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TECHNICAL REPORT

Radicalization or Rehabilitation

Understanding the challenge of
extremist and radicalized prisoners

Greg Hannah, Lindsay Clutterbuck, Jennifer Rubin

Prepared for the RAND Corporation



EUROPE

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Preface

This study is the result of internally funded RAND Corporation research. It seeks to provide a preliminary overview of the challenges posed by radicalized and extremist prisoners, and to explore the potential for the radicalization of young European Muslims in the prison environment. The study draws on the body of existing prison theory literature, historical case examples and contemporary open sources. It draws a number of conclusions about the potential in prison for extremist activity, including radicalization, and highlights a number of areas where further research and action may be desirable.

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Summary

The radicalization of young Muslims has become an issue of high priority to public policy-makers in the UK, Europe and beyond. The deadly attacks in Madrid in 2004 and on the London transport network in July 2005 highlighted the threat posed by small groups of violent, radicalized individuals. Consequently, focus is currently turning to questions about the challenge of radicalization – its precursors, processes, nodes (or physical environments) and operational characteristics, and the potential for de-radicalizing such individuals. Among the nodes for radicalization, three physical venues are thought to be of concern: radicalized mosques, educational establishments (notably universities) and prisons. In particular, radicalization and extremist activity in prisons has increasingly been highlighted as of being of concern in recent official statements surrounding the issue (for example, see House of Commons 2006, 2007a).

This study therefore seeks to explore the issue of radicalization and extremist activity in the prison environment. Using a combination of prison theory, historical examples and contemporary open source material, this report seeks to identify lessons from previous instances of dealing with extremist prisoners. It is hoped that these lessons may provide insights about the challenges posed by the increasing number of violent imprisoned jihadists.

There appear to be considerable overlaps between the historical precedents for dealing with prisoners in earlier conflicts, such as that in Northern Ireland, and the subject of this study. A substantial proportion of the lessons already identified from the management of extremist prisoners are therefore likely to remain valid. However, there are some aspects of the contemporary situation that appear to require greater examination and understanding. A notable difference between the examples of Irish Republican and Basque groups and contemporary violent jihadists concerns their respective attitudes to the recruitment of new members in prison. The nationalist groups deliberately avoided such recruitment, while imprisoned violent jihadists appear to regard recruitment in their prisons as a prime objective. This report draws a number of conclusions about what is and (arguably, more importantly) what is not known about the nature and extent of the problem. It highlights a number of areas that appear to require additional research and exploration.

It is difficult to assess the extent of the problem

Due to the lack of open sources and reluctance on the part of the authorities to discuss these issues, it is not currently possible to draw any definitive conclusions about the extent of violent jihadist radicalization and recruitment in European prisons. While there is some evidence that problem exists, without greater access to security and prison authorities and,

perhaps, to the prisons themselves, it will remain impossible to quantify its extent. However, it seems reasonable to conclude that, as the number of violent jihadist prisoners grows, so too will the potential for future challenges in managing them.

Radicalization of prisoners is neither new nor unique

The examples examined in this study show that the potential for imprisoned individuals to adopt new and, in some cases, extremist or radicalized beliefs, is not a new phenomenon, nor is it exclusive to contemporary violent jihadists. A number of organizations have demonstrated how the prison system is used as a source of new recruits and as a base of power. By examining these and other precedents we may gain a greater understanding of how the radicalization process operates in the prison environment.

Imprisonment may enhance vulnerability to radicalization

Imprisonment may increase a prisoner's susceptibility to adopting new and radicalized ideas or beliefs. This is referred to as a "cognitive opening". There are striking similarities between what are believed to be the psychological experiences that make young Muslims susceptible to radicalization and the psychological impact of imprisonment on individuals in general. These experiences include: undergoing a crisis of self-understanding that challenges or even destroys your conception of the self, experiencing acute feelings of rejection by your native or adopted society and seeking to cope by adopting a new self-identity or self-belief, which may be achieved by adopting a new belief structure (religious or otherwise) and being assimilated into a new, inclusive and frequently protective, group identity. Thus, placing young Muslims (who may already be vulnerable to radicalizing influences) in a prison environment, with all its accompanying psychological and physical dangers may well compound their vulnerability to radicalization. However, it must also be recognized that adopting new and radicalized beliefs may be only one potential pathway for prisoners. Some may seek solace in religion, which may be literalist in its interpretation, but does not necessarily indicate that the prisoner has become a potentially violent extremist. The apparent tendency of some prisoners to convert or revert to religious beliefs highlights the importance of preventing extremists from spreading their ideology via religious services or places of worship in prison. This reinforces the importance of initiatives such as that taken by the UK Prison Service to provide specialist training to prison imams.

Radicalization is one element in a spectrum of potential extremist activity

Radicalized and extremist prisoners may engage in a wide range of activities in prison. Some of these activities may be normal within prison walls, while others may be the result of active resistance. Such activities may simply involve forming into groups of like-minded individuals for self-protection or support, but others may be less benign, such as staging protests and hunger strikes or violent resistance in the form of riots and escapes. Prison and security authorities may have anticipated the possibility that, as the number of violent jihadist prisoners grows, a more cohesive organization may evolve in prisons that will seek to disrupt or subvert the custodial regime.

Greater understanding of the nature of the problem is required

One aspect of extremist prisoner organizations, such as the prison elements of Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) or the *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA), that made them easier

to identify, understand and counter was their hierarchical or paramilitary structures. Identifying who was in control and discerning what the roles of the different prisoners were was easy for the prison authorities. This is not the case with violent jihadist prisoners who, far from revealing their organizational allegiances and activities, may seek to remain covert. The clandestine nature of their operation makes it harder to distinguish which prisoners are extremists in the general prisoner population. Cultural differences between the prisoners and those who guard them make this perception harder still. Religiosity is an increasingly unreliable indicator of extremist or radicalized behaviour and it may be counter-productive to assume that it is. Further research may be useful for developing a better understanding of what indicators, if any, may point to influential extremist or radicalizing activity in prisons.

There are options for containing extremist prisoners

One of the problems faced by those seeking to manage extremist prisoners is deciding where and how to contain them. The two primary options are to concentrate them in one or a few prisons or to disperse them throughout the prison system. Both options have advantages and disadvantages. From a resource perspective concentration is beneficial, as the necessary high security resources (perhaps including intelligence-gathering capabilities, using specialized personnel such as linguists, staff training and so on) are needed in only a few locations. However, concentration can also have problematic consequences. In the Maze Prison in Northern Ireland, for example, opposing paramilitary factions of prisoners effectively took control of their prison wings, segregating themselves from the other side and other ordinary prisoners. The paramilitary prisoners could then more readily engage in a range of subversive and violent activities. Those engaged in violent jihad in the UK are typically not part of an organized, hierarchical group; instead they are made up of small, loosely affiliated cells and teams. However, it is possible that if such individuals are concentrated, their loose networks may consolidate into a more solid and organized form.

Dispersing extremist prisoners helps to prevent the formation of groups with strong organizations and ties in a single prison and reduces the opportunities for their leaders to maintain tight discipline and control over other prisoners. Dispersal also is likely to help security by preventing small groups of extremist prisoners from plotting organized escape attempts and from planning attacks or activities in or beyond the prison. Conversely, dispersal may provide violent jihadist prisoners with access to a new pool of potential recruits.

De-radicalization of extremist prisoners may be possible

In a number of countries, perhaps following the recognition by the authorities of the potential consequences of large numbers of violent, radicalized individuals being concentrated in prisons for many years, programmes for the de-radicalization of prisoners have been developed. The efforts of Singapore, Saudi Arabia and Yemen have received considerable attention but it is difficult to assess the level of success achieved by these programmes. The authorities in Singapore have released at least three former *Jemaah Islamiyah* members as a result of their rehabilitation efforts. It is reported that since 2004 some 2,000 prisoners have participated in the Saudi Arabian programme, of whom roughly 700 have been released. In the case of Yemen some 364 suspected militants were released before the programme's effectiveness was called into question.

The prisoners targeted have several opportunities to abuse such programmes. The Yemeni example appears to demonstrate this, as it resulted in releasing prisoners who returned to their extremist ways. It would be difficult for Western, non-Muslim governments to create such programmes without the active support of leading religious authorities. In Singapore the cooperation between the secular authority and local religious leaders appears to have helped their rehabilitation programme to succeed. However, these schemes mentioned above, and others, have been in operation for relatively short periods of time and therefore it is too early to judge their overall effectiveness. Thus, further research and evaluation may lead to greater understanding of these efforts and the effectiveness of different methods.

Preventative and resettlement initiatives require greater attention

Imprisonment provides many of the social and psychological conditions for subsequent criminalization and potentially for radicalization and future extremist activity. Prisoners experience the denigration of the self, detachment from supportive social relationships, exposure to harsh authority and day-to-day violence, and the affiliation with their peers offers them an alternative, counter-cultural community of thought. The period post-imprisonment thus poses further challenges for those seeking to counter radicalization. One way of mitigating these challenges is to implement pre-release programmes that help to prepare the prisoner to reintegrate back into the community and find work. This has been found to have positive effects on offenders generally. However, there are likely to be theological and political facets to prison programmes, which incorporate discussion groups and links that continue when the prisoner is released into the community. This is specifically to be avoided in countering Islamist radicalization.

Currently there is active and urgent debate and discussion about understanding how young Muslims become offenders and reducing the likelihood of their doing so. The issues are described at times in terms of counter-terrorism and at other times as concerning social cohesion. This inconsistent use of language indicates a lack of conceptual clarity. While counter-terrorism measures undoubtedly have a role to play in enhancing security, understanding the experiences and disaffection of Muslim youth should be a separate matter. Pursuing social cohesion means focusing on the diversity of communities, including the whole range of religious, socio-economic and cultural groups, rather than targeting one specific group. Targeting points of tension instead of individual groups and seeking potential points of agreement and consensus about desirable ways of living peacefully together, may be more constructive than exhorting the moderate Muslim community to condemn “Muslim terrorists” publicly. In pursuit of cohesion, inter-faith dialogue has increasingly been considered a way forward to solicit the interest and support of religious and cultural leaders in community dialogue. These leaders are key to galvanizing more popular support that could help promote in their community a sense of engagement, investment and belonging, a shared sense of purpose and positive and supportive relationships. The implication is that individuals are thereby less likely to experience crises of the self or to search for experiences that make them vulnerable to those who may offer them alternative ideologies and practices and alternative courses of action, including violence.

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Addressing the issue of the radicalization of young Muslims has become a high priority for public policy-makers in Europe and beyond. The deadly attacks in Madrid in 2004 and the London transport network in July 2005 highlighted the threat posed by small groups of violent, radicalized individuals. Consequently, many governments are increasingly focused on questions about the challenge of radicalization – its precursors, processes, nodes and operational characteristics, and the potential to de-radicalize individuals and groups. Among the principal nodes (or physical environments) for radicalization, three main physical venues¹ have been identified as being of concern: radicalized mosques, educational establishments (notably universities) and prisons. As the UK Government's counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) points out: "particular places can also be sources of radicalizing influences. The influence of particular mosques has already been mentioned but there is also evidence that individuals can become radicalized whilst in prison" (HM Government 2006: 13).

Despite this recognition, it appears that the challenge of radicalization and recruitment in prisons has not, in the public domain at least, been systematically explored and is not yet well understood as a phenomenon. As the UK Government's independent reviewer of counter-terrorism legislation has stated:

Richard Reid, the shoe-bomber, appears to be somebody who was radicalized in a custodial setting. I can only give you anecdotes on that, but I have received anecdotal evidence from governor grades that this is occurring and that it is a worry to them. I do not want to exaggerate the problem but there certainly is an issue in that context. (House of Commons 2006)

The Secretary of State for Justice, in evidence to a Parliamentary Select Committee, stated recently that there is a concern about the potential for radicalization in UK prisons:

[radicalization] is a matter of concern to the whole of the Prison Service and to me, and, of course, is exercising us a lot as to how you handle those prisoners who are likely to go in as proselytisers and evangelisers and how you separate them from their targets. (House of Commons 2007a)

These concerns are not, however, without precedent. The activities and challenges to authority by radicalized or extremist prisoners have played a significant role in a number of political and violent conflicts. It seems reasonable to assume that some of the insights and

¹ The Internet has also been identified as an important mechanism as well as venue for radicalization

lessons relevant to the current situation may be drawn from these historical precedents. Consequently, this study seeks to explore the challenges posed by radicalized and extremist prisoners, including how prisoners may organize themselves and the range of activities in which they may engage including, in some cases, radicalizing and recruiting new followers to their particular causes.

Chapter 2 of this report examines the prison environment, its impact on the individual, their coping mechanisms (including the role of religion in coping) and the extent to which the prison experience may exacerbate an individual's potential for adopting radicalized beliefs. Having looked at relatively generalizable principles underlying life in prison, Chapter 3 examines a range of historical precedents of extremist and radicalized groups that operated in prisons, starting with the Irish Republican movement and the Suffragettes. It then looks at more recent examples of radicalized groups existing in, adapting to and, in some cases, thriving in prisons. These include groups such as the Black Muslims, White Supremacists, organized criminal gangs, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and Basque Nationalists.

Chapter 4 examines the importance of imprisonment in the history, literature and thought of violent jihadists and outlines examples of suspected or actual violent jihadist activity in prisons. Chapter 5 draws on the preceding case examples to develop a spectrum of radicalized and extremist prisoner activity and highlights the differences between two groups. Chapter 6 draws preliminary conclusions from the study and highlights a number of areas where further research may be of benefit in managing the challenges posed by extremist prisoners.

A note on terminology

The word “radicalization” (used interchangeably in this report with “radicalized” and “radicalizing”) is frequently used to describe the process whereby individuals transform their worldview over time from a range that society tends to consider to be normal into a range that society tends to consider to be extreme. In some cases these individuals may then take a further step and involve themselves in acts of violence. However, it is not the case that those who embark on such a transformation do so solely as a consequence of their interpretation of Islam.

Radicalization is not confined to only one type of motivating ideology and neither is it a recent phenomenon.² For example, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the war in Vietnam, a rising general dissatisfaction with capitalism and frustration at the limitations of conventional politics acted as a catalyst for many young people to participate in protest movements. Some emerged from this milieu and went on to join groups and organizations committed to advancing by revolutionary methods the politics of communism and Trotskyism. An even smaller minority formed or joined extreme, left-wing oriented groups that were involved in terrorism. In Europe they were epitomized by the Red Army Faction in what was then West Germany, the Red Brigades in Italy and the Angry Brigades in the UK. In current parlance, individuals who undertook their personal journey from political

² For example, a 1973 US Congressional study on the US penal system explicitly refers to the radicalization of inmates in Californian prisons. (Committee on Internal Security 1973: 74).

awareness, through political activism and on into extremism or even violence, underwent a process now referred to as radicalization.

Today, Western governments' concern about the threat from terrorism is primarily focused (although not exclusively so) on its manifestation described as "radical Islam", a term defined by the Security Service of The Netherlands as "the politico-religious pursuit of establishing – if necessary by extreme means – a society which reflects the perceived values from the original sources of Islam as purely as possible" (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations 2006: 3). Consequently, in this context radicalization is "internalizing a set of beliefs, a militant mindset that embraces violent jihad as the paramount test of one's conviction" (Jenkins 2007: 2). The counter terrorism strategy of the UK, known as CONTEST, sets out a variety of "potentially radicalizing factors" that seem to contribute to developing and shaping this militant mindset (HM Government 2006). However, it also warns "the catalyst for any given individual becoming a terrorist will be a combination of different factors particular to that person" (HM Government 2006). The factors identified are "the development of a sense of grievance and injustice, the process of globalization, simplistic but virulent anti-Westernism, perceived lack of consistent Western standards in international behaviour, specific events for e.g. Coalition action to restore sovereignty in Kuwait, personal alienation or community disadvantage and exposure to radical ideas" (HM Government 2006). A recent report by the New York Police Department examines a number of case studies from the USA, Europe, Canada and Australia and identifies four distinct phases of radicalization; "pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination and jihadization" (New York Police Department 2007: 6).

Radicalization should not be viewed as an escalator, inevitably carrying all the individuals on it inexorably into violence. It is better envisaged as a funnel that large number of individuals may enter but from which only a very small number of individuals emerge. Many will drop out along the way, leaving only a small proportion to cross the Rubicon and become involved in terrorism. In order to reduce the numbers entering the funnel and to maximize the numbers of those who choose to go no further, counter terrorism strategies (including those applicable to the prison system) must "always offer a safe way back from the edge" (Jenkins 2007: 4).

A number of other terms are used in this report. The term "Islamist" is used here to refer to an Islamic political or social activist "committed to implementation of their ideological vision of Islam in the state and/or society" Esposito 2003. "Violent jihadist" draws on the definition adopted by the Dutch Security Service, specifically: an individual ready "to participate in armed struggle against the West and other perceived enemies of Islam" (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations 2006: 10). Finally, the term "extremist" is defined as "a person who holds extreme or fanatical political or religious views and especially resorts to or advocates extreme action" (specifically violence).

Like many other physical locations, social establishments or institutions, prisons are “places such as rooms, suites of rooms, buildings, or plants in which activity of a particular kind regularly goes on” (Goffman 1961: 15). However, along with a number of other social establishments, such as boarding schools, mental institutions, and hospitals, prisons can be seen as “total institutions” in that they maintain a “barrier to social intercourse with the outside and to departure that is often built right into the physical plant, such as locked doors, high walls, barbed wire, cliffs, water, forests, or moors” (Goffman 1961: 15–16). The occupants or inmates of these institutions, total or otherwise, are, to a greater or lesser extent, exposed to and conditioned by the specific institution’s rules and cultural mores. What makes prisons distinct from other forms of total institution is their deliberate and stated purpose to punish (by, at the minimum, detention and isolation from mainstream life) the inmates on behalf of the wider society. Indeed, as a leading researcher on prisons observes: “prison represents a social system in which an attempt is made to create and maintain total or almost total social control” (Sykes 1999: xiv). This chapter seeks to explore the impact of this perhaps unique institution upon its occupants.

2.1 **The impact of imprisonment on individuals**

In recent decades there has been growing evidence that criminal behaviour does not originate exclusively in the person. There has been an attendant shift, when seeking to understand crime and anti-social behaviour, away from focusing on the bad apples to examine the nature of its environment (Zimbardo 2007). Individuals do not commit violent or criminal acts in a vacuum. Their backgrounds, past experiences and opportunities make them more or less likely to do so, and their social and institutional contexts influence their immediate and subsequent behaviour.

With this movement in the discipline of psychology, understanding prisons as institutions and their effects on the incarcerated has become more nuanced. In the criminology and psychology literature (if not in many religious and ideological views), there has been a shift away from thinking about prisons merely as providing deterrence or punishment towards seeking to understand how prison experience shapes individuals’ attitudes and behaviour.

In a leading study of prison experience Sykes (1999) conducted research on the experience of life in a maximum security prison. He called the psychological impact of imprisonment upon individuals “the pains of imprisonment”. This chapter begins by discussing some of

these pains of imprisonment, which have become a standard reference in subsequent research, and their likely consequences. These consequences provide useful insights later, in discussing the challenges of the prison context for those attempting to understand and counter extremism and radicalization.

Separation from supportive relationships.

Sykes' study refers to being deprived of liberty. The deprivation of liberty is best understood with reference to the significant aspects of life that freedom affords individuals until they become prisoners. In their confinement prisoners tend to be cut off from family and friends.³ Separation from the regular day-to-day support that may be supplied by such relationships causes psychological stress at a time when the new prisoner is facing a traumatic set of conditions and going through a difficult adjustment.⁴ Social support and supportive relationships are known to be important for individuals' physical and emotional health and supportive relationships have been shown to protect individuals against offending in the future (Farrington 2002).

Threats to personal identity and masculinity

Despite having their basic survival needs met by custodial institutions prisoners are also deprived of personal or sentimental possessions. Individuals may use clothing and other personal items as symbols and reminders of their personal affiliations and ties to groups and identities (Goffman 1961). Thus, stripping away such items is part of the process of stripping away prisoners' autonomy and selfhood. Viggiani (2007) describes an ethnographic study of the experience of imprisonment and its effects:

On arrival at prison reception, prisoners were ordered to surrender all that identified them as responsible adults, allocated a prison uniform and number and addressed only by surname. This procedure signalled the beginning of a "mortification" process ... as their self-confidence, self-esteem and identity were diminished, and they felt progressively alienated by the system. As they entered induction, prisoners experienced fear, panic, anxiety, loss of privacy, vulnerability and heightened visibility as they came under constant surveillance from the prison staff and their fellow prisoners. It seems that the regime was therefore engineered to disempower prisoners, forcing them to surrender control to the system.

(Viggiani 2007: 115–35)

In addition to this loss of supportive relationships and the negating of their personal identity, for heterosexual prisoners the gender-segregated environment of the prison may be associated with other psychological difficulties. Sykes states that

³ Some prisoners may receive visits at specified times in certain prisons, but this is by no means always the case. It is worth noting that certain prisoners' families or loved ones are less likely than others to visit. Islamic teaching advocates compassion for criminals, but it is not clear whether or not this translates into support for family members and loved ones who end up in prison, or whether Muslim prisoners tend to be stigmatized and ostracized.

⁴ For evidence on social support as a buffer against the adverse effects of negative life events see Cohen and Wills 1985: 310-57.

a society composed exclusively of men tends to generate anxieties in its members concerning their masculinity, regardless of whether or not they are coerced, bribed or seduced into an overt homosexual liaison. Latent homosexual tendencies may be activated in the individual without being translated into open behaviour and yet still arouse strong guilt feelings at either the conscious or unconscious level. (Sykes 1999: 20)

Existing in such an environment can cause a male prisoner to question his status as a male, and the lack of opportunity to be identified as a man by female society may pose a further risk to some prisoners' self-image.

The deprivation of autonomy

Another characteristic of the prison environment is that it completely removes from individual prisoners their control of their daily routine, and replaces it with an array of imposed rules and regulations and bureaucratic controls. Sykes notes that this imposition of control causes inmates to direct intense hostility towards the prison authorities, particularly when the rationale for seemingly arbitrary decisions is not apparent.

Part of the reasoning for withholding explanations lies in the nature of the power relationship between prisoner and the authorities. Explaining the reasoning behind policies and rules implies that if the rationale is not accepted by the prisoner, it may be challenged and, as Sykes notes

if the inmate population maintains the right to argue with its captors, it takes on the appearance of an enemy nation with its own sovereignty; and in doing so raises disturbing questions about the nature of the offender's deviance. The criminal is no longer simply a man who has broken the law; he has become part of a group with an alternative viewpoint and thus attacks the validity of the law itself. (Sykes 1999: 20)

The imposition of harsh and arbitrary discipline and the removal of the prisoners' ability to make decisions for themselves poses a significant threat to their self-image and sense of self-efficacy, as it effectively reduces them to the status of helpless children, and "of the many threats which may confront the individual, in or out of prison, there are few better calculated to arouse acute anxieties than the attempt to re-impose the subservience of youth" (Sykes 1999: 73–6).

Improving offenders' self-control and reducing offending is facilitated both if they understand the rationale for rules and comprehend the consequences of their actions and their ability to alter their own behaviour. For example, cognitive behavioural therapy has been shown in other situations to help individuals develop ways of recognizing their own dysfunctional thought patterns and intervening to alter these (Lipsey and Landenberger 2006). The prison is structured in a way that, at best it does not facilitate this learning and at worst, fundamentally undermines it and exacerbates offenders' existing anti-social tendencies.

Insecurity and violence

Cohabiting with a group of other criminals, some of whom are violent or dangerous, gives rise to feelings of insecurity. As Sykes states, despite the formation of groups and mechanisms of mutual aid, "there are a sufficient number of outlaws within this group of

outlaws to deprive the average prisoner of that sense of security which comes from living among men who can reasonably be expected to abide by the rules of society". This loss of security provokes distress in two ways. First, the actual occurrence of violence directed towards the prisoner is distressing. Second, the violent context provokes internal anxieties about whether individual prisoners will be able to cope with future violent incidents, and the consequences for their standing in the inmate community should they not prove equal to the physical challenges they may face (Sykes 1999: 76–8).

Research on violence in prisons, which encompasses prisoner-on prisoner, prisoner-on-staff and staff-on-prisoner violence, illustrates the negative dynamic invoked by this anxiety and hostile context. Gilligan (1996) is a prison psychiatrist who has studied for many years the interactions that occur around violent incidents, concluding that in each case the violence was "provoked by the experience of feeling shamed and humiliated, disrespected and ridiculed, and... represented the attempt to prevent or undo this 'loss of face' – no matter how severe the punishment" (Gilligan 1996: 110). Other research also cites evidence for the significance of "saving face", especially in instances in which the insulted party already has low or unstable self-esteem: "microanalyses of homicides have indicated that such crimes are most often the results of 'transactions' in which the perpetrator resorted to lethal violence to resolve an argument involving emotional injury to the offender" (DeFronzo 1997: 397). Luckenbill reported "that such crimes are most often the outcome of a 'character contest' in which one of the participants attacks the other's sense of value, worth, competency, or reputation" (Luckenbill 1977: 176–86).

Rejection by the dominant group, separation from a dominant moral code

Sykes argues that imprisonment "represents a deliberate, moral rejection of the criminal by the free community". He states that being so completely rejected by society poses a significant threat to prisoners' self-conception of worth. They can deal with this damage in different ways. One way is to accept that the rejection is valid and engage in self-castigation, reflecting the broader institutional and societal judgement that the isolation represents. Another is to attribute the blame to some external source. In doing so, the offender may "find a device for rejecting his rejectors, if he is to endure psychologically" (Sykes 1999: 65–7). These failures can be attributed to the system, the authorities, and the organizations that pointed out or punished the offender's failures in the first place. This can be a significant psychological coping mechanism (Taylor and Brown 1988). By excusing their own actions and justifying themselves, some offenders manage to retain their own sense of worth.

2.2 Individual coping and "prisonization"

The discussion above indicates some of the ways that the prison environment provokes stress and can be psychologically detrimental to the prisoner. However, imprisonment does not impact on individual prisoners in a simple, unidirectional manner. Their previous experiences, affiliations and abilities also influences the way prisoners are affected by the prison context. Research on prisons has increasingly acknowledged this dynamic interplay between prisoners and their context by focusing on how they cope (Liebling and Maruna

2005). Prisoners arrive in prison differentially equipped to cope or deal with the deprivations, challenges and rejections of imprisonment described above, including

- the loss of social support and close personal relationships
- the denigration of their identity, sexuality and feelings of self-worth
- the insecurity, anxiety and threats to self-esteem they experience in a violent environment
- the moral rejection they have experienced by society and the dominant group or legal system
- the removal to a harsh, violent and unpredictable context

Coping is used or applied to a process of habituating or assimilating to a new environment. The process by which an individual prisoner is assimilated into the wider prison inmate population and subcultures has been described as “prisonization”. This phenomenon occurs when inmates adopt the customs and general behaviour of the prison community. In order to gain status, individuals are forced to adopt behaviour in line with those of their fellow inmates (Caldwell 1956: 656; Thomas 1977: 135–7).

Prisoners’ differential ability to cope and integrate in to the prison community is influenced by a range of individual, group and institutional variables, including their physical and mental health, their substance dependency, their personal relationships, their group memberships and affiliations, their attitudes, norms and belief systems, their ability to form new relationships and affiliations, and the of composition groups and regimes already found in the prison.

Many of these factors are inter-related. Joining an existing group may help prisoners to obtain a sense of psychological affiliation and physically to obtain a form of protection: “a very large proportion of inmates are also organized into small informal, natural or primary groups, based upon common interests or the performance of natural functions of some kind” (Caldwell 1956: 650). Some individuals adjust remarkably well to the prison context. However, as Leibling points out in her review of prison suicide and prisoner coping, “imprisonment seemed to be most distressing for vulnerable groups who were least able to cope with the demands made by an unresponsive and depriving environment” (Liebling 1999: 283–359).

Looking for a way out

There picture that emerges is that individuals adapting to imprisonment by finding physical and psychological protection in joining new groups and rejecting the negative judgement made by the dominant culture and legal system. However, in doing so, prisoners become detached or detach themselves from experiences and lifestyles that tend to protect individuals from future offending, while the experiences and activities that are associated with greater risk of future criminal behaviour are play a newly prominent part in their lives.⁵ The prison is not an environment where we can assume that offenders will be

⁵ Risks for future offending include harsh or inconsistent punishment by authority figures (parents) (Farrington 2002), low self-esteem, being male, peer relationships involving deviant moral codes (e.g. being stuck with

rehabilitated. With many known protective factors removed, and many of the risk factors enhanced or heightened, imprisonment in the UK and other countries tends to be associated with increased future offending.⁶ Indeed, research since the 1960s has shown how in some cases even otherwise normally law-abiding citizens may be induced to hostile and violent behaviour by being thrown into a “bad barrel” (see Zimbardo 2007).

Faced with a harsh and hostile environment that can generate dislocation, insecurity and acute anxiety prisoners may look to role models and other ways of coping, such as religion. For example, Stojkovic points out that many inmates are extremely alienated by the formal prison structure, which provides no opportunity to develop a positive self-image. Because of this alienation from prison staff, inmates have no positive means of expressing their own identities. In reaction to this loss of identity, inmates look for someone whom they can emulate (Stojkovic 1984: 517).

2.3 Religion in prison life

Religion and religious conversion have long played a role in the prison environment. Some observers have pointed to prison conversions as a means by which cynical prisoners seek to reduce their sentences, reverting to type upon release. Despite this, religion clearly has much to offer some prisoners on spiritual, psychological and at times physical and material levels. Further, religion may protect them against future offending and can go some way towards remedying some of the detrimental effects of imprisonment.

Embracing religion can help to explain or rationalize how individuals find themselves to be imprisoned and assuage their feelings of guilt or shame. For example, a prisoner can come to perceive his current predicament as being the result of his failure to live by religious teachings, which allowed him to fall into a life of crime. This fall may be attributed to the works of the “Devil” or a great “Evil”. “Laying responsibility for the crime as the work of an external agent can free the inmate of terrible burdens of guilt” (Clear *et al.* 2000: 60) Other prisoners do not seek to shift the blame for their actions, but embrace faith as a means of atoning for them.

Adopting, or reverting to, a set of religious beliefs or practices can offer a new outlook or way of living and an escape from the tribulations and tedium of prison life. It can also offer a new set of rules and guidelines for living that helps to return some otherwise lost self-control, providing a prisoner with a degree of certainty. This modicum of control and certainty can assist in reducing levels of aggression and tension and reduce the stress of interactions with other prisoners (Spalek and El-Hassan 2007: 109).

other offenders), lack of social support and supportive relationships (Prior and Paris 2005). Protective factors include bonding and warmth of relationships with parents and carers (Farrington 2002).

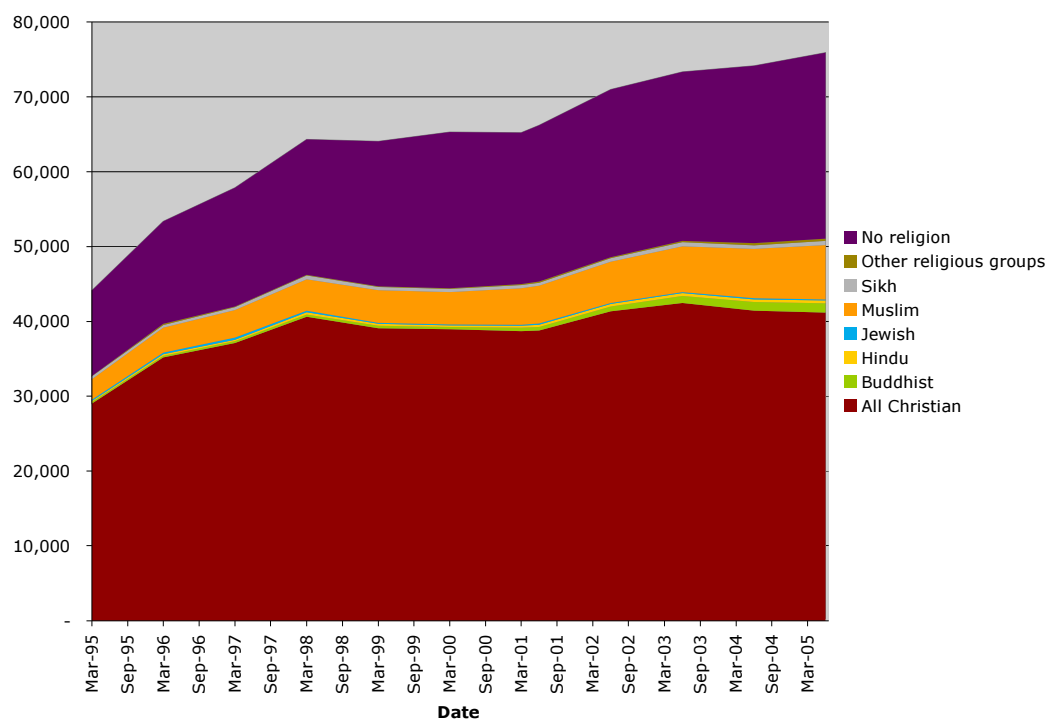
⁶ Denmark has approximately half the rate of incarceration (people tend to only be put in prison for very serious crimes), and half the rate of post-incarceration reoffending. They have liberal/progressive prison regimes – e.g. if the offender has a child, partner and child are allowed to come and live with the prisoner during their sentence. However, at the same time the Danes punish serious crimes severely, for example, sex offenders are chemically castrated. In the Danish prison system many of the “protective” factors discussed above are acknowledged and brought back in to the prison environment, including relationships and strong and consistent authority, and prison appears more successful at reducing reoffending.

Like many forms of social activity, practising religion can facilitate admission to a group. As has been observed above, group formation is a characteristic of prison experience. Adopting a religious identity may help a prisoner gain access to a particular, religiously oriented group. This brings a number of benefits. First, such a group offers new or prospective converts a supportive environment in which to learn about their new faith. Second, such a group provides prisoners with an element of protection from victimization and violence at the hands of other prisoners. An example of this is the propensity for those convicted of child sexual offences to join Christian religious groups in US prisons, because they offer a form of protection (Clear *et al.* 2000: 64). It can also improve the external world's perception of the prisoner, as adopting religion is a public declaration that he or she is no longer the sinful person who was imprisoned in the first place. Finally, at a more practical level, religious affiliation can provide material benefits to a prisoner, such as better welfare facilities, letters, visitors and other means of reconnection to the outside world. Joining religious groups and taking on a religious identity is thus not necessarily an indicator of radicalized activity or leaning. On the contrary, finding religion in prison may protect the individual against future offending.

2.3.1 Muslims in UK prisons

According to the 2001 Census in a total population of 49,138,831 for England and Wales some 1,763,676 were Muslims (constituting 3.58 per cent of the population of England and Wales). Home Office statistics for the same year show that out of a total prison population of 66,403 5,046 prisoners were classified as Muslim. This represents 7.6 per cent of the total number of prisoners in 2001, over double the proportionate rate.

Figure 1: Religious make-up of England and Wales prison population 1995–2005



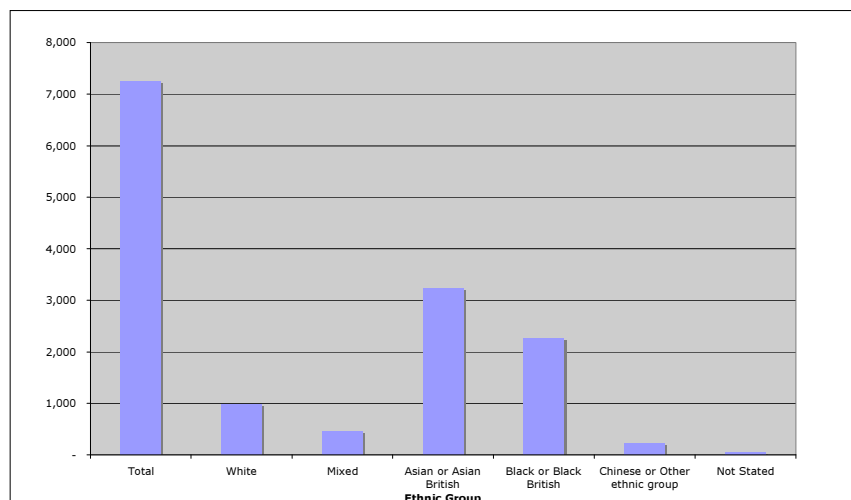
Source: UK Home Office

As [Figure 1](#) illustrates, in the period between 2001 and 2005, the number of prisoners classified as Muslim has risen along with the general increase in the England and Wales prison population. As of June 2005 the total prison population was 76,190 and the total number of Muslim prisoners had risen to 7,246, or 9.5 per cent. More recently, by August 2007, the total prison population for England and Wales stood at 81,189 (Ministry of Justice 2007).

(Central Statistics Office 2001).

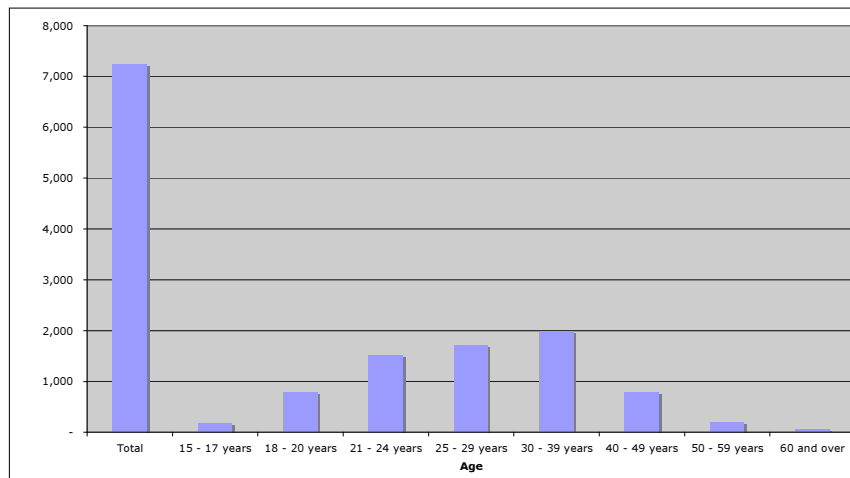
[Figure 2](#) breaks down the overall Muslim prison population in England and Wales in June 2005 by their ethnicity. Of the 7,246 Muslim prisoners 3,228 (44.5 per cent) were classified as being of Asian or British Asian ethnicity; 2,270 (31.3 per cent) were classified as Black or Black British and 988 (13.6 per cent) were classified as White; 447 were of mixed ethnic background and 224 were categorized as Chinese or other ethnic group. For comparison, in the 2001 census 74 per cent of Muslims were from an Asian ethnic background, the majority being Pakistani (43 per cent), Bangladeshi (16 per cent), Indian (eight per cent) and other Asian (6 per cent). Eleven per cent of British Muslims were from a White ethnic group, (4 per cent were of White British origin and 7 per cent from another White background, including Turkish, Cypriot, Arab and Eastern European). A further 6 per cent of Muslims were of Black African origin, mainly from North and West Africa, particularly Somalia (Central Statistics Office 2001).

[Figure 2: Prisoners classified as Muslim by ethnic group in prisons in England and Wales, June 2005](#)



Source: UK Home Office

[Figure 3](#) illustrates the ages of Muslim prisoners in England and Wales in 2005. It shows that most Muslim prisoners were aged between 21 and 39-years old, totalling 5,227 prisoners, with the single largest age group being 30–39-years old.

Figure 3: Prisoners classified as Muslim by age group in England & Wales, June 2005

Source: UK Home Office

Perhaps the most comprehensive assessment made to date of Muslims in UK prisons is that by Beckford *et al.* (2005) which makes a number of conclusions relevant to this study. First, it observes that that only 20 per cent of male Muslim prisoners in the sample studied had actively participated in religious activities before their imprisonment and that many had come to know more about Islam within the prison than they had done outside. Second, many prisoners had regularly attended mosque in their childhood or before to coming to the UK, but had drifted away from religious activity in their teens. Third, Beckford *et al.* note that that Muslim prisoners' understanding of the tenets of different Islamic teachings tended to be weak (Beckford *et al.* 2005: 236). Finally, despite the varied social and cultural origin of these prisoners, there was strong evidence of support and cooperation between them, ranging from mutual recognition to strategies they had developed for their mutual protection (Beckford *et al.* 2005: 237). Finally, Beckford *et al.* observe that the research carried out in UK prisons encountered little evidence of what might be considered extremist views or radicalized Muslim prisoners.

This study recognizes that in the traumatic environment of a prison, where individuals are faced with losing their established sense of identity, are dislocated and suffer from fear and shame at their imprisonment, it is not surprising that like individuals bond to form more or less cohesive groups. Indeed, it appears that such groups will always form, particularly in prison. Some of them will be religious but does not, by itself, indicate radicalized activity or leanings. Distinguishing normal prison behaviour from the indicators of nascent radicalization is the major challenge.

2.4 Prisoner vulnerability to radicalization

A full exploration of the radicalization concept is beyond the remit of this study, but it is useful to briefly examine some of the fundamentals of radicalization, and how, some prisoners may be uniquely vulnerable to potentially radicalizing influences.

A study published by the Dutch government in 2005 describes radicalization as a process composed of three elements. First, it is an individual process whereby an individuals ask questions about the world and seek to change their relationship with their environment. Such a process of change and redefinition normally occurs in adolescents, and adopting a radicalized worldview is only one potential outcome of it. Radicalization, therefore,

can perhaps best be regarded as adopting a (new) identity or self-image. Looking for one's own identity forms part of every normal development process from child to adult, but it can also be initiated separately from a specific life phase. It may be the result of signals from the environment that someone's identity is no longer being acknowledged or recognized, or that moral question marks are placed next to this identity. (The Netherlands Ministry of Justice 2005: 10)

However, individual dissatisfaction or disillusionment does not by itself result in an individual's acceptance of violent and radicalized beliefs. Personal interaction with those who espouse such beliefs and seek to actively convert or recruit new followers to this worldview is frequently required, although it has been suggested that it is possible for individuals to effectively "self-radicalize" (The Netherlands Ministry of Justice 2005: 11). Environmental factors also contribute to the process of violent radicalization, and these may enable the individual or group to legitimatise their actions as a response to perceived injustices or crimes suffered at an individual or collective level, such as discrimination and racism (The Netherlands Ministry of Justice 2005: 12).

A 2007 UK government study reinforces the Dutch conclusions and provides further illumination, suggesting that individual identity is an important aspect of radicalization (Choudhury: 2007). It states that "the path to radicalization often involves a search for identity at a moment of crisis", and that the process "creates a cognitive opening, a moment when previous explanations and belief systems are found to be inadequate in explaining an individual's experience". (Choudhury 2007: 6). Such identity crises may be caused by a sense of "not being accepted" or belonging to society and that as "part of this re-evaluation of their identity, individuals seek to construct a sense of what it means to be Muslim in Britain today" (Choudhury 2007: 6).

The similarities between Sykes' description of the mental pressures and challenges to the ego imposed by incarceration and those experienced in the process of violent radicalization are striking. In both situations individuals undergo a crisis of the self, which challenges or even destroys their self-conception. In both contexts, this crisis may be partly or wholly related to feelings of rejection by their native or adopted societies. Young Muslim criminal prisoners in the West, rejecting the moral stigma imposed by their imprisonment and separation from decent society, may attribute their incarceration to perceived racism, Islamophobia, or economic discrimination. Finally, in both cases, the individual may seek psychological first-aid⁷ by developing a new sense of self-identify or belief, which in both contexts may be delivered by adopting a new belief structure (religious or otherwise) and being assimilated into a new inclusive, and frequently protective, group identity.

Sageman highlights the importance of the formation of groups (or cliques) in the process

⁷ A term developed by Anne Speckhard in 2006.

of radicalization and ultimate recruitment to violent jihadist activity. He states that the cliques

are the social mechanism that puts pressure on prospective participants to join, defines a certain social reality for the ever more intimate friends, and facilitates the development of a shared, collective social identity and strong emotional feelings for the in-group ... cliques literally transform lives and, in doing so, change the meaning and impact of friendship bonds that pave the way to joining the jihad. Selected events that might otherwise be largely independent and disconnected are linked through symbolic means that stress continuity and form a unified worldview. (Sageman 2004: 154)

And

Such intense relationships are bound to strongly affect one's sense of identity. This leads to the development of a social identity, in which the feeling of belonging to the global jihad can be grafted on to the sense of belonging to the now religiously and politically activated clique. The clique becomes close in on itself, and operates like a subculture and or counterculture, leading to intense cohesion in both emotional ties to the group and cognitive view of the world. (Sageman 2004: 156)

A number of young European Muslims perceive themselves to be rejected by Western society. Under such circumstances people tend to seek to re-establish or confirm their sense of personal and group identity (Choudhury 2007: 21). The prison context may sharpen or exacerbate such experiences of rejection and prejudice, and increase the urgent need to find way of coping with or overcoming these threats to self-identity. A number of alternative ways of coping in such an environment may present themselves, including serving time and leaving the system, falling under the influence of more experienced criminals and emerging as a more criminalized individual, seeking escape through drug or alcohol abuse, or turning to religion. However, previous experience suggests that a small number of prisoners exposed to certain individuals and ideas in prison will come to embrace a radicalized worldview. An even smaller number may emerge from prison with a desire to "do something". Such cognitive openings to new and radicalized ideas are not unique to contemporary Muslim prisoners, or indeed to the prison environment. However, as will be seen in the following two chapters, radicalized groups have a long history of surviving and, in some cases, thriving in the prison environment.

Prison and imprisonment has played a significant role in the development of radicalized and extremist individuals and organizations throughout history. This chapter discusses examples of several such organizations. A number of influential figures in modern history faced imprisonment for their radicalized or extremist activities. Among them are Adolf Hitler, who, while imprisoned for his role in the 1923 Munich putsch, dictated *Mein Kampf* (My struggle), which set out his extreme ideology and his future vision for Germany. At the opposite end of the ideological spectrum, Antonio Gramsci, a founding member of the Italian Communist Party and leading Marxist thinker, was imprisoned by the Italian Fascist government from 1926 until 1934, during which time he produced an important series of works known as the *Prison notebooks*. Another example of an individual imprisoned for radicalized activities is Nelson Mandela, who was jailed in 1962 for his activities with the ANC's armed wing *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (spear of the nation). Mandela spent the next 27 years in prison, during which time he gained a law degree from the University of London, emerging in February 1990 and going on to become president of South Africa in 1994. As Buntman notes in her work on the experience of ANC prisoners under the apartheid regime in South Africa, "[p]olitical imprisonment plays a vital role in shaping resistance movements and their methods" (Buntman 2003: 2).

This chapter explores the relationship between prison and a number of radicalized or extremist movements.

3.1 **Irish republicanism**

A useful historical example of the challenges (for the authorities) and the opportunities (for the radicalized organization) posed by a prison environment occurred in the late 19th century, with the development of the nationalist Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). In the 10 years after its founding in 1858, a number of Irish republicans, including members of the IRB, were imprisoned by the British for trying to foster an armed rebellion in Ireland. In 1871, several of them, including Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, were granted an amnesty and forced into exile in the USA. Rossa was soon to have a profound influence on Irish republican thought and activity when he developed the concept of conducting violent attacks on the mainland of Britain in order to force the British government to grant Ireland its independence. Rossa (1991) set up a "Skirmishing fund" in order to raise money to put the concept into action. So much money was raised that other ventures were undertaken, the most successful of which was the rescue of several prominent Irish

republican activists from exile in Australia (Smith 1979: 33–4). This was a tremendous propaganda coup that served to boost the morale of Irish-American republicans and humiliate the British government.

From the events of 1867 on the British mainland Irish republicans learned that three things could greatly assist them in their cause: prisoners, martyrs and the impact of explosives used on the British mainland. The first two arose from the arrest and eventual execution of three men in Manchester for murdering a police officer during the rescue of two Fenian leaders from a police van conveying them to prison. This showed how important prisoners could be to the Irish republican movement. The third factor became apparent barely three months after the rescue of Kelly and Deasy. An attempt was made by a small splinter group of Fenians to rescue Burke, the organization's most successful arms procurer. The prison was aware of the plot beforehand and had already been moved Burke, and thus the escape was foiled (Quinlivan and Rose 1982: 76–93).

The Easter Rising of April 1916 heralded the new way that Irish republicans saw themselves when incarcerated and the their use of this new perception in their propaganda battle with the British government. After their unsuccessful attempt to secure British withdrawal from Ireland through force of arms the participants in the Easter Rising who had been captured and imprisoned began to claim forcefully that, as they had fought in uniform as soldiers, they should be treated as prisoners of war.

Most of those who were rounded up and not quickly screened out were dispatched to the British mainland, where they ended up imprisoned together in Frongoch. Once there, the prisoners reinforced the view of themselves as an army by emphasizing that they had surrendered and were in military captivity. Solidarity was everything and they did not want individual release, preferring to stay with their comrades. To them,

Prison was another stage on which to act out their parts to a mass Irish audience equally well versed in their roles as outraged compatriots.... For the prisoners it meant ennoblement as the men who had risked all for their country: name recognition, ideological authenticity, and instant political credibility. (Hart 2005: 100)

The prisoners formed themselves into two different administrative units, a civilian council and a military staff. The civilian council aimed to be recognized as political prisoners and treated accordingly. The military staff “wanted to be recognized as belligerent soldiers and demanded prisoner-of-war status” (Hart 2005: 102). As the months went by, most of the civilians were released, leaving the camp in the hands of the military camp commandant and the full panoply of ranks and roles that were created to enable him to run it in a manner befitting an army, “including a quartermaster, deputy quartermaster, aide-de-camp, provost marshal and dormitory and company commanders” (Hart 2005: 101–2).

Between April 1916, when the first prisoners arrived in Frongoch, and December 1916, when they were all released just before Christmas, the foundations and precedents were laid for many of the events and responses that not only characterized the way that future IRA prisoners behaved and were dealt with “inside the wire” but also the impact that they had on those who were outside. Underpinning all of these was the implacable belief that they were soldiers at war and when captured, they should be treated accordingly. From this

flowed the critical issues of gaining recognition for their self-declared status, the way that they organized themselves, the actions that they took and those that were undertaken on their behalf. In pursuit of these objectives was the prison hunger strike, one of the most difficult actions for the British authorities to deal with. Indeed, this tactic has become almost inextricably linked with Irish republican prisoners over most of the 20th century, although this is not where it originated.

3.2 The Suffragettes

The Suffragettes were pioneers not only of the use of the hunger strike as a political weapon but also using to secure recognition of their claim for to status of political prisoners (Raeburn 1974: 102). A long-running campaign for women to be allowed to vote had been underway for many years but had produced no tangible results. Gradually, with the formation of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in 1903, a more militant approach was adopted. In October 1905 Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney were arrested at a public meeting after trying to question the speakers about their attitude to votes for women, a tactic that they knew would attract attention to their cause. They were charged, sentenced and quickly released (Raeburn 1974: 6–9).

At that time, convicted prisoners could be categorized as “first division” convicts, thus securing them better treatment and more privileges (Raeburn 1974: 96). If the court of the motive accepted the motives behind their actions they were sentenced as first division convicts and were then viewed as political prisoners. Those sentenced as second division convicts were treated as common criminals and were “stripped, forced to wear prison clothes, scrub stone floors and live in solitary confinement” (Raeburn 1974: 30, 72). This category of punishment had first been applied to several Suffragettes arrested on 23rd October 1906 after they had tried to gain access to Parliament and put their case directly to the Prime Minister (Raeburn 1974: 28–9). Some were released from prison almost immediately and the Home Secretary quickly granted first division status to the remainder. By 1908, however, the authorities' tolerance of the Suffragettes activities had declined and they were routinely sentenced as second division convicts.

The first use of the hunger strike to support a demand for the status of political prisoner was by Marion Wallace Dunlop on 5th July 1909. When her request had been turned and she began to refuse all food. After a 91-hour fast, her release was ordered by the Home Secretary (Raeburn 1974: 102). As nearly all Suffragettes arrested after this incident followed suit and began hunger strikes, the government decided they should be force-fed. This began in September 1909. By 1912 force-feeding had become routine and the government realized that the situation could not continue. They were not prepared to let any of the Suffragettes die and become martyrs, but equally, public opinion was strongly against the pain and suffering that was inflicted on the women during the force-feeding process.

The government's solution was a piece of legislation entitled the Prisoners Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health Act of 1913 and dubbed by the Suffragettes the “Cat and Mouse Act”. Hunger-strikers were allowed to continue without food until they were medically assessed to be too ill to remain in prison. They were then released on a “ticket-of-leave”

that enabled them to be recalled to prison as soon as they had recovered sufficiently. The situation continued until six days after the outbreak of war on 10th August 1914 when the government released unconditionally all the Suffragette prisoners and the WSPU called on all its members to cease their activities and to help to defeat the enemy.

Dealing with radicalized prisoners was not just an issue for governments on the home front and was not confined to their own citizens. During the Second World War the Allies were faced with difficulties when managing German prisoners of war; in a number of instances, the prisoners of war were controlled by hard-core Nazi prisoners, who in part, derived their authority from cooperating with the Allied authorities: "Instead of interfering with the work program, the Nazi-dominated camps were in fact, usually models of efficiency. The Nazis realized that an orderly and well-run camp would give them the continued backing of the American authorities, and therefore, the real control over the camp" (Krammer 1976: 70).

In these camps the Nazi ideologues sought to establish effective totalitarian environments where the Nazi salute was a recognized form of greeting and prisoners accused of anti-Nazi activities were subjected to violence and frequently killed by their fellow prisoners of war.

3.3 Radicalized prisoners since 1945

3.3.1 Malcolm X and the Black Muslims

After 1945 there was a striking increase in prison populations in the West, particularly the USA, and increasing problems in managing these populations. The 1970s saw the development of organized gangs in the US prison system. These gangs covered a broad spectrum of ethnicity, religion, ideology and motivation. Some were exclusively criminal in their activity (such as the Hispanic Mexican Mafia), while others blended criminal and racist ideological beliefs (the Aryan Brotherhood). Among the examples of religiously oriented prison gangs or groups were the Black Muslims, later known as the Nation of Islam. A 1973 Congressional report states that the Nation of Islam

was found to be the largest and best organized of the inmate groups within the New York State prison system. Its membership is recruited from the new black inmates entering prison. They are subjected to constant pressure to join... Corrections officers differ in their views of the organization. Some see their militant drills and physical conditioning as a threat, while others see them as a stabilizing influence on the prison population. (Committee on Internal Security 1973: 65)

The life of Malcom X (Malcolm Little) is an excellent example of the potential for radicalization in the prison environment. He experienced racism and discrimination in early life. At school he was told: "A lawyer – that's no realistic goal ... You need to think about something you can be" (Malcolm X 2001: 118). Little moved to New York in 1942 and drifted into petty crime and drugs. He returned to his native Boston and in January 1946 was charged with burglary and carrying a firearm. He was sentenced to 10 years in the Massachusetts State Prison. Once there, he was so hostile to the religious ministrations of the prison chaplain that he earned the nickname "Satan" among his fellow inmates.

While in prison, he was visited by his brother, who introduced him to the ideas of Elijah Muhammed:

[H]e talked for two solid hours about the “devil white man” and the “brainwashed black man”. When Reginald left, he left me rocking with some of the first serious thoughts I ever had in my life ... I began to receive at least two letters every day from my brothers and sisters ... They were all Muslims, followers of a man they described to me as “The Honorable Elijah Mohammed” ... All of them urged me to “accept the teachings of The Honourable Elijah Muhammad” ... And what they termed “the true knowledge of the black man” that was possessed by the followers of The Honourable Elijah Muhammad was given shape for me in their lengthy letters, sometimes containing printed literature. (Malcolm X 2001: 255–6)

The visits from his brother and the letters he received had a significant effect on Malcolm X. Elijah Muhammad’s interpretation of Islam was idiosyncratic and contained a new, radicalized narrative of world and biblical history. Malcolm X rapidly adopted this new narrative, recognizing that “that the truth can be quickly received, or received at all, only by the sinner who knows and admits that he is guilty of having sinned much. Stated another way: only guilt admitted accepts truth ... The very enormity of my previous life’s guilt prepared me to accept the truth” (Malcolm X 2001: 257–8). This illustrates the potential for cognitive openings as a conduit for adopting new or radicalized ideas. After he embraced the teachings of Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X began to make efforts to recruit new followers to the cause. He gives a useful description of the way he went about the radicalization and recruitment process:

[W]hen Mr Muhammad’s teachings reversed my attitude towards my black brothers, in my guilt and shame I began to catch every chance I could to recruit for Mr Muhammad. You have to be careful, very careful introducing the truth to the black man who has never previously heard the truth about himself, his own kind, and the white man. My brother Reginald had told me that all Muslims experienced this in their recruiting for Mr Muhammad. The black brother is so brainwashed that he may even be repelled when he first hears the truth. Reginald advised that the truth had to be dropped only a little bit at a time. And you had to wait a while to let it sink in before advancing to the next step. (Malcolm X 2001: 277–8)

An affiliated group in the US corrections system in the 1970s that appears to be still in existence was the Sunni Muslims. This smaller group was regarded as more orthodox in its interpretation of Islam. However,

Corrections officers in general had only a limited knowledge of the difference between the Sunni Muslims and the NOI [Nation of Islam]. Members of the Sunni Muslim sect who were interviewed at Attica said that they had been lumped together with NOI by corrections officers who do not understand the differences between the two. (Committee on Internal Security 1973: 66)

A New York-based offshoot of the Black Muslims was the Five Percenters, so called because they believe themselves to be the anointed 5 per cent qualified to act as imams. They were considered to be more militant and more violent than the Black Muslims.⁸

Following the development of prisoners' rights as a policy issue (brought to the fore by a number of groups, including the Black Muslims) and subsequent interventions in the prison system by the judiciary, the degree to which prison authorities could effectively control their institutions was reduced. Fong (1990) highlights the importance of judicial intervention in the Texas prison system in the 1980 *Ruiz v Estelle* judgement in which the use of a system of control by employing specially selected inmates was declared unconstitutional. The vacuum left by this reduction in formal authority led to the development of numerous prison gangs throughout the US penal system. Fong uses the examples of two prison gangs in the Texan penal system to illustrate the organized nature of their activities. He points out that both gangs, the Texas Syndicate and the Mexican Mafia, are organized along paramilitary lines, with members adhering to a strict code of behaviour.

3.3.2 Spain and ETA

Since the creation of *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA – Basque fatherland and liberty) in 1958, the treatment of prisoners has played a central role in the group's ideological and doctrinal outlook. The repression and alleged torture faced by Basque nationalists under the fascist Franco regime in Spain helped to radicalize Basques, providing ETA with the pretext for their violence, which escalated dramatically in the late 1970s. Despite Spain's democratization and the enhanced legitimacy of Spanish counter-terrorist practices,⁹ the claim to have been abused while in custody remains an important source of propaganda for ETA, and is a standard operating practice, as outlined in internal group documents (Alonso and Reinares 2005: 274).

As in Northern Ireland, as the number of ETA prisoners increased, so the prisons in which they were held became a focal point for the politico-military struggle being waged outside them. In the 1980s the Spanish authorities became increasingly concerned at the degree of control that imprisoned ETA leaders exercised over other ETA prisoners and their families. In an effort to disrupt the discipline and cohesion of the prisoners, the authorities began a programme of "social reinsertion" whereby the then 500 or so imprisoned ETA activists were offered reduced terms and early release back into the community if they renounced violence. Between 1983 and 1984 some 230 ETA prisoners took advantage of this scheme. The extent to which this programme undermined ETA's cohesion was underlined when the organization began assassinating its former members who had been given early release from prison.

⁸ Neither the Black Muslims nor the Five Percenters followed a faith that could be construed as orthodox Islam, or even an extreme version of it. They appear to have blended tenets of Islam with Marxist ideology and radical Black nationalism.

⁹ There has been no reported incident of illegal state activity in relation to ETA since 1988. See Alonso and Reinares (2005: 275).

The second way in which of the Spanish authorities tried to break ETA's cohesion in the prisons was dispersal, when after 1989 ETA prisoners were distributed through the Spanish prison system. This attempt to break up and desegregate ETA's imprisoned membership was met with protest and violence. Initially the Spanish government was accused of infringing their human rights (for example, by making family visits more difficult due to the distance from their homes to the new prison). When this approach failed ETA prisoners staged a series of hunger strikes and finally resorted to attacks on prison staff.¹⁰ Despite these efforts, the dispersal policy remained in place and a primary ETA was for the return of ETA prisoners to serve their sentences in Basque prisons.

In furtherance of this aim, on 10th July 1997 ETA kidnapped Miguel Angel Blanco, a local Basque politician. In return for his release, ETA demanded the Spanish government transfer all ETA prisoners to Basque prisons within 48 hours. This kidnapping sparked anti-ETA protests across Spain and Blanco's murder, after the deadline expired provoked widespread revulsion. This set the context for ETA's first ceasefire in 1998 (which collapsed along with subsequent ceasefires). Most recently Jose Ignacio de Juana Chaos, convicted of 25 murders, sustained a hunger strike for over 100 days in protest at his sentence. In defiance of popular opinion, the Spanish government moved him from Madrid to a Basque hospital and stated that upon his recovery he would serve the last two years of his sentence under house arrest (BBC 2007a).

3.3.3 Northern Ireland and paramilitary prisoners

The resurgence of the Irish conflict in the late 1960s and the consequent re-emergence of the IRA saw a return to the issue of Irish "political" prisoners in British jails. Between 1969 and the release of paramilitary prisoners under the Good Friday Agreement, "prisoners ... organized themselves into paramilitary groupings with hierarchical command structures ... the prison experience for non-conforming paramilitary prisoners in Northern Ireland [being] largely a collective one" (McEvoy 2001: 38).

The renewed struggle between paramilitary prisoners and the authorities took place in what McEvoy refers to as four distinct phases:

- **Reactive containment.** This period began with the introduction, in August 1971, of internment for some hundreds of suspected Republican paramilitaries.
- **Special category status.** Under the special category regime, prisoners were effectively granted prisoner-of-war status.
- **Criminalization.** Following the end of special category status in 1976, the prison authorities (and the government) attempted to treat the paramilitary prisoners as normal criminals.
- **Managerialism.** Following the 1981 hunger strikes the prison authorities (and the British government) came to accept that the struggle against Irish republicanism could not be fought or won in the prison system. Hence a new pragmatic approach was adopted, seeking to treat paramilitary prisoners as another special type of inmate, such as sex offenders (McEvoy 2001: 251).

¹⁰ For example, the October 2000 murder of Maximo Carrera in a booby-trapped car bombing.

Underlying these four phases were a series of events that impacted upon and shaped not only those who were imprisoned over the next 30 years or so but were also to have significant repercussions in the wider context of Northern Ireland and beyond. The first of these critical events took place on 9th August 1971 when troops and police launched “Operation Demetrius” (Ryder 2001: 53–4). Its objective was use the Special Powers Act to arrest and intern the leading activists in the Republican movement, thus diminishing the ability of the IRA to function effectively. The immediate result was that 342 people were arrested on the first day, a number that rose to 2,400 over the six months that followed (Fay *et al.* 1999: 27).

Many were released after screening and questioning but, in the eyes of those who were interned, their families and supporters, the British government had opened a new front and they reacted violently. By the end of the year, the number killed (troops, police, civilians and terrorists) had risen to 173 (Fay *et al.* 1999: 27). Meanwhile, “In line with long-standing Republican tradition, those who had been imprisoned ... began a sustained campaign of ‘continuing resistance behind the wire’” (Ryder 2001: 94).

This resistance ranged from large-scale rioting, arson and taking hostages of staff and visitors to apparently mundane acts of defiance, such as refusing to carry out prison work or to share cells. It was also not long before nine prisoners made the first successful escape on 16th November 1971 by scaling the walls of Belfast Prison using rope ladders thrown over from the outside. From then on there were many more attempts at escape, a number of which succeeded. Early successful escapes were greeted with bonfires and celebration in republican areas and whenever possible, a press conference in Dublin was called by the IRA to put the escapees on show. Almost all these activities were in pursuit of one objective: the formal recognition by the British government that those imprisoned were entitled to political status and should be treated as prisoners of war. In June 1972, as part of secret cease-fire negotiations between the IRA and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, William Whitelaw, a special category of prisoners was created for those convicted of “political offences”, with accommodation for Republican and Loyalist prisoners separate from that of both internees and the “ordinary decent criminals”. The cease-fire did not hold for long but the concept of special category prisoners continued, thus creating an enormously difficult situation in the prisons when it existed, and an even worse one when attempts were made to end it in 1976.

Special category prisoners were those who had been sentenced to more than 9 months’ imprisonment and who had the agreement of the prisoner who was the so-called “officer commanding” of the relevant Republican or Loyalist compound (Ryder 2001: 105). The end result was that uniquely in the UK, the Maze Prison held prisoners “convicted or awaiting trial for crimes committed in the course of a campaign of violence against the State [and] in the eyes of those prisoners, they remain part of the campaign” (Ramsbotham, in Ryder 1999: 106). In contrast to other prisoners, they lived together in huts in a compound, did no prison work, wore their own clothes and received food parcels from outside the prison. Inside the compounds they adopted all the trappings of a military organization. Each compound had an elected “officer commanding” and each hut had a variety of “officers” such as “adjutant” and “quartermaster”. There was an overall officer commanding for all the prisoners who in turn had a “battalion staff” to assist him.

Internment was brought to an end on 5th December 1975 when the last and most “hard-core” group of internees was released. However, any feeling by the prison authorities that their task of managing the greatest concentration of convicted terrorist prisoners in Europe would be made easier was short-lived as the British government was determined to abolish the status of special category and all that had become associated with it. An intolerable situation had been reached and it was now imperative that “The influence of the terrorist leaders must be reduced and rehabilitation work started [as] the failure.... to take earlier action has significantly reduced the effectiveness of the penal system” (Gardiner Report, in Ryder 2001: 153).

The autonomy given to special category prisoners led to extraordinary circumstances. The prisoners adhered on a daily basis to their own militaristic regime that encompassed their whole day. Tasks and timings were strictly adhered to and discipline was strictly enforced, and extreme violence was used if it was deemed necessary. Lectures were given on all aspects of the life of a republican “volunteer”, from those aimed at raising their political knowledge and awareness to those dedicated to weapons, explosives, field-craft and first-aid training.

Relations with the prison authorities were always difficult, as the prisoners constantly sought to dominate and intimidate guards and governors. At every opportunity they sought information from staff and passed on any unguarded comments about staff members’ families to others outside the prison, who would then take steps to add to it. This enhanced information was then used to try to threaten or coerce the guard. Where possible, the prisoners tried to converse in Gaelic, a language unfamiliar to the guards. Over time, the way that it was spoken became so distinct that it became known as “jailic” and, unknown to the prisoners, the guards also became proficient in it.

The de facto end of special category status took place in March 1976. In response, prisoners treated in this way refused to wear prison clothes on their arrival and used only a prison blanket, thus setting in motion a protest that was to extend over many years. By 1978 their actions had escalated into a “dirty protest” where prisoners refused to wash, shave or cut their hair and smeared their excrement on to the walls of their cells. Over the next two years, negotiations and concessions failed to end the protest and on 10th October 1980 seven IRA men began a hunger strike. It was intended that as each one died, he would be replaced by another man. Once more, in a statement smuggled out of the prison by a visitor, they reiterated that “political status is ours as of right” (Ryder 2001: 203).

By the time that a second, subsequent hunger strike was called off in October 1981, 10 republican prisoners had died. The first and most prominent of these was Bobby Sands, an IRA member who had been elected in the early days of the strike as the Member of Parliament for Fermanagh-South Tyrone. The impact of these events was seen not only in Northern Ireland and Britain but also across the world, and it continued to reverberate for many years.

The managerialism phase of the interaction between prisoners and authority, continued from 1981 until their release in 2000. Its long-term, strategic effect was seen from the early 1990s as the paramilitary prisoners began to push forward the idea of peace. From the 1994 IRA declaration of a cease-fire, through the gradual emergence of the peace process, the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 and the final decommissioning of IRA and Loyalist

groups weaponry and explosives, a crucial role was played by prisoners. In addition to their vested interest in a particular outcome they made a crucial contribution to the difficult task of not only ensuring that their respective organizations stayed engaged with the peace process but that they continued to move it forward. From 1998 onwards a slow process of release began and on 28th July 2000, the last 78 prisoners were freed from custody.

Since then, numerous efforts have been made to reintegrate them into society. Some have required little assistance, some “found God” in prison or after release and have become pastors and preachers, and many others have been helped by over 40 community-based self-help initiatives. Other prisoners may have turned to crime. In 2001 the Northern Ireland Organized Crime Task Force stated, “78 groups involving some 400 individuals have been identified as meeting ... [our] definition of organized crime. Just over half the groups identified have current or historical links to Republican or Loyalist paramilitary organizations.”¹¹

¹¹ The 78 criminal gangs waging war on Ulster (*The Guardian* 2001).

Historically, prison and the experience of imprisonment have had a significant impact on the thinkers and activists in the radicalized Islamist movement. In his series of press releases from the Advice and Reformation Committee during the 1990s, Osama bin Laden favourably compared imprisoned Saudi scholars with Ibn Taymiyya's imprisonment for his beliefs.¹² The following chapter explores the significance of prisons in the development of Islamist and violent jihadist ideology and thought, the guidance given to violent jihadist prisoners for coping with capture and imprisonment, and evidence of their activity in prisons in the UK, Europe and beyond, and outlines efforts to rehabilitate or de-radicalize such prisoners.

4.1 Prisons in violent jihadist literature, thought and action

Ibn Taymiyya, a 13th–14th century writer who was one of the key historical influences on contemporary jihadist ideology and thought, was repeatedly imprisoned by the authorities in Cairo and Damascus for his radicalized beliefs. His first brush with the authorities came in 1294 when he led a protest in Damascus, but he was first imprisoned in Cairo in 1305 for his radicalized theological views, serving 18 months before his release was negotiated. Within the year, however, Ibn Taymiyya had been tried and re-imprisoned for two years and was again jailed for breaching an order preventing him from issuing *fawtas*. From 1318 until 1321 he was in and out of prison eventually dying in captivity in 1328 aged 67 (Little 1973: 312).

Sayid Qutb, who is widely cited as the leading modern ideological influence on a range of Islamist and violent jihadist groups, produced his most influential works while imprisoned in Egypt. Qutb was imprisoned in 1954 for his alleged role in an attempt to assassinate Egyptian President Nasser and spent much of the rest of his life in prison. It has been suggested that Qutb's own radicalization was a result of the torture and mistreatment he suffered and witnessed inside the Egyptian prison system (Atwan 2006: 72).

During his imprisonment he wrote the Islamist texts *Milestones* and *In the shade of the Qu'ran*, which were smuggled out of his prison cell. Qutb was given the opportunity to beg Nasser for a pardon but he refused to do so and was executed in 1966. Qutb's

¹² The press releases of Usama Bin Laden are Available online at http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/AFGP-2002-003345_Original.pdf Accessed 10 August 2007.

suffering and ultimate “martyrdom” for his beliefs was key to his appeal to many Islamists who were

inspired by Qutb, who showed them the way forward and whom they referred to as a shahid, or martyr. They talked about the torture he endured at the hands of the Nasserist security apparatus and the dignity and courage he showed under duress. Zawahiri says that Qutb’s words acquired a deeper resonance because of his defiance and refusal to appeal to President Nasser to spare his life, which provided activists with an example of steadfastness and sacrifice. (Gereges 2005: 7)

A contemporary jihadist ideologue, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was deeply influenced by Qutb’s thought and prison experience. Reportedly it was the impact of Qutb’s execution that led al-Zawahiri and a group of friends to form a covert Islamist group (Kepel 2004: 79). This group was to continue its existence through al-Zawahiri’s medical training and subsequent travels to assist the Afghan *mujahadeen*. Returning to Egypt in 1981 al-Zawahiri became entangled in the assassination of Egyptian President Sadat and was detained in the subsequent government crackdown. At the mass trial in 1982 al-Zawahiri acted as the spokesman for the defendants and for the first time was exposed to the world’s media.

While he was in prison, the leaders of the Egyptian Islamist movement split. Al-Zawahiri is reported to have become the leader of the Egyptian *Jama’at Al Jihad* group while a rival faction, *Gamaa Islamiya* emerged under the spiritual guidance of Omar Abdel-Rahman, who was later to be jailed in the USA for his leading role in the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing). Like Qutb, al-Zawahiri was apparently deeply affected by the torture and suffering he experienced in the Egyptian prison system. He is reported to have cracked under torture and to have betrayed a comrade. These experiences led al-Zawahiri to repeatedly raise the issue of prison torture in later writings. In *Knights under the prophet’s banner* he wrote:

Once the door of the cell is closed, the prisoner will wish that he had spent his entire life without a shelter rather than endure the humiliation of captivity. The toughest thing about captivity is forcing the *mujahid*, under the force of torture, to confess about his colleagues, destroy his movement with his own hands, and offer his and his colleagues’ secrets to his enemies. (al-Zawahiri 2004: 427)

In an earlier publication *The black book: the story of the torture of Muslims during the reign of Husni Mubarak*, al-Zawahiri railed against the widespread use of torture by the Egyptian regime against criminal and Islamist prisoners alike, and exhorts the Egyptian people to resist the regime:

We call on the tortured people to have faith in God and patience until God sends relief. We ask the Egyptian people to call for shari’a laws. We remind you that your predicament is caused by your abandoning the duty of waging jihad against the *kafir* rulers. Allah has told you that if you abandon this duty, you will lose security. Therefore, we ask every Muslim to wage jihad in his tongue by denouncing the *kufir* of these *kuffar* rulers and enlightening other Muslims and inciting them to fight. We also urge them to wage jihad with their money – the backbone of jihad. We also urge Muslim youth to wage jihad with their souls. (al-Zawahiri 1994).

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (real name Essam Barqawi) has been described as the most important living jihadi ideologue (McCants 2006: 8). He also acted as a mentor to the now deceased Jordanian militant Musab al-Zarqawi. Both men were arrested in Jordan in 1993 on charges of setting up a covert armed cell, and in 1995 were sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. Al-Zarqawi and al-Maqdisi were both released in a general amnesty in 1999, and al-Zarqawi left Jordan for Pakistan and Afghanistan, where he would come into contact with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network. Later he would become infamous as the emir of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and ultimately would be killed by Coalition forces in Iraqi in June 2006. Al-Maqdisi stayed in Jordan and was subsequently re-arrested and imprisoned, where he remains.

While they were in prison both men continued to proselytize and seek new recruits both inside and beyond the prison's confines. In an interview with the Islamist magazine *Nida'ul Islam*, al-Maqdisi detailed his activities in the prison. The full text of the interview (see Appendix A) offers some valuable insights as to the activities of radicalized Islamists in the prison environment, as well as offering an indication of how difficult it is for the authorities to suppress them. The most salient elements of al-Maqdisi's activities included:

- producing and distributing ideological literature within and beyond the prison population
- holding alternative Friday prayers to draw other prisoners away from the official prison Mosque
- using prison visits to communicate with followers in the outside world
- providing reinforcement and support to fellow prisoners who were punished for their subversive activities in prison
- engaging in active resistance to the prison authorities through refusing to cooperate in the prison's regime, intimidating prison staff and management and clashing violently with the guards. (*Nida'ul Islam* 1997–1998)

Among al-Maqdisi's prodigious collection of writings is a song or poem entitled *The perfumed prisons*. This has subsequently been used as the basis of a short propaganda video highlighting the condition of Islamist and violent jihadist prisoners around the world and is widely available on the Internet.¹³ Al-Maqdisi also wrote an article on prison life entitled, *Prison: heavens and fires* that elaborates on the experience of prison and how it may lead to obtaining the fruits of faith because there you can dedicate yourself completely to "obeying God, worshipping him, memorizing the Quran, seeking and spreading Da'wah and learning from the experience of those around him to become stronger for jihad". However, he notes those who are not able to stand the torture end up weaker, rather than standing their ground. As al-Maqdisi notes, some of the most famous jihadi clerics, such as Sheikh al-Khedhayri and Nasir al-Fahad, recanted during or after their prison experiences. Maqdisi warns Muslims against judging these scholars, as the torture that takes place in prison is too horrific for most people to imagine. Despite al-Maqdisi's pre-eminence as a ideologist

¹³ Available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPWybUudqGg> Accessed 3rd March 2008.

and scholar, it is reported that al-Zarqawi came to be the effective leader of the Islamists in their Jordanian prison. One fellow inmate stated that “the youth surrounding him in prison were actual jihadist fighters, they rejected the command of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, preferring Abu Mos’ab Al Zarqawi because of his strength and determination” (Napoleoni 2005: 68–9). Al-Zarqawi came to be the emir of the al-Tawheed group, with al-Maqdisi taking the role of spiritual mentor to the group in the prison. Al-Zarqawi was regarded as displaying strong leadership qualities in the prison, so that although there were “organizations and groups which shared the prison cells and had huge differences of opinions ... al-Zarqawi’s emirate was amongst the strongest and most influential within those groups for organizational reasons, because it extended to all prison quarters and attracted a large number of inmates” (Napoleoni 2005: 68–9).

4.2 Guidance and support for imprisoned violent jihadists

Early on in their recruitment, violent jihadists are warned that their path is perilous. They belong, they are told, to the few that the Prophet Muhammad mentioned in his famous *hadith* (or saying), “A few of my Umma¹⁴ will be on the right path till the end of days”. The Prophet also warned of the day when Islam will become a stranger again, as it was at its early stages. He said, “Islam came a stranger and will depart a stranger. God bless the strangers”. Violent jihadists are therefore aware that imprisonment may await them if *shahadah* (martyrdom) does not materialize first. Consequently, it is not surprising that prison and prisoners are a frequent subject in the various Islamist literature.

The institutions of jihad spell out the reasons why violent jihadists are imprisoned. The most prominent of these is that they live in a society that has gone astray. Many in society, even those who are Muslim by name, are in fact mostly *kuffar*¹⁵. By declaring Muslims *Kuffar*, or the practice of *takfir*¹⁶, violent jihadists seek to place themselves on the path taken by the *sahabah* (the Prophet’s companions) who suffered and stood their ground when prosecuted by unbelievers in their own societies (Al-Sheikh 2005: 14). Rulers who command the security apparatus are especially at fault because they “advance the agenda of the invaders by killing, imprisoning, and torturing the *mujahideen*”. (Al-Ansari 2003: 3). Therefore, violent jihadist literature, such as *Sawt al-Jihad* (Voice of Jihad) magazine periodically publishes articles urging jihadists, if arrested, “to stand their ground because this is the path that the prophets, the virtuous predecessors, and the martyrs have chosen” (Al-Dusri 2003: 2). It also reminds violent jihadists that God has already warned them that they will be tested to see which among them are true in their faith: “And We shall test you until We know the *mujahideen* [those who strive] to their utmost and preserve in patience; and We shall try your reported [mettle]” *The Quran* (47: 31).

¹⁴ *Umma* (alternatively *Ummah*). Muslim community, a fundamental concept in Islam, expressing the essential unity and theoretical equality of Muslims from diverse cultural and geographical settings (Esposito 2003).

¹⁵ *Kuffar* (singular *Kafir*). An unbeliever. First applied to Meccans who refused to submit to Islam, the term implies an active rejection of divine revelation (Esposito 2003).

¹⁶ *Takfir*. A pronouncement that someone is an unbeliever (*kafir*) and no longer a Muslim (Esposito 2003).

Prayers for prisoners and calls for their release are among the means by which violent jihadists are glorified in Islamist literature. For example, *al-Jama'ah* magazine published an article to remind its audience of the plight of prisoners and to urge Muslims to do whatever they could to release them through paying money or any other means available (*Al-Jama'ah* 2004: 35). Bin Laden himself has also frequently prayed that God will alleviate the plight of the prisoners and has urged their release. Since Sheikh Umar Abd al-Rahman was imprisoned in the USA for his role in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, Bin Laden has consistently called for his release over the years (*Al-Jazeera TV* 2002). This practice makes new violent jihadists aware that they will not be forgotten if they are imprisoned. Figure 4 provides another example of Bin Laden's references to prisoners in his statements.

Figure 4: Example of Bin Laden's references to in his messages

And then I call to memory my brothers the prisoners in Guantanamo – may Allah free them all – and I state the fact, about which I also am certain, that all the prisoners of Guantanamo, who were captured in 2001 and the first half of 2002 and who number in the hundreds, have no connection whatsoever to the events of September 11, and even stranger is that many of them have no connection with al-Qaida in the first place, and even more amazing is that some of them oppose al-Qaida's methodology of calling for war with America. And this is in addition to the arrest of those who were working in the relief agencies, like Abu Abdul Aziz al-Mutraqi, or those working in the media, like Sami al-Hajj and Taysir Alouni, who was imprisoned at the instigation of the American administration. So the conclusion is that all the prisoners to date have no connection with the events of September 11th and knew nothing about them, with the exception of two of the brothers, may Allah free them all ... My mentioning of these facts isn't out of hope that Bush and his party will treat our brothers fairly in their cases, because that is something no rational person expects, but rather it is meant to expose the oppression, injustice and arbitrariness of your administration in using force and the reactions that result from that. This is from one perspective, and from another perspective, perhaps there will one day come from the Americans someone who desires justice and fairness, and that is the path to security and safety, if you are interested in it. (As-Sahab Media 2006)

Violent jihadists also exploit the experience of imprisonment is exploited to gain sympathy from the public and appeal to potential recruits. The brutality of the jailers and their masters is given as a reason for fighting against them and the abuses that took place in Abu Graib prison in Iraq are regularly mentioned in jihadist magazines and websites. For instance, *Al-Fursan* (The Knights) magazine reported on the conditions of prisoners in Iraq, described by a fighter who had been released. He described the American torture as "so severe, it even supersedes the torture in the dictatorship regimes' prisons" (*Al-Fursan* 2005). Another publication, *Sada al-Jihad* (Echo of Jihad) magazine, has published entire profiles of prisoners in Guantanamo and other American prisons (Qa'id 2005: 26).

One of the authors in *Sada al-Jihad* voiced his intention to compile his experience and the experience of others in Western jails, "to put in the hands of the leaders of jihad, their soldiers, and their supporters for them to realize this aspect of the battle against Islam and know the truth about it" (Qa'id 2005: 26).

There is also written guidance for how violent jihadists should behave when taken prisoner. An example includes the *Declaration of jihad against the country's tyrants – military series*. This publication (a copy of which was discovered in a raid in Manchester in 2000 and thus is also referred to as the *Manchester manual*) has a chapter relating to prisoners,

specifically the 18th lesson – prisons and detention centres (see Appendix B for full details). The 18th lesson prepares the violent jihadist for what to expect during a trial and how he should conduct himself in prison. For example he (or she) must:

- Take advantage of visits to communicate with brothers outside prison and exchange information that may be helpful to them in their work outside prison [according to what occurred during the investigations]. The importance of mastering the art of hiding messages is self evident here.
- Inside the prison, the brother should not accept any work that may belittle or demean him or his brothers, such as the cleaning of the prison bathrooms or hallways.
- The brothers should create an Islamic program for themselves inside the prison, as well as recreational and educational ones, etc.
- The brother in prison should be a role model in selflessness. Brothers should also pay attention to each others needs and should help each other and unite vis a vis the prison officers.
- The brothers must take advantage of their presence in prison for obeying and worshipping [God] and memorizing the Quran, etc.

4.3 Violent jihadists in the British prison system

Those imprisoned, remanded and detained in the UK under different counter-terrorism laws are mostly held in a small number of prisons across the country. At August 2007 the England and Wales prison system held 121 terrorist or terrorist-related prisoners, of whom 43 were convicted prisoners, 58 were on remand, 11 were awaiting extradition and a further 11 were held under immigration legislation (House of Commons 2007a). UK high-security prison estate that reportedly hold violent jihadist prisoners include Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) Belmarsh in south-east London, which at August 2007 was holding 58 terrorist prisoners; HMP Frankland in Durham (which holds Dhiren Barot, sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment for plotting attacks, Omar Khyam, who led the cell which planned to attack nightclubs and shopping centres in the UK and Hussein Osman, jailed for his part in the failed 21st July 2005 attacks on the London transport network) (BBC 2007b; *The Guardian* 2007); HMP Whitemoor in Cambridgeshire, which holds Sajid Badat, jailed for his part in a plot to destroy a transatlantic airliner; HMP Long Lartin in Worcestershire, which holds, among others, Abu Qatada; HMP Woodhill near Milton Keynes and HMP Full Sutton near York.

In the UK prison system, prisoners are assigned to one of four security categories:

- Category A: prisoners whose escape would be highly dangerous to the public, police or the security of the state and whose escape must be made impossible.
- Category B: prisoners who do not need the highest conditions of security but for whom escape must be made very difficult.

- Category C: prisoners who cannot be trusted in open conditions but who do not have the ability or resources to make a determined escape attempt.
- Category D: prisoners who can reasonably be trusted to serve their sentences in open conditions (HM Prison Service 2001). In Category A there are three levels of escape risk classification; standard, high and exceptional.

It appears from these definitions that some individuals convicted of or on remand for violent jihadist activities in the UK may be classified as Category a – high escape risk, defined as those prisoners with

a history and background which suggest that they have the ability and determination to overcome the range of security measures which apply to the custody of standard risk Category A prisoners. There may be current information to suggest that they have associates or resources that could be used to plan and carry out an assisted escape attempt. If there is information that the prisoners or associates have access to firearms or explosives, and have been willing to use them in committing crime or in avoiding capture, high risk is the expected category. (HM Prison Service 2004)

Prisoners classified as high risk will be held in a more restrictive custodial environment than other prisoners, as they are likely to be in specialist secure units. In HMP Belmarsh is a highly secure unit with the capacity to hold 48 high-risk prisoners. Operating as an independent unit with its own reception, visiting area and segregation unit, the unit comprises four wings or spurs, each with 12 single-occupancy cells (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 2003: 37). According to Amnesty International, prisoners held in the high-secure unit are confined to their wings apart from visits to the gym and for religious services. Reportedly these high-risk prisoners are subject to lock-up in their cells for 22 hours per day and therefore have 2 hours per day to associate with other prisoners, exercise, make telephone calls and attend to other personal administrative needs. At the time of an inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons in 2005, Belmarsh prison's high-secure unit held 14 men awaiting trial on terrorism offences (nine of whom were related to the July 2005 attacks on London, who had previously been classified as high-risk and were subsequently reassessed as standard-risk). Four of these 14 were held in a wing designated a "special secure unit", and were under an enhanced restrictive regime where their activities were more closely supervised, and where they were permitted to associate only in pairs and were not allowed to attend Friday prayers with others. (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 2005: 27).

It is apparent from the above that the opportunities for some violent jihadist prisoners to interact with their peers and other prisoners may be limited by the special security regimes and the general high-security regimes of the prisons in which they are typically held. However, it seems likely that, as the number of convicted and remanded violent jihadist prisoners grows, the resources available to the authorities to manage this difficult prisoner population will become increasingly stretched. As the Prison Officers Association has noted, there are "now many high-profile terrorist prisoners locked up on normal location, on normal wings with any other prisoner instead of in special environments" (*The Guardian* 2006a). Also of concern are the radicalized or extremist individuals who are not in prison as a result of terrorism-related offences, but because of lesser crimes. The radicalized inclination of such prisoners may not be apparent to the authorities and

therefore they may be able to mix freely with the ordinary prison population without being adequately monitored.

4.4 Jihadist activity in European prisons and beyond

In order to make an assessment of the extent of violent jihadist activity in European prisons, sources beyond those in the public domain are required, and therefore the study team made approaches to the relevant authorities in a number of European states. Perhaps predictably, due to the sensitivities and security issues surrounding these issues, none of the organizations approached were willing to provide the study team with access to either policy-makers or operational staff in security or prison agencies. Without access to such sources it is impossible to reach a definitive conclusion as to the level of threat that radicalized Islamist or violent jihadist prisoners may pose. However, there is sufficient material in the public domain to suggest that there may be a nascent problem that requires further research and investigation.

Specific to the situation in the UK, the Prison Officers' Association (POA) has in recent years repeatedly raised concerns of the radicalization and recruitment of young Muslim prisoners by extremist prisoners. It was reported in 2006 that, "some of these terrorist prisoners are targeting for radicalization and recruitment other alienated ethnic minority groups, as well as the smaller number of younger Muslim prisoners, and they are providing rich pickings" (*The Guardian* 2006a). The Prison Officers' Association has also expressed fears that as the number of extremist prisoners grows they will divide along gang lines and may use their time in prison to plan future attacks (*Observer* 2007). There have been a number of incidents in the UK that demonstrate that radicalized or extremist Islamist prisoners may have the potential to cause disruption in prisons. These include:

- Richard Reid the failed transatlantic shoe-bomber is said to have embraced Islam while in prison and to have fallen under the influence of radicalizing influences upon his release from prison in 1996. (O'Neil and McGrory 2006)
- The August 2005 explosion at Whitemoor prison houses a number of violent jihadist prisoners, including Sajid Badaat, who was to have been Richard Reid's accomplice in a second aircraft bombing. (BBC 2005a)
- A 2006 report that a gang known as the "Muslim Boys" was using violence to intimidate inmates in Belmarsh prison in order to convert them to Islam, though it is unclear if this example is related more to gang activity than to extremism (*Daily Mirror* 2006)
- Disturbances at Wandsworth prison in November 2006 were reportedly caused by a schism between groups of Muslim prisoners, some of whom were being pressured to adopt militant lifestyles and belief systems. (*The Guardian* 2006b)
- In late 2006, Abbas Boutrab, serving a 6-year sentence for possessing information relating to the bombing of passenger aircraft, was caught downloading from the Internet al-Qaeda propaganda material and instructions on how to manufacture explosives while he was in HMP Maghaberry (*Observer* 2007a)
- In July 2007 Tariq al-Daour, jailed for establishing an online jihad network, was allegedly caught making a website in his cell at Belmarsh urging terror attacks.

When al-Daour refused to hand over his laptop, reportedly a riot ensued as prison officers clashed with a group of al-Qaeda sympathizers. (*Observer* 2007b)

- Muktar Said Ibrahim, who was sentenced to 5 years for robbery, went on to lead the failed 21 July 2005 attacks on the London transport network (*The Guardian* 2005)

There is also reason for concern about Islamist radicalization and recruitment in the Spanish prison system. Between 2001 and 2005, 188 individuals were imprisoned in Spain on charges related to violent jihadism (Reinares 2006). In late 2004 the Spanish authorities disrupted a plot to attack the Madrid headquarters of the National Court. The group planning the attack called itself the “Martyrs for Morocco” and was made up of violent jihadists from North Africa, Mauritania and Afghanistan (Haahr 2004). Further, a member of the cell responsible for the 2004 Madrid attacks, Jamal Ahmidan, had come to Spain from Morocco as an illegal immigrant in the early 1990s and had engaged in number of petty crimes, serving a series of prison sentences in Spanish jails. Eventually deported back to Morocco in 2000, he was imprisoned for 3 years for running over a pedestrian with his car while drunk. It is reported that it was during this sentence he became radicalized, giving up drugs and alcohol (Alonso and Reinares 2006). Returning to Spain in 2003, he procured the commercial explosives used in the Madrid attacks from Emilio Suarez Trashorras, a Spaniard convicted of drug offences in 2001 and who reportedly converted to Islam while in prison (Carlile 2006). Beyond Europe, in late 2005 the US authorities disrupted an indigenous violent jihadist cell that was reportedly seeking to target military, government and Jewish targets in the USA. The Authentic Assembly of Islam (*Jam’iyyat Ul-Islam Is-Saheeh* – JIS) was a radicalized Islamist gang formed inside the Los Angeles prison system by its self-styled imam, Kevin James (Shakyh Shahaab Murshid) who was imprisoned for robbery. James founded this group in the California prison system shortly after beginning a 10-year jail term in 1997 and actively sought to recruit more members in prison, partly by distributing “a document or protocol which set forth ... James’ religious teachings about Islam, including the justification for killing infidels or non-believers, and guidelines to be followed by JIS members (JIS Protocol)” (US District Court 2004).

James told his followers that it was their duty to attack infidel targets including the US government and Jewish and non-Jewish supporters of Israel. Following their release from prison, members of JIS are reported to have engaged in a range of activities including paramilitary training, the procurement of weapons and conducting surveillance of potential targets. In addition to the above, members of JIS committed a series of petrol station robberies with the aim of funding terrorist attacks. It was the arrest of two gang members in the course of these robberies that led police to the cell (Cozzens and Conway 2005).

Finally, in Indonesia, there is some evidence that the *Jemmah Islamyia* group that is responsible for a number of attacks, including the 2002 and 2005 Bali bombings, has established significant networks in the prison system. Senior *Jemmah Islamyia* members are alleged to have used their time in prison to translate radicalizing texts and instruction manuals that are then distributed via the Internet or bookshops. It is also alleged that the *Jemmah Islamyia* leaders have been able to plan attacks and issue instructions from their cells. In one instance a prison warden was accused of supplying the convicted Bali

conspirator Imam Samudra with a laptop. It was alleged that this laptop might have been used in planning the 2005 Bali suicide bomb attacks (*West Australian* 2007).

4.5 Examples of countering violent jihadist activity in prisons

In a number of countries, perhaps following the recognition of the dangers of concentrating large numbers of violent and or radicalized individuals in prisons for many years, attempts have been made to develop programmes for the de-radicalization of prisoners.¹⁷ Most of these programmes have been established in Middle Eastern and Asian countries, although it has been reported that the US military in Iraq has set up its own version at Camp Cropper in an attempt to prevent the radicalization and recruitment of detainees by insurgents in and outside the prison camp (*Newsweek* 2007).

Singapore has established the religious rehabilitation group (RRG) in response to the arrest of a number of members of the Jemaah Islamiyah group in Singapore in 2001 and 2002. The RRG's objective is to "study the Jemaah Islamiyah's ideology, offer expert opinion in understanding Jemaah Islamiyah's interpretation of Islam, produce necessary counter-ideological materials and to conduct public education for the Muslim community on religious extremism" (Hassan and Pereire 2006: 461).

The group is made up of a number of Islamic scholars and experts who provide advice and guidance on the development of counter-ideological material and a panel of counsellors who interview and attempt to rehabilitate those arrested and their families (Hassan and Pereire 2006: 462).

In addition to seeking to re-educate Jemaah Islamiyah detainees and those under "control orders", the programme has also made efforts to assist the families of those detained through counselling, financial assistance and ensuring the continuing education of any children. Reportedly these efforts were "significant in helping to win over the hearts and minds of the detainees and their families ... It was particularly important to minimize the risk of the children being radicalized in future by the detention of their fathers" (Hassan and Pereire 2006: 463).

It is difficult to assess the level of success achieved by the Singapore programme, but as a result of the rehabilitation efforts the authorities have released at least three former Jemaah Islamiyah members.

Saudi Arabia is implementing this concept in another way. Following the 2003 Riyadh compound attacks, the Saudi authorities established a programme aimed at countering the radicalizing ideology of extremist sympathisers. Like the Singapore approach, one aspect of this programme is counselling, which seeks to engage extremists in theological debate and psychological counselling. It is notable that the programme is open only to sympathisers: those who have engaged in violence are excluded from it (Boueck 2007: 1). The counsellors (made up of religious scholars, psychologists and social scientists) seek to engage the

¹⁷ In addition to the three examples discussed here, the Indonesian authorities have also created a de-radicalization programme for prisoners. For a detailed examination of this programme and the challenges it has encountered see International Crisis Group 2007.

prisoners in debate, and “attempt to persuade them that their religious justification for their actions is wrong and based upon a corrupted understanding of Islam” (Boueck 2007: 2). Again, like the Singaporean approach, efforts are made to address the needs of the prisoners and their family; such as providing the families are provided with financial support, and help with schooling for children. This is because the government recognises that if they fail to provide this support, “then it is possible that extremist elements will move in to provide” it (Boueck 2007: 3). If prisoners are assessed as ready for release, they are supported further after their release. They are given assistance in finding jobs and spouses, and are eligible for free medical care and financial support (*Daily Telegraph*: 2006). Again, from the open sources it is hard to form a meaningful view on the effectiveness or otherwise of this programme. It is reported that since 2004 some 2,000 prisoners have participated in the programme, of whom roughly 700 have been released (Boueck 2007: 3). In an enhancement to this programme, it has been reported that the Saudi authorities are in the process of constructing five special prisons to hold captured violent jihadists, each capable holding 1,200 prisoners. It is understood that these prisons will each have special facilities designed to improve the effectiveness of the de-radicalization programme (Boueck 2008: 1).

In 2002 **Yemen** created a programme called the religious dialogue council (RDC) that sought to de-radicalize its jihadist prisoners. Its head, Judge Hamoud al-Hitar reportedly introduced his sessions with prisoners by saying:

If you can convince us that your ideas are justified by the Koran, then we will join you in your struggle. But if we succeed in convincing you of our ideas, then you must agree to renounce violence. (*The Christian Science Monitor* 2005)

Initially the programme was hailed as an innovation and appeared to enjoy early success, and 364 suspected militants were subsequently released. However, the programme’s effectiveness came under increasing scrutiny in 2005. In an interview with the BBC one of the graduates of the initiative stated, “We understood what the judge wanted and he understood what we wanted from him. The Yemeni *Mujahideen* in prison know Hitar is the way for them to get released, so they ingratiate themselves with him. There was no long or complex dialogue” (BBC 2005b). In addition to these revelations, it emerged that a number of its graduates had subsequently been discovered fighting against Coalition forces in Iraq (Johnsen 2006).

It is apparent from the above that de-radicalizing prisoners is a complex issue. Clearly there is strong potential for the targeted prisoners to abuse such programmes. The Yemeni example appears to demonstrate this, with the result of releasing prisoners who return to their extremist ways. Further, it would be difficult for Western, non-Muslim governments to create such programmes without the active support of leading religious authorities: the cooperation between the secular authority and local religious leaders in Singapore appears to be a good example of how this has been overcome. However, the schemes mentioned above, among others, have been in operation for relatively short periods of time and therefore it is likely too early to form a judgement as to their overall effectiveness.

CHAPTER 5 **The Spectrum of Radicalized Prisoner Behaviour in Prison**

From the material and evidence outlined in the preceding chapters it is possible to plot a spectrum of the potential activities a radicalized or ideologically motivated group may undertake in a custodial environment. Some or even many of these activities may be seen in normal prison behaviour and, taken individually, may not be seen as reliable indicators of radicalized or extremist behaviour at the individual or group level. The following chapter explores three categories of potential activity: forming groups and the emergence of organizations; using passive or non-violent resistance and using violent means to resist the prison authorities actively.

5.1 **Group formation and organizational activity**

As has been detailed above, in all types of institutions, including prisons, **groups** of like-minded individuals are typical. This may cause concern to prison management, but it is not necessarily an indicator of radicalization or recruitment activity. Following from this, another characteristic of prison behaviour is the voluntary **self-segregation** of groups of prisoners from the rest of the prison population. This can manifest itself in a normal prison context. For example, in the UK Muslim prisoners have been observed to “pad up” (i.e. move into) in cells with their co-religionists, which promotes solidarity and avoids conflict with non-Muslim inmates (Beckford *et al.* 2005: 192). However, such segregation may take on less benign characteristics as has been demonstrated in the Northern Ireland and Spanish examples, where organized groups of prisoners engaged in deliberate efforts to take over the exercise of organizational discipline in the prisons. Self-segregation may manifest itself in other aspects of prison life, such as refusing to share religious facilities or communal religious services.

A characteristic displayed by a number of the groups we have considered is their use of paramilitary-style **hierarchical command structures**. This is true of both the PIRA and criminal gangs in the USA. The PIRA appears to have imported its external organizational structures to the prison. In the USA, for example, two prison gangs in Texas, the Texas Syndicate and the Mexican Mafia established similar chains of command (Fong 1990: 39). The use of such paramilitary structures and roles (such as “officer commanding”) is in keeping with the traditional Irish republican view of their prisoners as prisoners of war. There is little or no evidence of such formally hierarchical structures emerging among the violent jihadist inmates in Europe and beyond.

A fundamental aspect of any organization's existence is its ability to **recruit and integrate new members**. One might, therefore, reasonably expect this to be true of organizations in the prison environment. However, this is not always the case. In the case of Northern Ireland and Spain, it appears that there was little effort on the part of the PIRA or the ETA, respectively, to recruit or indoctrinate new members in prison. Instead, the efforts in prisons were directed towards reinforcing and indoctrinating existing members who had been jailed in the course of "the struggle". As McEvoy observes:

unlike in similar prison settings such as South Africa, the USA or Palestine, little systematic efforts were made to politicize or convert such prisoners in Northern Ireland. With large numbers of their own factions continuously being arrested and imprisoned, many of whom were potentially as much in need of politicization having just come from the respective military campaigns, there was little impetus for a concerted attempt at politicizing non-paramilitary prisoners in the Northern Ireland context. (McEvoy 2001: 42)

In contrast, in the US penal system prison groupings and gangs of various leanings and orientations proactively seek to recruit new members from the general prison population. In some cases, groups compete over these new fish are, who are coerced or intimidated into joining them.¹⁸ In both the historical and contemporary contexts, violent jihadist groups seek to use prisons and prisoners as a recruiting pool. Examples have already been cited previously, including the alleged 21st July plotter Muktar Said Ibrahim and the shoe-bomber Richard Reid. The 2004 Madrid attacks and the foiled attempt to bomb the National Court in Madrid all point to contemporary instances of violent jihadist recruitment in prison environments.

Of concern in Spain is the prevalence of the Islamic sect *Takfir wa al-Hijra* (excommunication and exile), in the prison system, and the reported involvement of several of its adherents in significant attacks or plots.¹⁹ The "Takfiris" may be especially significant in the prison environment, given their willingness to engage in criminal activity to further their cause and the likelihood that they will seek out those with criminal skills and backgrounds to assist them. Their theology may also prove attractive to those with criminal histories, as this ideology permits them to redeem themselves by engaging in an already accustomed way of life. A further example of the role of prisons in violent jihadist recruitment has emerged in Iraq, where, according to Coalition sources,

¹⁸ For example, the criminal Texas Syndicate has an established recruitment process that includes vetting procedures and majority consensus from the group membership before admitting a prospective candidate.

¹⁹ *Takfir wa al-Hijra* (excommunication and exile) is a radicalized Salafist sect originating in the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the 1960s. Much of its doctrine was generated inside Egyptian prisons; its key tenets were not only that Nasser and his government were apostates, but that the whole of Egyptian society was also apostate for failing to fight the rule of non-Muslims; thus the Takfir, or excommunicate element of this sect's beliefs. Takfiri members exiled (al-Hijra) themselves from mainstream, excommunicated society, and arguing that earthly laws were illegitimate, the group was able to justify a wide range of criminal activity in pursuit of its objectives. The modern Takfiri jihadist uses this justification to immerse himself in western society, engaging in a range of normally proscribed activities (such as drinking alcohol, eating pork *et cetera*) in order to effectively infiltrate and attack the non-believers (which include Muslims who the Takfiris consider apostate). See Mili (2006).

the three vulnerabilities al-Qaeda looks for in their potential recruits[are]: one, individuals who have been detained by Coalition forces in the past; two, children or a relative of individuals who have been detained or killed by coalition forces; and three, individuals that display religious values similar to those of al-Qaeda in Iraq. (Multi-National Forces Iraq 2006)

Substantive efforts appear to be starting to run information campaigns that provide **external support for detainees, remanded and convicted prisoners**. A leading example of such activity is the website, cageprisoners.com. This website seeks to draw attention to the incarceration of a number of prisoners charged with, convicted of or detained on suspicion of violent jihadist activities. It encourages visitors to write to these prisoners and to the detaining authorities in various countries, though the campaign appears to be coordinated from the UK. Campaigns highlighted in late 2007 included an appeal for funds for the legal appeal of Ali al-Timimi (convicted in the USA), and a weekly London demonstration calling for the closure of the US detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. A number of related UK campaigning groups and individuals focus on prisoners and detainees on their websites. These include:

- **Islamic Human Rights Commission** (<http://www.ihrc.org.uk>), a London-based advocacy organization which, among other activities, runs the “prisoners of faith” campaign. This campaign apparently seeks to highlight the situations of individual prisoners and encourages supporters to write letters in support.
- **National Guantanamo Coalition** (www.guantanamo.org.uk), apparently comprising the Birmingham Guantanamo coalition, the Justice for Omar Deghayes campaign, the London Guantanamo campaign and the Manchester Guantanamo and Belmarsh campaign.
- **Scotland against Criminalizing Communities** (www.sacc.org.uk), which purports to campaign against UK anti-terrorism legislation and the use of detention powers against terrorist suspects.
- **Helping Households under Great Stress** (<http://www.hhugs.org.uk/>) – a registered UK charity (www.hhugs.org.uk), which purports to have been “set up by British Muslims in response to the new Anti-Terror Legislation ... to provide support and advice to households affected by this legislation”.²⁰ It seeks to raise funds and to encourage voluntary support to assist the families of prisoners and detainees.

Imprisoned members of radicalized and violent organizations have long played a central role in the **information and propaganda campaigns** run by parent organizations and a wider network of sympathisers. This was true of the Suffragettes, the Irish republicans and the American White Supremacists and it is true today of those embracing violent jihadism. In the modern Irish example, Soairse was an organization created to support Republican prisoners and their families by fund-raising, and to run information campaigns to keep the prisoners in the target community’s consciousness. There is no suggestion that an overarching support organization has been developed by or for violent jihadist prisoners in

²⁰ <http://www.hhugs.org.uk/> Accessed 3rd March 2008.

Europe or beyond. However, examples of the exploitation of the imprisonment of violent jihadists for propaganda purposes have been cited previously, and it seems likely that this will continue to play a leading role in Islamist propaganda campaigns.

A further example of organized activity in prisons by radicalized or extremist prisoners is that of **education, reinforcement and strategy development**. Many prisoners take the opportunity afforded by prison to improve their educational status, and there is clear precedent for radicalized or extremist prisoners to do so as well. Nelson Mandela, for example, gained a law degree while on Robben Island. Republican paramilitaries in the Maze Prison had a strongly developed sense of the importance of education, developing alternative curricula for their inmates that sought to reinforce their political viewpoints, widen their understanding of their cultural heritage (for example, by learning the Irish language) and hone their practical skills through weapons training and bomb-making classes. These activities led to the Maze Prison being labelled a “university of terrorism” (Irwin 2003: 476).

In the case of violent jihadists, it is worth noting that prison has been formative in the thinking of some of the most significant Islamist ideologues, ranging from Ibn Tamiyyaa through to Ayman al-Zawahiri. Serious unintended consequences can thus flow from imprisoning radicalized and extremist prisoners.

5.2 Non-violent resistance

There are a number of examples where groups of prisoners have used the **law as a vehicle of resistance** to both their incarceration and the wider society. In the 1960s the Black Muslims (later to become the Nation of Islam) played a leading role in developing American prisoners’ rights by litigating for recognition as a religious group and for the right to conduct prayers and other privileges. (Smith 2003: 132). In the Northern Ireland example, the Republican movement sought to challenge extraditions by legal means to internationalize their campaign.

In one (unsuccessful) example, Republican prisoners involved in the dirty protest in 1978 tried to argue to the European Court of Human Rights that the prison authorities’ behaviour constituted inhuman and degrading treatment under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (McEvoy 2001: 153). More recently, in 2004 Abu Hamza al-Masri unsuccessfully attempted to gain release from Belmarsh prison, where he was being held on an US extradition request, on the grounds he could not receive adequate medical care in prison. Following the conviction of Dhiren Barot in 2007, his lawyer claimed that Barot had asked her to ask for himself and other convicted violent jihadists to be granted prisoner of war status, together with the associated rights and privileges of this status (*Daily Mail* 2007).

A recurring aspect of collective resistance is refusing to engage in normal prison administrative activities. This may include the **refusal to wear prison uniform, or to participate in prison work**. Such refusal serves to both distinguish the group from ordinary criminal prisoners, and to appropriate power from the prison authorities. A clear example of where such refusals is the paramilitary prisoner population in Northern Ireland.

Escalating from collective refusal to cooperate or adhere to prison regime, another form of resistance to the prison authorities manifests itself in the **use of prisoners' bodies as weapons**. While this technique is not used exclusively by radicalized individuals or groups, the dirty protest as a collective, group action reached its apogee in Northern Ireland in the late 1970s. Evolving from the refusal to wear prison uniform, Republican prisoners were left in their cells with only a blanket. Claiming that the prison staff assaulted them when slopping out the prisoners began to throw their excrement out of the cell windows and urinate under the cell doors. When the prison staff blocked the windows, the prisoner began to smear their excrement on their cell walls. The "dirty" or "blanket protest" was used in the Maze Prison and Armagh Women's Prison, from September 1976 until Autumn 1981.

Perhaps the ultimate expression of defiance and an extreme use of one's own body as a vehicle for resistance, **the hunger strike** has been used in a variety of contexts and to further a range of causes. The pioneers of the hunger strike as a political tool were the Suffragettes of the early 1900s in the UK and abroad. Hunger strikes have also been used to a significant degree by Basque nationalist prisoners in Spain and Kurdish separatists in Turkey and Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. There is some indication that violent jihadist prisoners and detainees may be disposed towards using hunger strikes as a means of protest. In September 2005 it was reported that some 128 detainees at the US detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba had gone on hunger strike, which the US authorities countered by force-feeding them. (BBC 2005c). An individual example is Sami al-Arian, a Palestinian university academic jailed in the USA for conspiring to aid Islamic jihad, who went on a 2-month hunger strike in January 2007.

5.3 Violent resistance

Moving beyond prisoner self-harm, we come to the use of violence in prison. Physical violence is likely to occur in all prison environments. Confrontations may occur between inmates and or staff over a variety of issues, such as control of resources (e.g. drugs or money), access to privileges or simply as a means of self-preservation. As one observer has noted, "A majority of inmates believed that adequate force was the only method available to protect oneself ... [it] sends a direct message to other potentially aggressive prisoners that coercive power will be used to defend oneself" (Stojkovic 1984: 516).

However, violence can also be used collectively and to further specific aims in a prison. The Aryan Brotherhood, which blends criminality and white supremacist beliefs, is one of the most violent gangs in the USA, existing largely within the prison system. It has been referred to as one of the most murderous criminal organizations in the USA and engages in murdering non-white inmates and sexual offenders. Prospective members are required to murder another inmate in order to be accepted into the organization (Grann 2004). In Northern Ireland, when seeking to force segregation, Republican paramilitaries engaged in violent attacks on Loyalist prisoners in both the Maze and the Crumlin Road prisons. In an extreme example, in 1991 PIRA prisoners detonated an explosive device in a dining hall in Crumlin Road prison, killing two Loyalist prisoners (McEvoy 2001: 276–8). There is also a potential for the external conflict to spill over the walls into the prison environment,

as shown by the 1997 murder of Loyalist volunteer force leader Billy Wright by three Republican prisoners in the confines of the Maze Prison, using a smuggled firearm.

Violence may also be directed towards prison staff and officials. In any given prison, members of staff may be vulnerable to attack by inmates with a grievance. When such violence is undertaken as part of a group's overall agenda within prison, it takes on potentially greater significance. As McEvoy notes:

Violence against prison staff or other inmates (normally from opposing factions) is a direct challenge to the prison authorities, it is a direct appropriation of power. The state's monopoly of power on the use of force is challenged in a place which should be the zenith of the state's capacity for power and control. (McEvoy 2001: 45)

Radicalized or violent groups have the potential to attack the prison staff or innocent individuals outside the prison. The history of PIRA and ETA is replete with numerous examples where prison staff have been murdered by the associates of those they are incarcerating. There have also been instances where individuals who are not affiliated to the prisons have been kidnapped and held to ransom for the release of prisoners.²¹ The UK Prison Officers' Association has reported that some radicalized Muslim inmates in the high-security Belmarsh have been adopting increasingly confrontational attitudes towards prison staff:

when an officer confronts a Muslim prisoner in Belmarsh, he or she often finds themselves surrounded by five or six other Muslim inmates. They are becoming a lot more defensive ... Tariq al-Daour, jailed for establishing an online jihad network, was caught making a website in his cell at Belmarsh urging terror attacks. When al-Daour refused to hand over his laptop a riot ensued as prison officers clashed with a group of al-Qaeda sympathizers (*The Observer* 2007)

While some radicalized individuals may exploit the opportunities offered by imprisonment (publicity, in the case of the Suffragettes, recruitment in the case of some contemporary jihadists) for many radicalized groups, an over-riding objective for prisoners is **to escape**. This has the benefit of both returning volunteers and activists to the field of operations and also providing great potential for propaganda – primarily by embarrassing the incarcerating authorities. This has been described as “resistance by ridicule” (McEvoy 2001: 45). The PIRA was particularly effective at executing escapes. Doubtless these appealed to PIRA prisoners’ self-declared status as prisoners of war. The most spectacular example came in September 1983, when 38 IRA prisoners staged a mass escape from the Maze Prison, using knives, smuggled firearms and disguises. A number of these escapees were never recaptured.²²

²¹ For example, the ETA kidnapping of Miguel Angel Blanco in 1997 (see above) and the 2005 abduction of Jill Carroll in Iraq where the captors demanded the release of all female Iraqi detainees in US custody.

²² Other notable IRA prison escapes include: the 1991 escape of Pearse McAuley and Nessian Quinlivan from Brixton prison; the 1981 escape of eight remanded IRA suspects from the Crumlin Road jail in Belfast; the 1980 escape of Gerrard Tuite from Brixton prison; the 1973 escape of three IRA prisoners by helicopter from Mountjoy Prison, Dublin; and the 1997 escape of Liam Averell from the Maze Prison disguised as a woman, under the cover of the annual Republican prisoners’ Christmas party.

Contemporary violent jihadist groups have shown a propensity for staging escapes from detention. In July 2005 Abu Yehia al-Libi, along with three other detainees, managed to escape from the Coalition detention facility in Bagram, Afghanistan. Since his escape Al-Libi has appeared in a series of propaganda videos distributed by the *as-Sahab* (the cloud), al-Qaeda's media operations wing as a new example of resistance by ridicule. Al-Libi taunts the Coalition in these videos and draws attention to perceived moral flaws in his American military captors and more widely in the US military.²³ In a number of instances, jihadists have taken escape to new heights, launching of armed assaults on prisons to free their comrades. For example in March 2007 a large group of militants purportedly from al-Qaeda in Iraq, assaulted a jail in Mosul, Iraq and freed 140 prisoners, most of whom were insurgents (Reuters 2007). In December 2007 the Belgian authorities arrested and subsequently released 14 individuals who were alleged to have been plotting to use explosives in an effort to release Nizar Trabelsi, sentenced in 2003 for planning a suicide attack on a NATO airbase (*New York Times* 2007).

Perhaps the ultimate concern for security authorities should be the potential for these groups to **plan future attacks** beyond the confines of the prison. While there are limited examples of such planning, it is alleged that the "Martyrs for Morocco" cell, which sought to attack the National Court in Madrid, was created in Spanish prisons (*International Herald Tribune* 2004). The Authentic Assembly of Islam in California (see above) provides a further example of this potential development.

5.4 Comparison of two groups' activities and behaviour

A range of similarities and differences exists in the observed behaviour of different types of prisoner. Comparing the Irish republicans and violent jihadists is of potential value, as both examples have used violence to further their aims and have a long association with the prison environment, yet they are very different in terms of their structure, culture, ideology and objectives. The following section compares the behaviour of generic criminal prisoners, Irish republicans and violent jihadists. All three groups have a number of activities or behaviour in common including

- suffering attacks from other prisoners
- imposing self-segregation from other prisoners
- launching violent assaults on prison staff
- seeking to communicate with the outside world via visitors
- attempting to escape

²³ These videos are as follows: *Abu Yahya al-Libi – escape from Bagram* (available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pidwqajsDw> as of 21/08/07), *Violations and torture* (available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqei86f3w10> as of 21/08/07), *The ulema* (available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NojDHLKDLULk> as of 21/08/07) and *Message for the mujahideen* (available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhkcBBms5cU> as of 1/08/07).

- developing prisoner codes of behaviour
- taking hostages in prison
- engaging in hunger strikes
- rioting and
- using their time in prison to improve their educational status.

The analysis also highlights a strong degree of difference between generic criminal prisoners on the one hand and Republican and violent jihadist prisoners on the other. Indeed, it is striking how many similarities exist between the Republican and violent jihadist prisoner categories. Both types of prisoners have been observed to engage in a range of similar behaviours including

- making consistent allegations of mistreatment at the hands of the authorities as part of a deliberate strategy
- refusing to cooperate in the formal prison regime and creating parallel structures in the prison for administration, education and, in the case of violent jihadists, for religious purposes.
- using time in prison to develop and refine their ideological and strategic thinking, and to distribute such material both within and without the prison, sometimes resulting in profound consequences for both environments
- mounting large-scale escapes, in some cases with concerted assistance from outside, and using the propaganda value of such escapes to maximum effect
- seeking to use prisoners more generally as vehicles for propaganda and information campaigns.
- taking hostages outside the prisons in an effort to negotiate the release of their captured comrades
- using coded communication or variations in language to communicate internally and with associates and organizations outside the prison.

However, violent jihadist prisoners are distinct from Republican prisoners in a number of ways. For example, they

- apparently seek to convert or radicalize other “ordinary” inmates to their interpretation of Islam and alternative worldview. There are also examples of where new recruits have been inducted in prison. This is in direct contrast to the Republican prisoners who sought to segregate themselves from ordinary prisoners and made a deliberate decision not to recruit new members in prison.
- do not appear to form themselves into obvious or overt hierarchical or paramilitary command and control structures in prison. However, charismatic or strong leaders do appear to emerge, though it may be harder to discern their role.
- do not appear to have the inclination to engage in “dirty protests”. This may due to their religious beliefs.

As the previous chapter has shown, there are strong parallels between the experiences gained by security authorities in dealing with radicalized and extremist prisoners in earlier conflicts, such as Northern Ireland, and those facing the challenges posed by contemporary violent jihadist prisoners. A good deal of the existing lessons identified for the management of extremist prisoners are likely to remain valid. However, there are some aspects of the contemporary situation that require greater examination and understanding. A notable difference between experiences with PIRA and ETA and contemporary violent jihadists concerns their contrasting attitudes to recruiting new members in prison. PIRA and ETA deliberately avoided such recruitment, while violent jihadists appear to regard it as an important task in prison. This chapter draws a number of conclusions about what is (and more importantly) what is not known about the nature and extent of the problem and highlights a number of areas that may merit additional research and exploration.

It is difficult to assess the extent of the problem

Due to the lack of open sources and the reluctance by the authorities to discuss these issues, it is not possible to draw any definitive conclusions about the extent of violent jihadist radicalization and recruitment in European prisons. However, evidence from the Spanish examples described above, and the cases of individuals such as Muktar Said Ibrahim and Richard Reid show that contemporary violent jihadists can and will seek out new recruits in the prison environment. Also pointing towards the existence of a threat are the reported efforts being made by European governments to manage their extremist prisoner populations better. However, without greater access to security and prison authorities, and perhaps to the prisons themselves, it will remain impossible to quantify the extent of the problem. Despite this, it seems reasonable to conclude that as the number of violent jihadist prisoners grows, so too will the potential for future challenges in managing them.

Radicalization of prisoners is neither new nor unique

It is clear from the examples examined previously that the potential for imprisoned individuals to adopt new, and in some cases, extremist or radicalized beliefs, is not a new phenomenon. Nor is it exclusive to radicalized Islamists. Radicalized organizations in the USA such as the Black Muslims and the Aryan Brotherhood demonstrate the potential for ideologically and/or criminally motivated groups to use the prison system as a source of new recruits and as a base of power. As has been demonstrated, it may be possible to gain greater understanding of how the radicalization process may function in the prison environment by examining these and other precedents.

Imprisonment may enhance vulnerability to radicalization

Imprisonment may increase a prisoner's susceptibility to new and radicalizing ideas or beliefs; this has been referred to as a cognitive opening. There are striking similarities between what are believed to be the forces leading to the radicalization of young Muslims and the psychological impact of imprisonment upon individuals; specifically, undergoing a crisis of the self, which challenges or even destroys one's self-conception, experiencing acute feelings of rejection by one's native or adopted society and seeking to cope by adopting a new sense of self-identity or a new belief, which may be delivered in adopting a new belief structure (religious or otherwise) and being assimilated into a new inclusive (and frequently protective) group identity. However, it must also be recognized that adopting new radicalized beliefs may be only one potential pathway for the prisoner. Some may seek solace in religion, which may be literalist in its interpretation, but this does not necessarily indicate a prisoner has become a potentially violent extremist. The apparent tendency of prisoners to convert or revert to religious beliefs highlights the importance of preventing extremists from spreading their ideology via religious services or places of worship in prison. This reinforces the importance of initiatives such as that taken by the UK Prison Service to provide specialist training to prison imams (HM Government 2006).

Radicalization is one element in a spectrum of potential extremist activity

As has been suggested above, radicalized and extremist prisoners may engage in a wide range of activities in prison. Some of these activities may be normal within prison walls, but others may be the result of active resistance to the authorities and seek to subvert the prison regime. Such activity may range from simple actions like nominating spokesmen or grouping together for protection and status. Other activities may be less benign, including staging protests and hunger strikes through to active violent resistance in the form of riots and escapes. In addition, prison and security authorities may face the possibility that, as the number of violent jihadist prisoners grows, a more cohesive organization may evolve in prisons that seeks to disrupt or subvert the custodial regime.

Greater understanding of the nature of the problem is required

One aspect of traditional extremist prisoner organizations such as the PIRA that made them easier to identify, understand and oppose was their adoption of hierarchical or paramilitary structures. It was easy for the authorities to identify who was in control and to discern the roles played by different prisoners. This is not the case with violent jihadist prisoners who, far from declaring their group allegiances and activities, seek to remain hidden. The clandestine nature of such groups makes it hard to distinguish extremist prisoners from the general prison population.

This task is made harder still by cultural differences between prisoners and those tasked with guarding them. As Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons wrote in a report on HMP Belmarsh, "It is vital that prisons understand the prisoners they hold, and can assess the relationships between and within different groups of prisoners, in order to be able to manage them safely. We did not believe this was the case for staff in relation to Muslim prisoners at Belmarsh" (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 2005).

Taking increasing religiosity (which, as has been seen, is not uncommon among prisoners) as a reliable indicator for extremist or radicalized behaviour may be counter-productive,

causing prisoners to become more alienated and therefore potentially more vulnerable to radicalizing influences.

The UK security authorities are already taking steps to address this issue. The Metropolitan Police counter terrorist command maintains a prison intelligence unit (PIU) that promotes the flow of information and intelligence between London's high-security prisons and external police and security agencies. The PIU has reportedly worked with the Prison Service to create a joint intelligence unit, which feeds intelligence about prisoners and their contacts from seven London prisons into a central database. In an additional effort to better understand the threat posed by radicalized prisoners, the Prison Service has also created an extremist prisoners working group, which is considering the strategic policy and operational issues posed by radicalization and extremism in prisons (House of Commons 2007b).

There are options for containing extremist prisoners

One of the most pressing problems for those seeking to manage extremist prisoners is deciding where and how to contain them. The two primary options available are to concentrate the prisoners in one or several prisons or to disperse them throughout the prison system. Both options have their advantages and disadvantages.

Concentration has a number of attractions; first it permits the extremist prisoner population to be held in one location, or at least a small number of prisons. From a resource perspective this is beneficial, as the necessary high security resources (and other resources such as intelligence gathering assets, specialized personnel, training *et cetera*) can be focused on fewer locations. This was the case in Northern Ireland, where the authorities had to deal with a rapidly growing paramilitary prisoner population within a small prison estate. Also, where the prisoners in question are suspected of seeking to radicalize or indoctrinate other "ordinary decent criminals", concentration offers a means of reducing and managing this risk. This is the approach adopted by the Dutch authorities who "[t]o protect other detainees from becoming 'contaminated'... have decided to concentrate convicted jihadists in two detention centres and keep them separated from other prisoners. Prison staff in these institutions are specially trained to detect signs of radicalization" (Ongering 2007). "In addition, individual customized regimes will be developed, taking account of the individual's background and conduct and the risks these might pose. The prison staff who have to deal with this particular group of detainees will be specially trained and instructed for the task" (House of Representatives 2006–2007).

However, concentration can also pose a range of difficulties. Again, the Northern Ireland experience is instructive here. In the Maze Prison, opposing paramilitary prisoner factions effectively took control of their prison wings, segregating themselves from the other side and other prisoners. This permitted these paramilitary prisoners to engage in a range of activities including intimidating prison staff, maintaining organizational structure and discipline, conducting ideological and practical training for members, planning and executing escape plans and generally continuing to contribute to the struggle from the confines of the prison. The difficulties posed by concentration were noted by an inquiry into the issue, the May Committee, which "specifically acknowledged the difficulties of concentrating Category A terrorist prisoners in the one establishment in that it would allow such prisoners to organize themselves and 'pose unprecedented security problems'"

(McEvroy 2001: 186). It is notable that those engaged in violent jihadism are typically not part of an organized, hierarchical group; instead they are made up of small, loosely affiliated cells and teams. However, it is possible that if they were held in a concentrated manner, this loose network may consolidate into a more solid and organized form.

Conversely, the dispersal of extremist prisoners helps prevent the formation of strong organizational ties and structures in a given prison, and reduces the opportunities for leadership figures to maintain tight discipline and control over other prisoners. Dispersal is also likely to aid security by preventing groups of extremist prisoners from plotting organized escape attempts and from planning attacks or activities within or beyond the prison. However, as has been noted, dispersal may provide violent jihadist prisoners with access to a new pool of potential recruits.

De-radicalization of extremist prisoners may be possible

In a number of countries, perhaps following the recognition of the dangers of concentrating large numbers of violent radicalized individuals concentrated in prisons for many years, attempts have been made to develop programmes for the de-radicalization of prisoners. Singapore, Saudi and Yemen are three examples that have received considerable attention for their efforts in these areas. It is difficult to assess the level of success achieved by these programmes. In Singapore, as a result of their rehabilitation efforts the authorities have released at least three former *Jemaah Islamyia* members. In Saudi Arabia it is reported that since 2004 some 2,000 prisoners have participated in the programme, of which roughly 700 have been released. In the case of Yemen some 364 suspected militants were released before the programme's effectiveness was called into question.

Clearly there is strong potential for the abuse of such programmes by the targeted prisoners. The Yemeni example appears to demonstrate this, with the result being the release of prisoners who return to their extremist ways. Further, it would be difficult for Western, non-Muslim governments to create such programmes without the active support of leading religious authorities; the cooperation between the secular authority and local religious leaders in Singapore appears to be a good example of how this has been overcome. However, the schemes mentioned above, and others, have been in operation for a relatively short period of time and therefore it is likely too early to form a judgement as to their overall effectiveness. Thus further research and evaluation may lead to greater understanding of these efforts and methods and effectiveness.

Resettlement and reintegration requires greater attention

As discussed in Chapter 2, imprisonment provides many of the social and psychological conditions for subsequent criminalization and potentially for radicalization and future extremist activity. Prisoners experience denigration of the self, detachment from supportive social relationships, exposure to harsh authority, day-to-day violence and affiliation with peers offering an alternative, counter-cultural community of thought. Evidence also suggests that having been imprisoned makes it more difficult to integrate as a law-abiding citizen in a community and obtain legitimate forms of work Visher *et al.* cited in Rubin *et al.* (2007).

The period post-incarceration thus poses a particular challenge for those seeking to counter radicalization. One way of mitigating these challenges is to implement pre-release

programmes that help to prepare the prisoner to reintegrate and find work. This kind of programme is likely to have psychological and practical components, and evidence suggests that multifaceted approaches may be most effective (Dowden and Andrews 2000). This has been found to have positive effects on offenders generally. However, with respect to countering Islamist radicalization, there is likely to be a theological and political facet to prison programmes, incorporating discussion groups and links that continue when the prisoner is released in to the community (Hart 2006). Such elements appear to be represented in the de-radicalization and rehabilitation programmes of a number of countries.

Evidence-based prison regimes that reduce the crime-inducing aspects of the prison environment, and post-release reintegration programmes may help to reduce the likelihood of radicalization and subsequent extremist activity (Kubrin and Stewart 2006 cited in Rubin *et al.* 2007). However, countering the challenge of prison radicalization is likely to require an integrated approach that acknowledges the apparently disproportionate numbers of Muslims in prison in the UK and other European countries. Such an approach engages with root causes, seeking to understand and reduce the likelihood of young Muslims becoming offenders. Currently there is active and urgent debate and discussion about such measures. These measures are described at times in terms of counter-terrorism and at other times as social cohesion.²⁴

This movement between counter-terrorism, preventing extremism and social cohesion is an unhelpful slippage of terminology that indicates a lack of conceptual clarity. While counter-terrorism measures are undoubtedly going to continue and have a role to play in security, the attempt to understand the experiences and disaffection of Muslim youth should be a separate endeavour. Most Muslims are no more radicalized or extremist than other young people in Britain. Lumping diverse and internally divided Muslim communities together as a unified and at-risk mass is likely to be counter-productive and generate further alienation and disaffection.

Instead, pursuing social cohesion as an approach requires a focus on the diversity of communities, including the range of religions, socio-economic and cultural groups instead of targeting one group. Targeting points of tension instead of individual groups and seeking potential points of agreement and consensus about desirable ways of living peacefully together may be more constructive than exhorting the moderate Muslim community to publicly condemn Muslim terrorists. Inter-faith dialogue has increasingly been considered a way forward for soliciting the interest and support of religious and cultural leaders in community dialogue. These leaders are the key to galvanizing more

²⁴ Part of the tendency to slippage may be due to the fact that social cohesion is a relatively amorphous term that tends to be utilized as a suggested response to the conflict and fragmentation in diverse, multiethnic, violent or crime-ridden communities. However, the term is often defined by absence, as a state that would exist if diverse citizens could live together peacefully, trusting one another, with shared goals and relatively untroubled by crime. The academic literature on trust and communities has a related term called “collective efficacy”, as communities with high trust, high social support or social capital, meaning that people are connected to one another and feel that they can rely on one another for help. This trust, social support and shared vision tend to be protective against crime. For detailed discussion of these effects see (Putnam and Sampson 2006).

popular support that could help promote the sense of engagement, investment and belonging, a shared sense of purpose and positive and supportive relationships that make individuals less likely to experience crises of the self and to search for alternatives that leave them vulnerable to people whose alternative ideologies and practices may offer opportunities for dramatic action and change, possibly through violence.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – An Encounter Behind the Apostates’ Bars in Jordan²⁵

“Our brothers dwelled in the solitary confinements of the secret service, isolated from the outside world for periods unmatched by prisoners before them in this country except for a few ... Nevertheless, this was a unique and blessed experience that strengthened many of the brothers ... From the moment I stepped foot in that jail, I eagerly began my Da’wah²⁶. So I began writing some literature as part of a series I named “O Two Companions of the Prison! Are Many Different lords Better or Allah, the One, the Irresistible?” (derived from the verse 12:39). I included in it various subjects relating to Tawheed²⁷, Ibrahim’s way, Worship, Polytheism etc. I tried to circulate this booklet between the prisoners. In fact, some of the prisoners took this booklet out with them when they were released. They published this booklet outside the prison with my name imprinted on it. This obviously angered the enemies of Allah, while some of the released brothers were constantly trying to communicate with those imprisoned in order to obtain my writings. Later, Allah destined for those ex-prisoners to play a part in an armed attack on one of the offices of the Jordanian Intelligence, some of whom were arrested and admitted to have known and met me in the prison, and some of my writings were found with them. Allah the Almighty made this incidence a cause for reuniting me with my brothers, since I was transferred South to the central jail immediately after this incidence.

“After we were reunited in the central jail, we began to organise our activities inside the jail. The first thing I called the brothers to was to hold Al Jumu’ah (Friday prayers) in the wing so it can become a resort for the prisoners and a platform for our Da’wah. The purposes behind holding Al-Jumu’ah were to uphold the Da’wah and to provide the alternative over the jail’s mosque, who’s [sic] Khateeb²⁸ are from the regime. We also prayed Eid prayers in the wing and its hall. The number of prisoners who used to pray with us were multiple-fold the number of those who prayed in the jail’s mosque. I prepared a series of lessons for the brothers who kept busy in the Da’wah of prisoners convicted in different cases.

Many prisoners from different cells and convictions were keenly obtaining our papers and booklets, which had an evident effect inside the jail. The brothers were active in Da’wah and consequently guided many prisoners who later became soldiers for Tawheed. During the days

²⁵ (*Nida’ul Islam*, 1997-1998)

²⁶ *Da’wah*, meaning “Call”, God’s way of bringing believers to the faith and the means by which prophets call individuals and communities. Militants interpret da’wah as calling Muslims back to the purer form of religion practiced by Muhammad and the early Muslim community (Esposito 2003)

²⁷ *Tawheed* (alternatively *Tawhid*) is the defining doctrine of Islam. It declares absolute monotheism – the unity and uniqueness of God as creator and sustainer of the universe (Esposito 2003)

²⁸ *Khateeb* (alternatively *Khatib*), is an orator, a person who preaches the Friday sermon at a mosque (Esposito 2003)

where visits were allowed, we used to be visited by groups of brothers from all over the country. At that time, we did not know most of these brothers, but they'd heard about our Da'wah or received our writings. Some of them used to consult us on certain issues or ask from us Fatwah regarding specific problems. Accordingly, I gave them many of the writing which I wrote in jail as well as other special responses to their queries. They then took part in publishing these outside the jail. As a result, the enemies of Allah were furious and delirious with this Da'wah, for they did not sentence nor jail us to spread, manifest and publicise our Da'wah, but instead to deter us from it.

As for their plots within the jail, the management isolated all the prisoners from us and prohibited them from communicating or praying with us. They punished everyone who prayed Friday Prayer with us, or was caught any of our essays or writings in his possession. These punishments were usually either by beating up the person, or by enchaining him to the bars, so that he would remain suspended upright in the air for long periods, or by solitary confinement, etc. We used to encourage our brothers, especially those who found guidance inside the jail, to remain patient and steadfast, and we explained to them that this is Allah's Patterning for those who follow this Da'wah.

However, if the matter was related to someone's Deen²⁹, such as the cursing of the brother's religion or shaving off his beard, we used to react immediately by congregating at the doors of the prison, disobeying orders, refusing to follow the daily timetable and refusing to enter our cells at night. We would then send verbal or written messages to the managers to remind them of Allah and frighten them with His Punishment, and to warn them from disdaining or interfering with our Deen. We used to hold talks and agreements regarding this issue. When negotiating with them, we used to always emphasise on the fact that we are not concerned with solitary confinement as a method of punishment. However, we will not accept or tolerate their interference with our Deen, because we were imprisoned for the sake of our Deen and we are prepared to die for its cause. After hearing this from us manifold, the jail's management acknowledged our demand and did not interfere with any of our brothers' Deen, even if that brother was from those convicted in other cases. All of this took place after numerous clashes with the guards, who sometimes used to use gas against us and try to break into our cells".

²⁹ *Deen* can be translated as "religion", "way", or "path".

Appendix B – Lesson Eighteen: Prisons and Detention Centres

If an indictment is issued and the trial, begins, the brother has to pay attention to the following:

1. At the beginning of the trial, once more the brothers must insist on proving that torture was inflicted on them by State Security [investigators] before the judge.
 2. Complain [to the court] of mistreatment while in prison.
 3. Make arrangements for the brother's defense with the attorney, whether he was retained by the brother's family or court-appointed.
 4. The brother has to do his best to know the names of the state security officers, who participated in his torture and mention their names to the judge. [These names may be obtained from brothers who had to deal with those officers in previous cases.]
 5. Some brothers may tell and may be lured by the state security investigators to testify against the brothers [i.e. affirmation witness], either by not keeping them together in the same prison during the trials, or by letting them talk to the media. In this case, they have to be treated gently, and should be offered good advice, good treatment, and pray that God may guide them.
 6. During the trial, the court has to be notified of any mistreatment of the brothers inside the prison.
 7. It is possible to resort to a hunger strike, but it is a tactic that can either succeed or fail.
 8. Take advantage of visits to communicate with brothers outside prison and exchange information that may be helpful to them in their work outside prison [according to what occurred during the investigations]. The importance of mastering the art of hiding messages is self evident here.
- When the brothers are transported from and to the prison [on their way to the court] they should shout Islamic slogans out loud from inside the prison cars to impress upon the people and their family the need to support Islam.
 - Inside the prison, the brother should not accept any work that may belittle or demean him or his brothers, such as the cleaning of the prison bathrooms or hallways.
 - The brothers should create an Islamic program for themselves inside the prison, as well as recreational and educational ones, etc.
 - The brother in prison should be a role model in selflessness. Brothers should also pay attention to each others needs and should help each other and unite vis a vis the prison officers.
 - The brothers must take advantage of their presence in prison for obeying and worshipping [God] and memorizing the Qora'an, etc. This is in addition to all guidelines and procedures that were contained in the lesson on interrogation and investigation. Lastly, each of us has to understand

that we don't achieve victory against our enemies through these actions and security procedures. Rather, victory is achieved by obeying Almighty and Glorious God and because of their many sins. Every brother has to be careful so as not to commit sins and everyone of us has to do his best in obeying Almighty God, Who said in his Holy Book: "We will, without doubt, help Our messengers and those who believe (both) in this world's life and the one Day when the Witnesses will stand forth."