences of discrimination, marginalization, and isolation, by contributing to inmates' social and psychological well-being.

Of course, networks can also affect the radicalization potential among its members in a negative sense. They can be a source of intergroup conflict and gang violence, and they can transmit negative attitudes and criminal behaviour throughout the prison population. Understanding the factors that lead the negative features of social networks to overwhelm the positive ones will be a critical part of the research agenda, as will a more complete understanding of the special risks posed by individuals at the periphery of these groups who may not be properly embedded in any social group.

Equally important is the need to investigate the role of social networks in the transition of inmates from prison to society. For example, the question arises whether social networks established in prison can survive after an inmate is released into society. That is to say, to what extent do extremist networks cross prison walls? How easily and often do ex-felons maintain their connection with related networks outside prison? What does the answer to that question mean for the propensity to commit violent acts after detention? In general, a more comprehensive understanding about how structural characteristics of social networks affect an inmates' susceptibility to radicalization would provide an important cornerstone for the development of counterradicalization efforts.

One further focus for future research should be the dynamics of religious conversion and its relation to radicalization. Converts are often seen as particularly vulnerable to radicalization, though concrete information on the subject is virtually absent. Are converts indeed more susceptible to radicalization, and if so, why? What are the figures, what are the reasons for conversion, what determines whether converts radicalize or not? To determine whether heightened attention on converts is justifiable, a thorough understanding of this group, its social position in the prison system and its role in the spread of extremist thought will be indispensable.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Given the lack of information on prison radicalization today, policy makers face special challenges in understanding the dimensions of the threat and in crafting a response. As research progresses in different countries, policy makers will need to

be aware how country-specific characteristics—including demographics, the socio-political climate, institutional characteristics of the penitentiary system, and cultural and historical patterns—can affect the risk of prison radicalization and appropriate responses.

Similarly, governments need to be cautious in relying on internationally established "best practices." Policies that appear to be effective in one country might produce suboptimal or counterproductive outcomes in another country. In a similar vein, policies that were successful in the past or aimed at other populations will not necessarily be successful now. Policies must be considered, in this regard, in light of the unique cultural, historic, and political characteristics of the individual national contexts.

In line with this, policy makers need to be aware of potential unintended consequences of their policy decisions in both the short and the longer run. Policies that produce favorable results in the near term might elicit negative consequences over extended periods of time. For example, imposing severely restrictive prison regimes on extremist inmates might erect barriers against recruitment efforts by these inmates, but might simultaneously contribute to shaping an environment that is conducive to radicalization.

Sensitivity to individual offender circumstances will be critical. Since only a small minority of the prison population appears to be susceptible to radicalization, standardized interventions that are aimed at large subgroups (e.g., Muslims in general) can cause resentment and run the risk of stigmatizing and unduly marginalizing groups of people. Rather, the implementation of restrictive measures should be grounded whenever possible on individual risk assessments, to temper accusations of institutionalized discrimination.

At the same time, governments and prison authorities must resist the temptation to focus wholly on restrictive measures. A balanced approach will incorporate ameliorative efforts that help to prepare inmates for their return into society. Governments should invest in developing programs that encourage extremist inmates to renounce violent ideologies and move toward more peaceful interpretations. Such interventions should start at the moment inmates enter the prison system and carry on after the inmates are released.

Additionally, a balanced approach requires prison authorities to be cognizant of the perceived or real infringements on individual or religious freedoms. Prison authorities need to be aware that imposing restrictive measures on particular groups of inmates can be met by antagonism and frustration. Authorities need to deal sensitively with inmates' complaints or accusations. Failure to do so will likely backfire by promoting protests or extremist thought.

To ensure legitimacy and broad acceptance, government policies and interventions must be thoroughly explicated. Policy subjects, goals, target populations, divisions of responsibility and expectations about policy outcomes need to be unambiguously articulated to facilitate transparency and assessment. Moreover, policies and interventions have to be evaluated on a regular basis to ensure their efficacy. Reliable indicators have to be defined according to which intended policy outcomes can be measured.

Ultimately, the nations of the West will need to develop a coordinated and integrated effort to assess the threat of prison radicalization and to develop a coherent and effective response. This will take a renewed appreciation of how little is currently known about this complex subject, and a commitment to developing policies that are nuanced, flexible, and based on facts rather than emotion.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The chapter discusses the causes of radicalization among Muslims in prison. However, many kinds of extremists can be found in the prison system, like white supremacists, animal rights liberationists, and anarchists. Do you think that the underlying causes for these different types of radicalization are the same, or that there are differences in the factors that produce different kinds of extremism?

2. The authors argue that no coherent approach currently exists to combat radicalization in prison. In crafting an appropriate response to this possible threat, can lessons be learned from policies that deal with other kinds of special needs populations in prison? Similarly, what can be learned from rehabilitation programs for other kinds of offenders, like sexual offenders or drug addicts?

3. When confronted with the potential threat of religious radicalization in prison, governments face a pressing dilemma to maintain a delicate balance between religious rights and public safety. To what extent should the government be able to restrict the religious freedoms of inmates in order to prevent radicalization?

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