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## REHABILITATION OF RADICALS

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### Abstract

In the past 10 years, the rehabilitation of Muslim radicals has become a pressing issue. Great numbers of radicals have passed in and out of various incarcerating institutions and are returned to their societies where they frequently rejoin radical groups, sometimes more radicalized and technically proficient than they were prior to their incarceration. Both Muslim and non-Muslim governments have sought different methods to rehabilitate radicals, ranging from arranging debates between radicals and mainstream Muslim religious elite to confronting them with betrayals and denunciations by relatives, friends, and associates. There are also full-scale “re-education” camps. This policy paper will seek to evaluate these methodologies and propose for the United States a workable policy for re-integrating radicals into society, thus defusing the power of recidivism.

### Issue: What to do with radicals?

One of the major issues that policymakers face in dealing with Muslim radicalism is that of rehabilitating the radicals in such a way that they are tied to their societies rather than induced to return to radical groups from which they came. During the past 10 years, the United States government and a variety of allied Western governments (the United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands), together with other countries that have been targeted by radical Muslims (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Singapore, and Indonesia), have captured large numbers of militants. Most of them are guilty of perpetrating or aiding in the perpetration of violent actions; they serve time in prison and eventually are set free. What happens to them afterward is the subject of this policy paper.

Muslim radicalism is a loosely linked group of ideologies that—in its broadest definition—includes those Muslims who seek to radically change Islam in order to establish a modern *shari`a*-based state that would (hypothetically) encompass the entirety of the Muslim world. In order to accomplish this audacious goal, the radicals have needed to create a unified version of the *shari`a* that avoids the sectarianism of the classical four Muslim schools of law and that is viable and attractive in the contemporary world. Radicalism has a number of different additional

components (which will be listed below), but the idea of the need for a *shari`a* state always stands at the heart—the *raison d’etre*—of the movement.<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible for the United States to accept this basic radical Muslim demand. If the *shari`a* pertained merely to personal or local Muslim law, it might be palatable. But unfortunately, the *shari`a*, as presented by Muslim radicals, would reshape any Muslim society in ways that are fundamentally discriminatory toward ideals that are important to U.S. foreign policy, such as women’s rights, rights of religious minorities, and freedom of speech. However, in the following discussion, it is important to realize that, for the broad range of Muslim radicals, the United States and its allies are not the *primary* enemy. Their hostility comes from the perception that U.S. support for elites, both religious and political, in the radicals’ own countries has blocked the establishment of the *shari`a* states they believe to be integral to their faith. (For them, the fact that broad majorities in Muslim countries have consistently rejected the establishment of *shari`a* states is irrelevant, but should serve to remind us that while radicals are vocal they do not constitute a majority except for under extreme circumstances.) Rather, the Muslim radicals contend that **the true enemies are Muslim elites, who do the bidding of the non-Muslim world, as well as promote a false version of Islam for mass consumption.**

Because of its rejection of the elites, Muslim radicalism employs *takfir*, or labeling apparent Muslims as non-Muslims, against its enemies, which allows them to be killed as “apostates.” It is due to this style of discourse that there is so much violence against Muslim civilians at the present time. Violent radicals are seeking to forcibly “purify” the Muslim world of their religious and political (and, in some cases, cultural) opponents. However, one should also realize that radicalism as a phenomenon is much larger than the militant groups that gain media attention. There is a substantial section of the movement that we can refer to as “quietist” (as opposed to the “activist” or militant), which seeks to form *shari`a* regions, as opposed to the violent transformation of an entire state into a *shari`a* state. This quietist model of radicalism is present throughout the Muslim world and involves the creation of a small community in a given area

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<sup>1</sup> On the ideology, see William Shepard, “What is Muslim ‘Fundamentalism’?” *Studies in Religion* 17 (1988): 5-26; Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29 (2006): 207-36.

(sometimes called a *jama`a*), which will be ruled by *shari`a*. There are a number of places within the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States where such models have taken root as well.

This paper argues that these types of communities might allow for the containment of radicalism within a specific geographical location that is not substantially different from other separatist religious groups,<sup>2</sup> although such “mini-states” must be policed properly to prevent them from becoming lawless zones and headquarters for organizations designed to intimidate both Muslims and non-Muslims. Of course, a detractor, when critiquing such a paradigm, will make haste to note other religious groups that have created zones for themselves share neither the dominationist ideology of radical Islam, nor its history of violence. For this reason, the suggestion of containing radical Muslims within their *shari`a* zones cannot exist in tandem with governmental abdication of the rule of law throughout a given country. Otherwise, these zones effectively would become independent small countries. But such a paradigm could provide an outlet for the religious needs of radical and conservative Muslims in a way that would be acceptable and could eventually integrate them into the larger society if they wished—or answer their religious needs if they did not.<sup>3</sup>

It is important at this point to define what is meant by “rehabilitation” for radical Muslims. In the wake of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, U.S. authorities began detaining large numbers of radical Muslims. Temporary housing for the detainees was created at several holding locations, the most famous of which was in Guantanamo Bay (established early 2002), along with Bagram Air Force Base north of Kabul, Afghanistan, and undisclosed locations scattered throughout U.S.-allied countries. The apparent goal of these facilities was merely to confine the prisoners and to extract as much usable intelligence from each of them as was possible (perhaps with some of the guilty being tried for their crimes), without much thought given to what should be done with them afterward.

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<sup>2</sup> The ones that obviously come to mind are the Hasidic Jews and the Amish, but other communalist habitations are associated with Christians, Buddhists, spiritualists of all types, Sufis, and Hindus.

<sup>3</sup> It is perfectly possible to integrate Muslim law with U.S. needs, as the *fatwa* issued after September 11 allowing Muslim soldiers to fight in Afghanistan illustrates; see Basheer Nafi, “Fatwa and War: On the Allegiance of the American Muslim Soldiers in the Aftermath of September 11,” *Islamic Law and Society* 11 (2004): 78-115.

For this reason, many prisoners released today only turn back to violence. Or, if they personally do not return to violence, they serve as success stories, as ones who have “beaten the system” for those who do perpetrate violence, and function as recruiters for the next generation of radicals.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, we have to ask: What kind of rehabilitation would we want? There are several options. One would be a full conversion away from the system of radical Islam into some type of belief that promotes civil society.<sup>5</sup> The second would be a mere disappearance into ordinary life without any obvious conversion away from radicalism. The third would be the retention of radical beliefs with a refocus upon nonviolent methods, such as education, missionization, or other activism.<sup>6</sup>

The first option would be preferable. However, the goal for policymakers realistically should be that rehabilitation would mean a return to society without engaging in violent action. This benchmark should be the lowest common denominator because of the necessity of freedom of speech (however gruesome that can be from people who have engaged in such violent actions) and of religion. It is clear, however, that this lowest common denominator is not being reached in a large number of cases with regard to radical Muslim prisoners who have been released.

### **The problem of recidivism**

There is a serious problem with radical Muslim prisoners. While prisons or holding locations are supposed to be deterrents to engaging in further violent activities, in two senses, many constitute universities in the worst sense. First, they serve to consolidate the unity of the radicals, who in the wider world are often astonishingly quarrelsome and disunited. Further, during this process of consolidation, they also serve as educational facilities for radicals to teach each other skills, such as practical bomb-making, methods of propaganda and intimidation, and related tactics. Prominent radicals such as Abu Musa`b al-Zarqawi were converted to radicalism while in prison. In a second, even more significant, sense, prisons serve as universities because of the personal

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<sup>4</sup> One such individual was Muhammad Haydar Zammar, who served as a mentor for the Hamburg cell that carried out the attacks on September 11, 2001 .

<sup>5</sup> A good example of this outlook would be Ed Husayn of the Quillam Foundation (U.K.).

<sup>6</sup> Examples of this type of activism could be the British Muslim organization Cageprisoners (<http://www.cageprisoners.com/>), run by former Guantanamo Bay prisoner Muazzam Begg.

and religious prestige that they confer upon a former prisoner once he is set free. At that time, the former prisoner is possessed of great “street cred” and can assist in recruiting impressionable youth—or even assume leadership positions within a radical group.<sup>7</sup>

This latter possibility has become a reality, and makes the development of a policy for rehabilitation urgent. Many major leaders of radical groups today are either graduates of prisons or are actually from the West.<sup>8</sup> The issue of prisons and what their function should be needs to be discussed. Until now, a prison’s primary function has been merely to keep radicals out of circulation. This fact means that, in many cases, the prisoners effectively are in control of the facility—a situation that is furthered by the ability of radicals to group together into gangs, and to force other inmates to join them either for protection or out of conviction (through conversion). Sometimes such situations are further facilitated by the presence of radical Muslim chaplains who can supply these prisoners with radical literature. Thus, it is not always clear who precisely is in control of the prisons.

Nor is it clear that the treatment of prisoners places the United States or its allies in a positive light. With a high suicide rate in Guantanamo Bay<sup>9</sup> and allegations (albeit unproven) of various types of torture and murder,<sup>10</sup> our prisons may be teaching prisoners the worst types of lessons in

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<sup>7</sup> As Abdul Qayyum has done (apparently) within the Taliban; see “Ex-Gitmo prisoner now Taliban commander?” *MSNBC* via *The Associated Press*, March 3, 2010, World News section.

[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35691738/ns/world\\_news-south\\_and\\_central\\_asia/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35691738/ns/world_news-south_and_central_asia/).

<sup>8</sup> The best example of the latter is the Shabab commander Abu Mansur al-Amriki; see Andrea Elliott, “The Jihadist Next Door,” *New York Times Magazine*, January 27, 2010,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/31/magazine/31Jihadist-t.html?hp=&pagewanted=all>; for a list of Gitmo returnees, see “Guantanamo Recidivism Fact Sheet,” *ABC News*, April 7, 2009,

[http://abcnews.go.com/images/Politics/guantanamo\\_recidivism\\_list\\_090526.pdf](http://abcnews.go.com/images/Politics/guantanamo_recidivism_list_090526.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> “Mass Guantanamo suicide protest,” *BBC News*, January 25, 2005, Americas section,

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4204027.stm> (approximately 12 attempted suicides over the years); see also

“Triple suicide at Guantanamo camp,” *BBC News*, June 11, 2006, Americas section,

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/5068228.stm> (3 suicides).

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Dahlia Lithwick, “Too Terrible to Be True?” *Slate Magazine*, January 20, 2010, Jurisprudence section, <http://www.slate.com/id/2241948/> (review of Scott Horton’s article “The Guántanamo ‘Suicides’: A Camp Delta sergeant blows the whistle” in *Harper’s Magazine*, January 2010,

<http://www.harpers.org/archive/2010/01/hbc-90006368>).

preparation for their release or repatriation to their home countries. Approximately one in seven prisoners, according to an unreleased Pentagon report, has returned to violent activities.<sup>11</sup>

For this reason, the issue of former prisoners returning to radical movements constitutes a danger both in real practical terms—former prisoners might attack the United States using skills learned in our prisons—as well as politically—by reinforcing the paranoia about Muslim radicals within the larger population. If we cannot trust the prisons to deradicalize prisoners, what is the point of freeing prisoners at all? What is the point of closing down a facility such as Guantanamo Bay (or its associated holding areas) when these prisoners remain dangerous?

### **Methods tried in the Muslim world and the non-Muslim world**

Given the seriousness with which governments—non-Muslim since September 11, 2001, and Muslim since May 2003 when Al Qaeda launched attacks in Saudi Arabia—view the issue of radicalism, it is not surprising that there is a wide range of methodologies that have been tried in order to rehabilitate radicals. In general, the non-Muslim governments have tried education of a secular or a semi-secular nature, relying to various degrees upon official Muslim elites in order to help them out. Muslim governments have taken much more directly religious methods. Both types of rehabilitation can claim successes and failures, and these will be critiqued below.

#### *1. Egypt*

Probably no country other than Egypt has done more to work for the end of a radical Muslim uprising, which dominated the country from the mid-1980s until 1997, with elements of the uprising continuing on into the early 2000s. From a military point of view, the primary drivers of the uprising, the Gama`at Islamiyya, together with the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, were defeated by the middle 1990s. But it was not until 1997 that elements of the groups' leadership (most of them in prison) began to call for a "cease-fire." This cease-fire was coupled with declarations from major religious leaders that the use of violence was illegitimate, together with popular rejection

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<sup>11</sup> Elisabeth Bumiller, "Later Terror Link Cited for 1 in 7 Free Detainees," *New York Times*, May 20, 2009, Politics section, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/21/us/politics/21gitmo.html>.

of the radicals, especially after a series of bungled and murderous operations during the middle 1990s.<sup>12</sup>

Continuously from that period, the leaders of the Gama`at have published an extremely successful and effective series of refutations of the radical use of violence.<sup>13</sup> These refutations were prompted by the public revulsion toward the tactics of the radicals, especially after 1997. The effectiveness of these publications has been heightened by the fact that many of the authors have served extensive prison sentences and some of them are still in jail, and therefore their credibility as opponents of the regime cannot be impugned. The best known of all of these “clarifications” was that of Dr. al-Fadl al-Amin (who was the mentor of Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri), published in serial form during 2007<sup>14</sup>— the fallout from which included a refutation of Al-Amin by al-Zawahiri himself. Although large numbers of radicals remain in Egypt at the present time, the fact that the older generation of radicals has turned so decisively against the use of violence has had an effect. The regime’s carrot-and-stick approach has been mirrored by other Muslim countries in North Africa, such as both Algeria and Libya, which have tried amnesties—sometimes with success, sometimes not.<sup>15</sup> But none have made the efforts that the Egyptians have made to directly combat the ideology of the radicals using repentant prisoners and former prisoners directly.

### 2. Saudi Arabia

Before May 2003, when Al Qaeda formally began targeting Saudi Arabia using suicide attacks and guerilla raids as their preferred methodology, there was little effort on the part of the regime to combat radicalism. Al Qaeda critiques of Saudi Arabia had been particularly harsh during the period leading up to 2003, with Osama bin Laden and other prominent radicals referring to the

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<sup>12</sup> These included the failed attempt on the life of Atef Sidqi in November 1994 (which killed a little girl, Shayma’), and most especially the November 1997 slaughter of 57 tourists at the tomb of Queen Hatshepsut in Luxor, an event that caused nationwide revulsion against the radicals.

<sup>13</sup> These include Usama Ibrahim Hafiz and `Asim `Abd al-Majid Muhammad, *Mubadarat waqf al-`unf: ru`ya waqi`iyya wa-nazra shara`iyya* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Turath al-Islami, 2002), along with approximately six other major treatises.

<sup>14</sup> Fadl Amin (Abd al-Qader bin Abd al-Aziz), “Indoctrinating the Jihadi Activity (Tarshid al-amal al-Jihadi),” in the Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (e-Prism.com), [http://www.e-prism.org/images/TARSHID\\_AL-JIHAD.pdf](http://www.e-prism.org/images/TARSHID_AL-JIHAD.pdf) (accessed July 20, 2010). Note: The document is in Arabic.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., “Libya frees ‘repentant’ Islamists,” *BBC News*, October 15, 2009, Africa section, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8309460.stm>.

kingdom as “a non-Muslim country,” which undercut its Islamic legitimacy. Furthermore, the Saudi Arabian authorities had arrested a great many Muslim activists, among them a number of scholars, such as Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-`Awda, who were seen as sympathetic to them.

Immediately following the twin attacks of May and November 2003, the Saudi Arabian authorities began to combat Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula quite effectively. These attacks were directed nominally against expatriates living in the kingdom; in actuality, however, most of those killed were Muslims. By the end of 2004, the government had either killed off its leadership (which was mostly fighters from the first Afghani war, 1979-1989) and had imprisoned a large number of radicals. As in Egypt, the most effective means of dealing with the radicals has been the co-option of figures such as al-Hawali and `Awda, who both spearheaded a program of dialoguing and debating radicals to encourage the radicals to turn themselves into the authorities.<sup>16</sup>

Several times, the Saudi Arabians have proclaimed amnesty for radicals on the run. While of course this has not gained them any support from the hardcore Al Qaeda leadership, large numbers of peripheral radicals have turned themselves in and have been pardoned. However, this approach has risks. On August 27, 2009, a radical pretending to turn himself in to Deputy Interior Minister Muhammad b. al-Nayi blew himself up with explosives concealed in his rectum.<sup>17</sup> Although the assassination attempt was unsuccessful, it signaled both the dangers of the rehabilitation of radicals, as well as the importance that radicals have placed upon stopping it. It is also unclear whether work done with radicals actually results in their ceasing all violent activities.<sup>18</sup> As with the Guantanamo Bay inmates, there is a problem with recidivism.<sup>19</sup> It may be that the failure of Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia was because of the concurrent efforts of radicals

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Spencer, “Saudi Arabia defends Al Qaeda rehabilitation scheme,” *Telegraph* (U.K.), February 9, 2010, World News section, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/saudi-arabia/7195400/Saudi-Arabia-defends-al-Qaeda-rehabilitation-scheme.html>; for other assessments of this program, see <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=24648>

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Hegghammer, “On the Bin Nayif Assassination Attempt,” *Jihadica Blog*, August 28, 2009, <http://www.jihadica.com/on-the-bin-nayif-assassination-attempt/> (accessed July 21, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> But see one success story: Judith Miller, “Former Gitmo Prisoner, Rehabilitated in Saudi Arabia, May Soon be Released,” Fox News, February 16, 2010, World section, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/02/16/exclusive-gitmo-prisoner-rehabilitated-saudi-arabia-soon-released/>.

<sup>19</sup> Bobby Ghosh, “Can Jihadis be Rehabilitated?” *Time*, January 27, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1874278,00.html>.

to establish a Muslim state in Iraq, which attracted large numbers of radicals to fight there rather than in Saudi Arabia. With the development of an Al Qaeda base in the lawless regions of Yemen, there may be a second phase to the fighting.

### 3. *Yemen*

Ever since its founding, Al Qaeda has been able to count on Yemen as one of its major bases and a prime contributor of manpower to its ranks. The country has been the starting point for a number of the attacks that have been leveled against the United States (prime among them the 2000 attack on the *USS Cole*). In general, the policy of the Yemeni government has been to conciliate radicals—imprisoning them for brief periods of time, but still coddling them and then quietly pardoning them (if not actually abetted in their numerous escapes from prison). Unlike the policies of Saudi Arabia, those of Yemen focus on avoiding any upset to the delicate tribal balance that exists within the country, especially given the fact that Al Qaeda and other radicals have established close connections with the tribes.

That said, the Yemeni government has also established a framework of rehabilitation of radicals similar to that of Saudi Arabia. However, while the rehabilitation is one of Islamic education, it has none of the counterpart “stick” threats that the Saudi Arabians use if the rehabilitated prisoners return to radical and violent actions. Consequently, these programs exist as nothing more than the equivalent of Islamic education courses within the prison system and can be easily flouted. Additionally, as many Guantanamo Bay returnees have been Yemeni, there is an extremely high rate of recidivism. Others who have been expatriated to Yemen usually return to violence. For example, Said al-Shihri, the leader of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, is a former Guantanamo Bay prisoner.<sup>20</sup> Of the Arab countries that have a policy regarding the rehabilitation of radicals, Yemen’s efforts must count as the obvious failure.

### 4. *Indonesia and Singapore*

During the late 1990s, a number of radical Muslims in Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and other closely associated Muslim minority populations in the Philippines)

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<sup>20</sup> “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula urges Jihad,” *BBC News*, February 8, 2010, Middle East section, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8504855.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8504855.stm).

organized the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), which was eventually headed by Abu Bakr Ba'asyir. This organization was supposed to be a quietist radical movement that was gradually to establish *shari`a* zones throughout Southeast Asia with the eventual goal of establishing a pan-regional Islamic state. Violence was supposed to be eschewed during the early phases of the movement's existence and reserved for the finale (just before the transition into an actual Islamic state).<sup>21</sup>

However, because of the close relations between a number of JI's senior members and Al Qaeda, the transition to violence, heralded by the first Bali suicide bombings on October 12, 2002, happened before the group had fully matured. The group fought a low-level guerilla campaign primarily against the Indonesian authorities, until the last of its leaders were killed during 2009. JI also fomented a number of plots against countries with pro-Western governments, such as Singapore, and aided Muslim radicals in the Philippines.

In general, the strategy of the Indonesians has been to pursue JI as a military opponent, while also utilizing the religious support of the Muslim establishment against suicide attacks.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, major theological treatises were penned to refute radicals,<sup>23</sup> effectively marshaling ex-members of JI such as Nasir Abas—and even to some extent Abu Bakr Ba'asyir—to deny the claims of the radicals.<sup>24</sup> Both of these former members of JI have very obviously not given up their radical views, but have denounced the use of violence on tactical groups. Abas, for example, very conspicuously states that he did not abandon JI and still believes in its goal of a Muslim state, but that this will not be achieved through the use of violence.<sup>25</sup> These prominent denunciations have close parallels with those in Egypt and Saudi Arabia that have been so

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<sup>21</sup> Elena Pavlova, "From a Counter-Society to a Counter-State Movement: Jemaah Islamiyah according to PUPJI," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30 (2007): 777-800.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., *Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia tentang Terorisme* (Jakarta: Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> Al-Ustadz Luqman bin Muhammad Ba'abduh, *Mereka adalah Teroris bantahan terhadap buku Aku Melawan Teroris* (Jakarta: Qawlan Sadida, 2005), a response to the Bali bomber Imam Samudra's *Aku Melawan Teroris* (Solo: Jazera, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> Scott Atran, "The Emir: An Interview with Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, Alleged Leader of the Southeast Asian Jemaah Islamiyah Organization," The Jamestown Foundation, December 16, 2005, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=562&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=26&cHash=f0e77f13a0](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=562&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=26&cHash=f0e77f13a0).

<sup>25</sup> "Nasir Abas on Jamaah Islamiyah," *Indonesia Matters* website, February 12, 2006, <http://www.indonesiamatters.com/104/nasir-abas-on-jamaah-islamiyah/> (accessed on July 21, 2010).

effective in breaking the morale of radical groups. However, recent research has revealed that jihadis have extensive control within the prison system, so there is room for improvement.<sup>26</sup>

Singapore was a target for a JI plot during 2002. The arrest of a number of local Muslim radicals shocked the small island state.<sup>27</sup> In order to combat radicalism within the country's Muslim population, the Singaporean government made a major effort to engage Muslims as a whole—and radicals in particular. Most of the policies enacted were laid out in a “White Paper” issued in January 2003.<sup>28</sup> Some of the key recommendations were the following: “to set up Inter-racial Confidence Circles and Harmony Circles to work at community levels, schools and work-places....”<sup>29</sup> As a non-Muslim country, Singapore does not have the advantage of a Muslim religious elite that is close to the government (the local equivalent, the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura or Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, lacks popular legitimacy), but on an intellectual level it has sought to engage the radicals through meetings, conferences, and dialogues during the intervening years. Although one cannot say that the danger of Muslim radicalism has disappeared in Singapore, it has certainly subsided.

### 5. Central Asia

Radicalism in Central Asia has been focused around the region of the Ferghana Valley (split between Uzbekistan, Kirghizstan, and Tajikistan), which is the most religious region of the area as a whole. Although the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan mounted a credible challenge to the secular Uzbek regime of Islam Karimov during the 1990s, and the Islamic Redemption of Tajikistan fomented a civil war in Tajikistan from 1992 to 1997, Central Asian radicals are comparatively weak. Both Karimov and the Tajiks used the same formula that other Muslim countries described above used in dealing with radicals: fighting them to a standstill, and then proclaiming amnesties for those who were willing to surrender. (Karimov, however, has been

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<sup>26</sup> *Indonesia: Jihadi Surprise in Aceh* (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2010), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/189-indonesia-jihadi-surprise-in-aceh.aspx>.

<sup>27</sup> “Singapore details terror network,” *BBC News*, January 10, 2003, Asia-Pacific section, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2645001.stm>.

<sup>28</sup> *White Paper: The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests and the Threat of Terrorism* (Singapore: Ministry of Home Affairs, 2003), [http://www.mha.gov.sg/publication\\_details.aspx?pageid=35&cid=354](http://www.mha.gov.sg/publication_details.aspx?pageid=35&cid=354).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

very careful to monitor those amnestied.) The Tajik situation was resolved by a complete amnesty, as it was a civil war.

Since the 1990s, radicalism has moved from formal insurrection to propagandizing and missionization in the extremely repressive atmosphere of Uzbekistan, and has broadened its appeal into Kirghizstan and Kazakhstan. Both of these latter two states have traditionally been known for their weak attachment to Islam, and heavy levels of secularization. However, due to the appearance of missionaries from the Muslim world, radicalization has been growing in both countries, and there are a fair number of Muslim radicals in their prisons.<sup>30</sup> The International Crisis Group states:

“Many Islamists, notably members of Hizb ul-Tahrir (HT), view prisons as an important theatre of political struggle. They have targeted, apparently successfully, the *obshchak*, the organization created by senior criminal prisoners that has traditionally been the main focus of power in Central Asian prisons. HT and other groups like Tablighi Jamaat have exploited the weakness of underfunded, demoralized and corrupt prison systems to extend their own networks and recruit within the prison population. They are helped by a program of prison mosque building, allegedly funded in part by a major organized crime figure, where their own imams usually preach their brand of radical Islam. Prison directors, meanwhile, are often reduced to mere observers of the power struggle taking place within their own establishments.

“In some places Islamists have established a *modus vivendi* with the *obshchak*; in others, as they grow in strength, they are competing with it for influence. Some veteran prison officials feel the time is rapidly approaching when Islamists will wield more power than criminal structures in prisons. This development is all the

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<sup>30</sup> *Central Asia: Islamists in Prisons* (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2009), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/central-asia/B097-central-asia-islamists-in-prison.aspx>.

more striking—and ironic—as just a few years ago prison authorities were successfully using criminal prisoners to bring Islamists to heel.”<sup>31</sup>

It is unfortunate that for all of the governments in the region there is little incentive to actually rehabilitate radicals, as the threat of radicalism serves as a very useful justification for the repressive governing tactics. Even scholars specializing in Central Asia remain uncertain to what extent the threat of radicalism is real—and what is fabricated or magnified by the governments in question.

### *6. United Kingdom*

The radical Muslim community in the United Kingdom has been a source of concern for a range of governments, particularly those of France and the United States, for a number of years. This community has two foci: radicals who have claimed asylum in the United Kingdom over the years and use it as a base for continued militant activities, and homegrown radicals of either Pakistani or convert origin who seek to engage in violence. In general, the U.K. government, like that of Saudi Arabia, has only taken the threat of radicalism seriously since it began to be targeted by attacks in July 2005 (the London suicide attacks).

Following these attacks, most of the prominent foreign-born radicals have fled, been deported (or are in the process of being deported), or have made known their opposition to violence inside the United Kingdom. However, the issue of radicalism among the British Muslim population is still a difficult one. There is a wide range of radical groups that have continued to flourish, despite the best attempts of the British government and (belatedly) the Muslim establishment to combat them. Ideologically, probably the most interesting ideas on confronting radicalism come from the Quilliam Foundation, which is comprised of a number of ex-radicals who make policy suggestions.<sup>32</sup>

However, the practical side of rehabilitating radicals, especially in the prisons, is clearly a failure in the United Kingdom. Recent reports have noted that radicals control the prisons, forcibly

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Quilliam Foundation, <http://quilliamfoundation.org/> (accessed July 21, 2010).

convert non-Muslim prisoners, and terrorize the imams who are supposedly sent to try to de-radicalize them.<sup>33</sup> More specifically, there does not seem to be any intellectual or religious coherence as to what the de-radicalization message should be. Should it focus upon convincing the radicals that their methods are false? If so, this is difficult when the imams that come to persuade them are viewed (as the BBC found) as nothing but government stooges. Additionally, there is the evidence is that the inmates are able to “out-argue” the imams and demonstrate that their methods are in fact in accord with Islamic teachings. Should the goal simply be to focus upon the benefits of opposing radical teachings once the prisoners leave? This also is difficult, as the radicals provide a social support network, such as via friends, would-be employers, and occasionally marriage-partners that sustains the released prisoners, who would be foolish to deny themselves the benefits of that support when the state can offer little.

### 7. *European Union Countries*

None of the other major European Union countries has coherent policies to deal with the rehabilitation of radicals. The countries that have been the most serious about the issue of radical Islam have been France, the Netherlands, and Italy. Others, such as Germany and the Scandinavian countries, have floundered around without an obvious policy. Since the middle 1990s, France has consistently been the toughest European country on Islamic radicalism. In general, the French policy has been, however, to simply deport the radicals, usually to Algeria or Morocco, as they are likely to be foreign nationals. Despite these tough policies, France also suffers from a loss of control over its prisons and the creation of mini-*shari`a* zones throughout the country where radicals can take refuge.<sup>34</sup> It would be difficult for the United States to look to the EU for a positive example with regard to the rehabilitation of radicals.

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<sup>33</sup> Gail Champion, “Prison is ‘not taming’ Islamist radicals,” *BBC News*, April 13, 2010, BBC Radio 4, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/8615390.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8615390.stm); and see James Brandon, *Unlocking al-Qaeda: Islamic Extremism in British Prisons* (London: Quilliam Foundation, 2009), [http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/images/stories/pdfs/unlocking\\_al\\_qaeda.pdf](http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/images/stories/pdfs/unlocking_al_qaeda.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> Catholicgauze, “No-go areas of France and the rest of Europe,” *Geographic Travels* blog, November 29, 2006, <http://www.geographictravels.com/2006/11/no-go-areas-of-france-and-rest-of.html> (accessed on July 21, 2010).

### Possible solutions to the problem

As one can see from the above, successful Muslim responses to the rehabilitation of radicals have usually involved a mixed carrot-and-stick approach. In general, the stick has been to pursue those who carry out violent attacks relentlessly, and to treat them extremely harshly once they are captured in prison. The carrot has been to proclaim frequent amnesties for radicals who wish to surrender themselves (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Algeria have all done this), and to engage in religious dialogue or debate with the radicals when they are in prison. This is done with the help of members of the religious elite who are recognized and respected by the radicals, and can convince the radicals that they are in error. All of this is done with the goal of gradually reintegrating radicals into society.<sup>35</sup>

In general, the non-Muslim solutions to rehabilitation lack both the carrot and the stick components of the Muslim countries' policies. While the Muslim countries can at least offer the prisoners a Muslim society into which they can be rehabilitated after their release, non-Muslim countries can only offer the smaller Muslim enclaves of their countries, which are all too often controlled or dominated by radicals anyway. The danger that the released prisoners will slip back into radicalism when a warm and receptive environment is waiting for them outside of the prison is huge. There is also no "stick" to be offered either, as in many cases the prison that could be seen as a punishment is controlled or dominated by the radical inmates, and the Muslim religious personnel who are supposed to debate the radicals sometimes either actually sympathize with them or can be intimidated into ceasing all meaningful dialogue. As noted above, there is also no consensus among the United Kingdom and EU countries as to what the message should be.

Dismal as these conclusions are, they pale when one considers the fact that U.S. policy with regard to rehabilitation of radicals has been entirely lacking. Although one can say that the situation with regard to the radicals' control of the prisons is nowhere near as bad in the United States as it is in the United Kingdom, there is still a substantial radical Muslim effort to convert

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<sup>35</sup> A good example of this would be the Jordanian radical Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (mentor of Abu Musa`b al-Zarqawi), released in spring 2008, but closely monitored.

prisoners.<sup>36</sup> In many cases, these conversions do not persist beyond the walls of the prison, but there have been cases of Americans who go and join Al Qaeda and its ideological affiliates after their release.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, we should be asking: What can we learn from the experiences of other countries with regard to the rehabilitation of radicals?

### Directions for U.S. policy

From a conceptual point of view, I would state that it is *desirable*—although not absolutely necessary—that there be some attempt at rehabilitation of radicals who are American citizens. It is very likely that the phenomenon of Americans joining radical groups will continue to grow, albeit at a moderate pace through the next years. We can expect to see several dozen U.S. citizens who will either join, or attempt to join, radical groups throughout the world. Some of those will be killed in action, some of them will be taken prisoner by other governments (who may or not repatriate them to the United States), some of them will leave the organizations (either fleeing for their lives, disillusioned, or homesick), and some will be captured by U.S. forces.

This latter group could be treated merely as criminals, since they will almost certainly have committed some tangible crime (although not necessarily against the United States *per se*), and be judged either in front of military or civilian courts. If they are convicted and imprisoned, then the best method of dealing with them is to attempt to rehabilitate them. This would be important for the following reasons: 1. Given that their crimes would have been impelled by ideological-religious imperatives, if that ideology-religion is not confronted and diluted during the course of their imprisonment, they will return to it with greater vehemence after their release. 2. Given that their ideology-religion is *attractive* and *conversionary* by its nature (radical Islam), it could spread significantly if not confronted. 3. Given that it is important to find out information about

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<sup>36</sup> Eric Rupp and Christian Erickson, “Prisons, Radical Islam’s New Recruiting Ground?: Patterns of recruitment in U.S., and comparison with the U.K., Spain and France” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, San Diego, California, March 22, 2006).

[http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p\\_mla\\_apa\\_research\\_citation/0/9/9/3/8/p99381\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/0/9/9/3/8/p99381_index.html).

<sup>37</sup> Reports state that as many as three dozen U.S. prisoners converted to Islam and went to Yemen to join radical groups: “Report cites ‘radicalization’ of U.S. prisoners,” *MSNBC* via *The Associated Press*, January 19, 2010, [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34943955/ns/us\\_news-security/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34943955/ns/us_news-security/).

the movement of radical Islam, turning prisoners seems logical. This can best be accomplished by attempting to rehabilitate them.

I would suggest the following: 1. Use of Muslim educational curricula, especially that favored by Egypt or Turkey, in dealing with radicals. Moving them away from the ideological world of radical Islam involves placing them into a different Muslim framework, which will provide alternatives. 2. Careful selection of Muslim religious personnel to debate and dialogue with the radicals as has been done in some Muslim countries. The selection and training of Muslim religious leaders would be the most difficult and problematic section of the proposals listed here, as it is possible that the wrong candidates themselves could either be influenced or even potentially further the radicalization of the prisoners.<sup>38</sup> 3. Sealing the radicals from contact with non-Muslim prisoners, to ensure that no radical groups are actually created inside a given facility.

Once a prisoner is released, it is important to find some type of function or Muslim setting in which that person can be received. If that is not the case, then all too often the released prisoner will simply return to the welcoming fold of the radical society from which he came. Marc Sageman has delineated a convincing paradigm (albeit not the only one) of how many Muslim youths are radicalized through conformity to group pressures and join groups in order to gain acceptance not accorded to them elsewhere.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, rehabilitation of radicals must have a component outside of prison that is equally vigilant. This does not mean that they need to be mollycoddled, but that they should be recognized as being people who could very well return to a path of violence. Every attempt should be made to integrate them within mainstream American Muslim institutions (which are usually dominated by conservative Muslims) or *at the very least* to integrate them within the framework of quietist radical Islam (if they will not be accommodated within mainstream organizations). This latter possibility is fraught with some

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<sup>38</sup> Patrick Dunleavy, "The Roots of Radical Islam in Prison," *The Investigative Project on Terrorism News*, August 19, 2009, <http://www.investigativeproject.org/1380/the-roots-of-radical-islam-in-prison>; also Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, "Radical Indoctrination in the U.S. Prisons," *Counterterrorism Blog*, August 25, 2005, [http://counterterrorismblog.org/2005/08/radical\\_indoctrination\\_in\\_the.php](http://counterterrorismblog.org/2005/08/radical_indoctrination_in_the.php) (accessed July 21, 2010).

<sup>39</sup> Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), chapters 4-5.

amount of danger as the transition between quietist and violent radical Islam is one that has been little studied or understood, and it is very possible that allowing former prisoners to associate with any type of radicals could allow them to return to militancy whether in the short term or the long term.

### Conclusions

It is important to realize that radicalism within the Muslim world has decreased significantly since 2001, both in terms of its successes and in terms of its appeal to the broader Muslim population. Although one cannot say that the basic causes that fueled the growth of radicalism during the 1970s and 1980s have disappeared (the “Islamic Revival” *al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya*, Muslim frustrations over authoritarian regimes, inability to modernize their societies, etc.), the fact is that several decades of exposure to radical methods, especially the extensive use of indiscriminate violence against civilians inside Muslim countries (and beyond), has tarnished the image of radicalism beyond recovery in key countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan.

While radicalism as a political-military movement is at a low point, it still can flourish and perhaps even take control of regions of the Muslim world including the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier, the Horn of Africa, the Saharan regions of Algeria and Mali, and the islands between the Philippines and Indonesia. But these “failed state” regions pale in importance to the one place where radicalism is truly flourishing, which is among expatriate and minority Muslim communities in non-Muslim countries (mostly in Europe, but to some extent in the United States, Australia, and South America).

These regions are the key foci for the issue of rehabilitation. While in Muslim majority countries radicals channel the desire for a Muslim state, radicals in non-Muslim countries express the frustrations of Muslims as they integrate or fail to integrate within their new host societies. Radicals coming out of prison can serve as powerful proponents of their ideology or deter its appearance among the next generation. Their imprisonment confers upon them personal and sometimes religious legitimacy, whether as heroes or failures (in their jihad), that will be key in

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the development of Muslim youth. Therefore, the process of rehabilitation of radicals is of the utmost importance at the present and in the coming years.