

# Are prisons really schools for terrorism? Challenging the rhetoric on prison radicalization

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## Abstract

When governments justify the necessity to segregate and/or isolate terrorist inmates from mainstream prisoners, they commonly raise concerns about their prisons becoming schools for terrorism. Yet, these concerns are often based on limited information about prisoner radicalization, potentially resulting in the mismanagement (both financially and psychologically) of terrorist inmates in many countries. This article challenges contemporary research on prison radicalization and recruitment by highlighting several factors that may hamper these activities to demonstrate why some prison regimes and their programmes for housing terrorist inmates face a greater risk than others. In contrast to other studies, this article concludes that the radicalization and recruitment of mainstream prisoners by terrorist inmates under certain prison conditions is not necessarily a given outcome.

## Keywords

inmate culture, penology, prison radicalization, terrorist offenders

## Introduction

It is commonplace to refer to prisons as ‘schools for crime’ (Gendreau et al., 1999: 4–5), but are they also schools for terrorism? When governments justify the need to segregate and/or isolate inmates who have been charged or convicted of terrorism-related offences from other prisoners, they commonly raise concerns about their correctional facilities becoming ‘breeding grounds’ or ‘universities’ for terrorism

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(Useem and Clayton, 2009: 562). In Australia, for example, the fear that mainstream prisoners will become radicalized<sup>1</sup> and recruited by terrorist offenders<sup>2</sup> resulted in costly national security and corrective service policy that specifically classified all terrorist offenders as 'high-risk' and segregated and isolated them from other prisoners (Carlton, 2008). Yet, these actions appeared to be based on limited empirical grounding about the risk of prisoner radicalization and terrorist recruitment. Rarely were alternative strategies considered or tested. For example, can different methods of incarceration, such as integration or dispersal, contribute to changes in beliefs and behaviour in terrorist offenders? How and to what extent are terrorist offenders affected by the prison environment and inmate culture (Jones and Morales, 2012; Neumann, 2010)? Do the 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes, 1958) enhance or inhibit terrorists from radicalizing mainstream prisoners?

At the outset of this article, it is important to recognize the orthodoxy on prison radicalization, which appears to be based on only a limited number of high-profile cases like Richard Reid, Kevin James, Levar Washington and Jose Padilla, all of whom are alleged to have become Islamic radicals in prison (Brandon, 2009a; Cuthbertson, 2004). Not only are these cases offered regularly 'as irrefutable evidence of the dangers' of prison radicalization (Illardi, 2010: 2) (that is when terrorist offenders are mixed with other prisoners), they also seem to provide a collective justification for countries such as the USA and Australia to develop special expensive segregation (and often isolation) strategies for terrorist offenders. The common rationale behind these strategies is that prison radicalization is a growing trend (George Washington University and the University of Virginia, 2006), prisons serve as ideal incubators for terrorism, prisons are full of vulnerable inmates who form captive audiences for recruitment by terrorist offenders (Cilluffo et al., 2007; Hannah et al., 2008) and terrorist offenders are determined to turn prisons into training grounds for militant activities (Brandon, 2009a; Quilliam Foundation, 2009). Another concern is that the imprisonment of terrorists will produce a greater threat by bringing them together with hardened criminals (Neumann, 2010) creating 'a potential toxic mix of extremist ideology' and criminal minds resulting in more ingenious and deadly forms of terrorist acts (Spalek and El-Hassan, 2007: 100). This small sample of studies only echoes a much larger body of literature 'that portrays prison radicalisation as one of the most serious security threats' since 9/11 (Illardi, 2010: 2).

It is important to acknowledge these contributions, as they draw attention to the seriousness of the threat, as it only takes one determined radicalized inmate to carry out an attack once released. However, the area of prison radicalization, which is the focus of this article, remains understudied and rarely intersects with conventional penology. This intersection, along with a comparison of a range of prison regimes in different countries, will help work towards a better understanding of the true nature of the prison radicalization (and terrorist recruitment) threat (Silke, 2011; Spalek and El-Hassan, 2007: 100). To date, much of this discussion has been one-sided because an underlying assumption is that prisons are thought to be schools for terrorism.

This article provides an alternative perspective by raising the role of several interrelated factors that may act to undermine terrorist offenders' efforts to radicalize and recruit other prisoners when they are integrated into a prison population. These factors include the prison environment, the prison regime, inmate culture, inmate moral code, patriotism, racism, social barriers and basic survival needs. Furthermore, because different countries have their own unique cultural, religious and political characteristics, which promote some or all of these factors in the various prison systems, the radicalization of mainstream inmates towards Islamist militancy is not a foregone conclusion in certain prison environments. For example, in prisons where the main religion is not Islam or in situations where prison sub-cultures dominate the prison environment (Dunleavy, 2011a), the radicalization and recruitment of mainstream prisoners towards Islamist militancy may instead be inhibited and, in some circumstances, could possibly lead to the temporary disengagement of terrorist offenders (Jones and Morales, 2012).

To provide context to the examination of factors that may inhibit prison radicalization and recruitment, this comparative study explores prison systems in the USA, the UK, Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Pakistan. Information on prison populations, such as total numbers of inmates, terrorist offenders, Muslim inmates and the strategies used to incarcerate those convicted for terrorist offences, are identified and considered. These countries were chosen to reflect a cross-section of correctional models ranging from modern western prisons with low ratios of terrorist offenders to out-dated prisons in South-East and South Asia, where terrorist offenders usually represent a larger proportion of the total prison populations. The study also draws inferences from a review of the contemporary literature on prison radicalization, an analysis of prison reports that examine the conditions under which terrorist offenders (and Muslim inmates more generally) are housed, as well as primary research being conducted in the Philippines.

The author acknowledges the limitations of this study, which stem from the lack of relevant prison statistics, particularly in relation to reliable estimates of the number of terrorist offenders, those prisoners who may have been radicalized while serving sentences, the recidivism rates of released terrorist offenders and radicalized prisoners (Useem and Clayton, 2009). Clearly, empirical studies measuring the extent of prison radicalization in the different countries are required, and, therefore, not all cases where inmates have been radicalized and attempted to commit terrorist acts upon release have been captured in this study. Of those that have been identified, it is difficult to prove conclusively that their radicalization was primarily as a result of their time in prison (Zahn, 2012). When those limitations have been taken into account, and based on the size of the prison populations studied below, there appears to be only a relatively small proportion of cases where prisoners have been radicalized and, upon release, plotted or attempted to carry out acts of terrorism (Ballas, 2010; Brandon, 2009b; Spalek and El-Hassan, 2007).

## Prison case studies

### *The United States*

The US correctional system consists of a 'network of prisons and jails at the federal, state and local levels' (George Washington University and the University of Virginia, 2006: 8). It has the highest incarceration rate in the developed world, with approximately 2.3 million adult inmates and a recidivism rate of over 40 per cent (US Department of Justice, 2012). Muslim inmates make up around 10 per cent of the total prisoner population. This number appears to be growing, with approximately 35,000 inmates converting to Islam annually – although Christianity remains the dominant religion (Pew Research Centre, 2012).

A small fraction, approximately 300 inmates, are serving sentences or awaiting trial for terrorism offences. Among these, there are 12 al-Qa'ida linked terrorists, including those responsible for the attacks on the World Trade Centre in 1993, the East African Embassy in 1998, the USS Cole in Yemen in 2000 and the Los Angeles International Airport plot in 1999. There are also about 150 terrorist suspects detained by the US military in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, including five al-Qa'ida members allegedly responsible for 9/11 (Hamm, 2013). These high-risk terrorist offenders are housed in high-security federal prisons under strict conditions, which involve segregation and, on occasion, isolation from other inmates, with communications closely monitored. There are also terrorist offenders housed in state prisons, either convicted or awaiting trial, who are dispersed into the general prison population.

There are a few cases where inmates have been radicalized in prison and then attempted to commit terrorist attacks. Some of the more commonly cited cases include: Kevin James, who formed a militant group called Jam'yyat Il-Islam Is-Saheed (JIS) in 1997 (Smith, 2011) and orchestrated a plot to attack synagogues and US military recruiting stations from inside California's New Folsom Prison; Levar Washington, an accomplice of James, met him in prison in 2004 and was also a member of JIS (Ballas, 2010); the Newburgh Four, consisting of James Cromitie, Laguerre Payen, David Williams and Onta Williams, who were arrested after plotting to attack synagogues and shoot down military aircraft (Dunleavy, 2011b); Jose Padilla (Abdullah Al Muhajir), who was charged with taking part in an al-Qa'ida plot to detonate a radioactive 'dirty bomb' within the USA, converted to Islam after serving time in a Broward County Florida jail (Fighel, 2007); and, a more recent case, Abu Khalid Abdul-Latif (Joseph Anthony Davis), who posted a number of videos on-line praising al-Qa'ida leader Anwar al-Awlaki and for plotting to attack a 'military entrance processing station' in 2011 (Ross et al., 2011).

With such a large population of adult offenders inside US prisons and only a few alleged examples of terrorist recruitment inside these prisons, it is worth examining whether there are other factors like inmate culture that may inhibit such activity. Much of this inmate culture and social structure in US prisons is influenced by prison gangs. The presence of gangs in US prisons makes the environment

extremely dangerous, where organized gangs assert their oppositional religious, ethnic or cultural identities. Gang rivalry is common, particularly when it relates to competition over illicit enterprises, such as drug distribution, gambling and prostitution, and to the recruitment of new members, be it voluntary or coerced (Fleisher and Decker, 2001; Hannah et al., 2008).

Within the gangs, there is a broad spectrum of ethnicities, religions and ideologies that affect inmates who join these gangs or who interact with them on a daily basis. Some gangs are exclusively criminally motivated (such as the Mexican Mafia and the Texas Syndicate), while others combine criminality with racist ideologies (such as the Aryan Brotherhood) (Hannah et al., 2008). However, gang dynamics have become more fluid in recent years, as members now cross racial lines to perform tasks for other gangs, such as contract killings or protecting illicit businesses (Hamm, 2007).

Like other minority groups in prison, Muslim inmates are often forced to group or gang together or cross racial and religious lines to join non-Muslim gangs for protection (Ballas, 2010). A recent report by Downing (2011) on religion in US prisons, which sought the views of prison chaplains, concluded that religious extremism is very common among Muslim inmates (particularly among followers of the Nation of Islam and the Moorish Science Temple of America).<sup>3</sup> Once a member of a Muslim gang, the report claims that an inmate is more likely to adopt radical beliefs. However, it is also understood that the majority of these radicalized inmates assimilate back into their original social settings following release, rather than acting out their radical beliefs by joining a terrorist group or conducting terrorist acts.

Based on an assessment of 53 different terrorist plots since 9/11, another study by Bjelopera (2011: 23) for the US Congressional Research Service concluded that it did 'not believe that there is widespread terrorist-inspired radicalization or recruiting' occurring in federal prisons. The study found that 'only one involved radicalization in prison'. It claimed that the lack of evidence that prison radicalization was behind these plots suggests that 'the threat emanating from prisons does not seem as substantial as some experts may fear'. Interestingly, a study by Hamm (2008) of state prisons also came to a similar conclusion, suggesting that, even though US prisons appear to be fertile grounds for radicalization, the actual recruitment into terrorist groups is relatively rare and only a small percentage of converts to Islam turn radical beliefs into terrorist action.

To date, the radicalization and recruitment of inmates in US prisons has not been a significant problem, with the Federal Bureau of Prisons (2009) claiming that there has been no evidence of widespread radicalization nor any indication of organized recruitment efforts. This conclusion is supported in a study by Useem and Clayton (2009) that identified seven factors that may reduce the incidence of radicalization and recruitment. Some of these factors include advances in prison reform to reduce the incidents of prison disorder and improve the safety of inmates, better staff awareness, a greater use of surveillance and intelligence-sharing, and improvements in the screening and supervision of prison chaplains. The study

further suggests that the risk of radicalization and recruitment may also be reduced by an isolationist approach, where terrorist offenders are housed separately under very strict and controlled conditions. However, such conditions have been subject to much criticism, particularly in relation to US-run military prisons like Guantanamo Bay and the now defunct Abu Ghraib (McCulloch, 2008).

For terrorist offenders incarcerated in state prisons, there are many influences within a prison environment that they must adapt to and contend with. It is hypothesized that over time these influences may impact on the beliefs and behaviour of terrorist offenders. For example, while many characteristics of prison gangs (such as their use of violence and their overall disruptive effect on prison life) are generally troublesome for inmates and prison management, a prison gang's strict code of conduct and ideological or cultural influence may provide conditions where terrorist offenders, who are imprisoned for lengthy sentences, adopt new social identities, patterns of behaviour and possibly new belief systems (Pyrooz et al., 2011). Therefore, rather than terrorist offenders radicalizing and recruiting other prisoners, further research is needed to test whether oppositional prison gang culture has an influence on the disengagement (and potentially de-radicalization) of terrorist offenders (Jones and Morales, 2012). A similar line of enquiry is currently being undertaken in the Philippines (discussed later); however, it is important to note that there are stark differences between the US and Philippine prison systems, which need to be factored into any comparison.

### *The United Kingdom*

The UK has an adult inmate population of approximately 87,500. Around 11,000 inmates (approximately 12.6 per cent) are Muslim with just under half the prison population being Christian (UK Ministry of Justice, 2012). There are approximately 150 terrorist offenders (Liebling et al., 2011), the majority being incarcerated since 2005 (Hanna, 2010). Eighty-nine of these are linked to or inspired by al-Qa'ida and include some high-profile cases, such as Abu Qatada, Abu Doha and Adel Abdel Bary. Although not the focus of this article, the remainder includes Irish Republicans, who 'seek to continue terrorist campaigns against British interests', and Ulster Loyalists, who remain opposed to a unified Ireland (Hamm, 2013: 17). Most terrorist offenders are held in a small number of Category 'A' maximum security prisons, which hold inmates who, if they were to escape, 'would be highly dangerous to the public, police or the security of the state and whose escape must be made impossible' (Hannah et al., 2008: 32).

Unlike the US or Australian prison systems, which segregate terrorist offenders, the UK disperses them into the general prison population. They are, however, subject to strict security and close supervision, including regular searches, restricted movements, constant surveillance and regular cell changes. Inmates on remand for terrorism offences or those appealing against deportation or extradition to face trial abroad are generally held in a specialist unit in the Long Lartin high-security prison. This prison is specifically designed to hold those suspected of involvement



in international terrorism and those deemed a high threat to national security (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2007).

From a correctional policy perspective, the UK government has been reluctant to categorize terrorist offenders specially and separate them from other prisoners following their experience with the incarceration of Irish Republican Army (IRA) members in the 1970s. While it is likely that some IRA inmates disengaged from terrorism during imprisonment, the segregation policy generally proved counter-productive. Their confinement together in large numbers 'engendered powerful social pressures' to conform and remain committed to the group (Silke, 2011: 125), resulting in them feeling as if they were still 'part of the campaign' (Hannah et al., 2008: 25). For example, they adhered to a daily regime of military training to enhance political knowledge and awareness, improve weapons and explosives handling and bolster tradecraft and first-aid skills.

As a result of the experience with IRA prisoners, the UK government now seems less 'isolationist' with the incarceration of terrorist offenders, adopting a dispersion approach. However, this approach also has consequences, as inmates tend to form into clusters or groups of like-minded individuals. These clusters or groups can also be referred to as 'gangs', often in a negative sense because of alleged criminal activities (Liebling et al., 2011). The UK does not have the same type of organized and violent gangs along racial lines as US prisons (Phillips, 2012). However, not all prisons are the same because some display a greater propensity for gang problems than others. For example, in Whitemoor Prison, a maximum security dispersal prison holding high-risk offenders (including terrorists), there has been evidence of growing hostility between Muslim and non-Muslim inmates. This is partly attributed to non-Muslim inmates' perceptions of unfairness about Muslim prisoners receiving extra benefits. A split between Muslims and other non-Muslim groups has therefore developed, resulting in the formation of Muslim gangs to counter the increasing hostility towards them. Due to differences in culture, behaviour and beliefs, terrorist offenders have tended already to feel alienated from other prisoners. However, since 9/11, this split has widened further due to a common perception in western countries that Islam is a threat. 'Islamophobia' has raised tensions to a level where Muslim inmates, including terrorists, have become insecure and vulnerable to violent attacks from non-Muslim prisoners (Liebling et al., 2011).

This insecurity was identified in a review of Muslim prisoners' perceptions of prison life, which found high levels of anxiousness among Muslim prisoners compared to other inmates. This can be partly attributed to media interpretations of Islam that appear to associate Muslim prisoners with terrorism. This is not helped by the ongoing occurrences of terrorism directed at western interests, which have often resulted in retaliatory action inside prison. The ongoing threat of terrorism has tended to create suspicion about Muslim inmates among prison staff, resulting in harsher treatment, regardless of an inmate's religious interpretations or connections to terrorism. Therefore, Muslim inmates are regularly concerned about being intimidated, victimized and threatened by prison officers and inmates alike. As a

result, the review found that Muslim inmates often policed themselves in groups or gangs, rather than trusting or relying on protection from prison officers (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2010).

Despite the level of insecurity of Muslim inmates and the suspiciousness that has arisen, the number of inmates converting to Islam and joining Muslim gangs in the UK has increased (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2008). The reasons for conversion are multifaceted. For some, conversion has a positive influence and implies spiritual enlightenment, rehabilitation, a new path in life or dealing with the pains of imprisonment. Others, however, convert because they feel that being Muslim brings greater benefits, such as better food and longer time out of cells for prayers. For younger inmates, who, through their marginalization from and disappointment with the British government and society, conversion and collaboration with terrorist offenders seems a suitable way of taking a stand and as 'an act or mode of resistance to the prison system and staff'. Another aim is to create fear in others by exploiting their associations with radical teachings and terrorism to improve their social standing within prison. While the version of Islam they adopt inside prison (often referred to as prison Islam) can be highly aggressive and confrontational, it does not necessarily lead to violence upon release (Liebling et al., 2011: 62).

While conversion to Islam in prison may bring greater benefits (real and perceived), there are also negative consequences. For example, an increase in conversion is also often viewed by inmates and prison staff as an indication of prison radicalization rather than an authentic expression of faith (Hamm, 2013). However, the assumption that conversion will lead to radicalization and recruitment into terrorist groups is unsupported. This assumption tends to ignore the significant differences between religious observance, radicalization, recruitment and terrorist action. This ignorance is also translated into the UK prison environment, where many inmates are contemptuous of Muslim prisoners' Islamic identities. There is often resentment and distrust of some prisoners' genuine commitment to Islam, particularly when it secures gang protection (Phillips, 2012).

For those who plan to commit acts of terrorism following release, it is difficult to prove that their radicalization occurred exclusively as a result of incarceration. Most cited instances of prison radicalization, such as Richard Reid the 'shoe-bomber', who 'converted to Islam during one of his two stints in Feltham Youth Offenders Institution' (Illardi, 2010: 6), and Muktar Said Ibrahim, the leader of the failed 21/7 bombings of 2005, who converted while in the same institution, commonly claim that the radicalization process occurred while in prison. However, in these two cases, and others previously mentioned, 'there is often a significant time-lag between a person being radicalized in prison' and committing terrorist acts following release. It is therefore difficult to conclude that prison radicalization was the key factor behind their actions, because of the many other personal changes that occur through life, which 'the time-lags do not take into account' (Zahn, 2012: 210). For example, it is more often the 'experiences both before and after imprisonment' that are the key drivers behind the adoption of radical ideologies and acts of terrorism (Brandon, 2009b: 20).



## *Australia*

There are approximately 29,100 adults incarcerated in prisons around Australia. It is estimated that over half of these are recidivists (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). At the time of writing, neither nation-wide statistics nor empirical studies were available to measure the total number of Muslim inmates, the number of inmates who had converted to Islam or the number who had been 'radicalized'. However, Monash University and Victoria Police, in co-operation with other state and federal government agencies, are currently examining issues that surround countering violent extremism and the radicalization and de-radicalization of terrorist offenders in Victoria's prison system (Victoria Police, 2009–2010). To date, prison gangs have not been a major problem in Australian prisons; however, as in most prisons, inmates tend to form into groups with common interests and/or criminal associations. Gangs that have been recorded in the Victorian prison system, for example, include right-wing groups like the Prisoners of War and the Overcoat Gang. Groups that have formed in opposition to these types of gangs include inmates from Koori, Asian and Middle Eastern backgrounds (personal communication, 2013b).

Australia's recent history of terrorist plots in Victoria and New South Wales (NSW), and the successful disruption and prosecution of those involved, led to the incarceration of 21 individuals. However, only 13 terrorist offenders remain in Australian prisons (nine in Goulbourn Jail in NSW and four in Barwon Prison in Victoria) (personal communication, 2013c). As a result of their experiences with these inmates, Victoria and New South Wales Corrective Services have become more aware of the potential for prison radicalization, and have improved intelligence collection arrangements and the level of co-operation between security and policing agencies. This has resulted in the disruption of radical inmates attempting to impede prison operations and possibly recruit other prisoners. For example, in 2007, NSW Corrective Services disrupted the activities of up to 40 radical Muslim inmates who had established an internal organization in several prisons around New South Wales modelled from the al-Qa'ida manual. The group aimed to interrupt prison operations, resist police interrogation and encourage others to join them (personal communication, 2013a).

At the time of writing, terrorist offenders in Australian prisons were usually deemed 'high-risk' and segregated from other inmates in purpose-built maximum security or 'supermax' facilities. These facilities included the High-Risk Management Unit (HRMU) in Goulburn Jail in NSW and the Melaleuca and Acacia High Security Units in Barwon Prison in Victoria. In Barwon prison there were initially eight individuals remanded on terrorist offences and four were eventually sentenced to between four-and-a-half and 15 years. While on remand, the suspects were segregated and isolated from other prisoners in Barwon's Acacia Unit. As a result of this segregation, one of the remand inmates, who was eventually acquitted, claimed he was suffering from a post-traumatic stress disorder because of his alleged inhumane treatment. This was said to have

included intrusive body searches, unnecessary handcuffing and shackling, and assaults. He also claimed he was served non-halal food and was restricted in his ability to practise his religion. During the suspects' trial in the Victorian Supreme Court, Chief Justice Bongiorno threatened to stay the proceedings if the state persevered with their harsh security procedures and segregation/isolation conditions. Eventually, in March 2007, the Chief Justice ruled that the harsh conditions could compromise the defendants' access to a fair trial. This was a significant case in that it was unprecedented in Australian legal history that harsh remand conditions were successfully linked to the right to fair trial (Brown, 2008).

While the four who were eventually sentenced were initially segregated and isolated from the mainstream prisoners, a revised risk assessment resulted in them being transferred into the maximum security inmate population, albeit under close supervision. Relating to others, of particular interest for this study is that the one terrorist inmate who remains in Barwon prison, Abdul Nacer Benbrika (the others have since been released), has not attempted to radicalize others even though he has a reputation among prison staff for being a fervent proselytizer. Instead, he has difficulty relating to others in a prison population that appears to look down on terrorist offenders, placing them somewhere near the bottom of the inmate code. Some inmates have also tried to disassociate themselves from him in fear that they may be stigmatized by other inmates and prison guards (personal communication, 2013b).

In contrast, in Goulbourn Jail, the terrorist offenders are categorized as 'AA' inmates, which was a NSW government initiative introduced in 2004 in response to an immediate need to establish a security classification appropriate to the terrorism threat. The category includes:

inmates who, in the opinion of the Commissioner, represent a special risk to national security (for example, because of a perceived risk that they may engage in, or incite other persons to engage in, terrorist activities) and should at all times be confined in special facilities within a secure barrier that includes towers or electronic surveillance equipment. (Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2008 (NSW): 24)

As there is no legislative requirement that an AA classification be applied only to terrorism offenders, the classification is also applied to any inmate deemed a threat to national security. It also relates to any inmate who converts to or adopts a terrorism-related ideology and represents a special risk to national security (Spaccavento et al., 2008).

Considering the high cost of constructing supermax facilities and the small number of terrorist offenders, Australia's preferred segregation and isolation strategy appears excessive; particularly when there have been no evidence-based studies to examine what terrorist offenders do when dispersed into the prison population. The current strategy in NSW is designed to minimize human contact; reduce time out of cells for exercise; limit association between prisoners; and restrict access to communications, visitors and reading material. Inmates also undergo frequent and

intrusive strip searches, wear orange jumpsuits and wear hand and feet shackles during transfers (Brown, 2008).

The incarceration of terrorist offenders in supermax facilities is controversial. In fact, the use of isolation is not a new practice in prison management and there is a long controversial history involving its use to exert control over prisoners who are designated high-risk (Shalev, 2008). There is also unequivocal evidence that isolation can impact on the mental and physical health of inmates (Brown, 2008). For terrorist offenders, the type or method of incarceration can also work towards reducing their chances of successful rehabilitation and may increase disruptive behaviour and enhance their likelihood of recidivism (Carlton, 2008). The use of isolation may also act to reinforce the psychology of exclusivity and 'martyrdom' among terrorist offenders (Richman, 2008) and may even work to foster or magnify the root causes that led individuals towards terrorism (Carlton, 2008).

### *The Philippines*

The Philippine correctional system consists of approximately 1344 different types of prisons and jails including national prisons, provincial jails, sub-provincial jails, district jails, city jails, municipal jails and regional rehabilitation centres. There are also numerous 'lock-up jails' and detention centres that are maintained by the Philippine National Police (PNP), the National Bureau of Investigation, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and the Bureau of Immigration, which are not included in the figure above. The latter facilities are generally utilized as temporary detention cells for those under investigation and for those awaiting transfer to jails under court orders.

Due to several factors, such as the large number of different types of correctional facilities, out-dated systems of record management, court backlogs and over-stayers, it is difficult to ascertain the exact number of offenders incarcerated in the Philippines. With these limitations in mind, it is estimated that there are over 132,000 adult offenders, which includes those who have been convicted and serving sentences in prisons run by the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor), those on remand in jails run by the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) and those under investigation by the PNP. Of this total inmate population, there are 341 terrorist offenders (personal communication, 2013d). While there have been no recorded cases of prison radicalization in the prisons or jails under study by the author, further research is required to ascertain fully the nature of the threat in the Philippines' corrective system.

Most of the prisons and jails struggle to meet the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (United Nations, 2012). This is primarily due to archaic facilities and out-dated equipment, a lack of adequate supervision of staff and inmates, and corruption. Overcrowding is also a significant problem considering the total capacity of Philippine prisons and jails combined is only around 35,000 inmates (International Centre for Prison Studies, 2012). In Manila City Jail, for example, inmates take turns to sleep, as there is inadequate

room for everyone to sleep at the same time. The City Jail was originally built to accommodate 1000 inmates, but it currently houses over 5000. Overcrowding is common in many correctional facilities around the Philippines and has resulted not only from its notoriously slow judicial system, but also from over-stayers who do not leave at the completion of their sentences. As one senior prison guard stated, 'life is often better on the inside' (personal communication, 2010a).

There are two main facilities where either remanded or convicted terrorist offenders are housed. The first of these is NBP, which is the largest prison in the Philippines for convicted felons. The prison has a total population of just over 22,000 inmates. NBP is divided into three security classifications: maximum; medium; and minimum. In maximum security there are 14,313 inmates,<sup>4</sup> resulting in the area being approximately 286 per cent overcrowded. As a result of the sheer number of inmates, the prison has become more like a community or village with an economy supported by markets and stalls selling cooked food and fresh vegetables (grown inside the prison). There are also different types of businesses, including barbershops, shoe-repair shops, a cafe and bakery, small hardware stores and woodwork and basket-weaving factories. There are also inmates preparing food and washing their clothes in the laneways with chickens and dogs running around them. Prisoners and their families mingle in the open spaces and inmates play basketball and other sports in the facilities provided.

As religion plays a major role in the life of inmates, there are several churches, temples and mosques. Approximately 95 per cent of the prison population (13,597) are Christians (the majority being Catholic). The remaining five per cent (716) are Muslims. Of these 716, 41 are labelled by government officials as terrorist offenders due to their association with proscribed terrorist groups (even though they have been convicted for criminal offences). Four of these terrorist offenders have been linked to al-Qa'ida (personal communication, 2013d).

Terrorist offenders in maximum security are integrated with the mainstream prisoners and distributed among 12 different gangs. The gangs vary in size depending on their city or region of origin, the largest gangs coming from Metro Manila. The gangs are led by 'bosyos' or gang leaders. Even though gangs can, at times, be disruptive to prison management, the gangs (through the bosyo's leadership) help the prison authorities maintain a fragile state of peace and system of order. This system of order is guided by gang rules, which are strictly enforced. As all inmates depend on money for survival, prison gangs also provide a means to acquire funds through legitimate and illegitimate businesses. However, the bosyos and senior gang members (and often guards) take a slice of the profits and there are dire consequences for those inmates who try to avoid payment.

The terrorist offenders distributed among the prison gangs are given no special prison status or category apart from the fact that they are designated maximum security inmates. Assigning terrorist offenders to the different gangs does not necessarily mean that they are obliged to join the gang. However, group pressure, a need for protection, acceptance and a sense of belonging may result in the terrorist offenders eventually joining the gang. Over time, this gang membership may

ultimately influence their behaviour (and possibly their beliefs) (Jones and Morales, 2012). There is one example where a terrorist offender's gang membership has provided new opportunities for personal change. An Indonesian national, who was a former member of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and convicted in 2003 for possession of explosives inside the Philippines, is currently serving a 10-year sentence in NBP maximum security. In prison, he has held several senior positions in the Betang City Jail Gang and now runs a reflexology and massage business that helps support the gang and his Filipino wife and children, who live in close proximity to the prison. While it is too early to tell whether his gang membership, new business endeavours and new family have a long-lasting effect on his beliefs, his good conduct and willingness to co-operate with prison authorities during his 10-year sentence give some indication of positive behavioural change and opportunities for a new direction in life (personal communication, 2012a).

Metro Manila District Jail (MMDJ) is the other main maximum security facility where terrorist offenders are held on remand. In contrast to NBP, terrorist offenders in MMDJ are concentrated together into the Special Intensive Care Area (SICA), which is a separate section within the jail. It houses approximately 770 inmates, including 350 high-risk and high-profile detainees on remand. Of these 350 inmates, approximately 205 are suspected of being members of terrorist organizations including the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) (personal communication, 2012b).

The two incarceration strategies (integration and segregation) used in NBP and MMDJ provide the basis for a study currently being undertaken by the author. This study examines, among other objectives, which strategy is more effective in minimizing radicalization and promoting disengagement of terrorist offenders. Like the UK's experience with IRA inmates, the possibility exists that, when terrorist offenders are segregated together, the concentration of terrorist offenders into a separate area of a jail away from other influences allows them to maintain a group structure, foster their militant ideology and continue to operate and communicate with outside members. This is facilitated by the management style of the jail, corruption and poor security practices. For example, in a bid to keep the peace and order in the jail, guards often perform favours for inmates, such as facilitating communication with terrorist groups on the outside, either directly or through family members, and the facilitation of contraband into and out of the jail. As guards spend considerable time with the terrorist offenders, sometimes even sleeping in converted cells next to them, close relationships can develop. These relationships can result in guards being manipulated or bribed by the inmates to support the terrorist groups or even being actively recruited (personal communication, 2010b). Such activity is known as 'para-radicalization', which occurs when guards or other prison staff aid or abet militant networks or individual terrorist offenders (George Washington University and the University of Virginia, 2006). A pertinent example of this occurred in 2005 when ASG inmates effectively took control of their segregated cell block in the SICA in a siege that left 23 inmates, one

policeman and three jail guards dead. It is alleged that a guard who had been accommodated at the SICA had been radicalized to the extent that he was willing to give an ASG inmate access to an automatic rifle from the jail armoury. This action allegedly triggered the takeover of the SICA and subsequent rioting (Jones and Morales, 2012). There has not been a serious incident in the SICA since 2005; however, tension remains high as the terrorist offenders' futures remain uncertain and as they struggle to survive in overcrowded archaic remand conditions.

## *Indonesia*

There are many parallels that can be drawn between the Philippine and Indonesian prison systems in terms of prison regime, corruption and overcrowding. The Indonesian prison population stands at over 163,153 inmates (sentenced and on remand) (personal communication, 2013e), with a total capacity of 85,500 spaces (International Centre for Prison Studies, 2012). As overcrowding sometimes reaches as high as 69 per cent, it is not uncommon for there to be up to 30 inmates per cell. Inmates often lack basic sanitation, such as clean running water and toilets. Even under these conditions, prisoners often overstay their sentences. Also, without effective rehabilitation programmes, recidivism is a considerable problem (Bonnett, 2010).

There are around 400 prisons and detention houses (remand jails) in Indonesia, with 20 of these holding terrorist offenders. Of the 539 individuals convicted on terrorism offences since 2002, there are currently 254 in prison, the majority of whom are due for release by 2016. There is a significant recidivism rate among terrorist offenders, with 23 out of the 291 jihadists released in the past six years returning to terrorist activity (personal communication, 2013e). The largest concentration of terrorist offenders is in Cipinang Prison in Jakarta, which houses some of the more notorious terrorists from JI. Other prisons that hold terrorist offenders include Kedungpane Prison in Semarang, Central Java, Kalisosok Prison in Porong, East Java, Kerobokan Prison in Bali and Makassar Prison in South Sulawesi (International Crisis Group (ICG), 2007).

While there is no single strategy for managing terrorist offenders in Indonesia, there is a general correctional policy that attempts to segregate all prisoners 'who are threats to internal prison security', including serious criminal offenders. While terrorist offenders 'are often housed together' in the same cell block, they are not isolated and are free to socialize with one another, which has expanded their personal networks within militant circles. In other prisons, such as Porong Prison near Surabaya, attempts are made to segregate terrorist offenders in separate cell blocks, but overcrowding means terrorist offenders are also accommodated with other prisoners (ICG, 2007: 7).

As in most prisons, inmates in Indonesian jails tend to group together for a number of reasons, such as safety and support and common backgrounds, language, interests and place of origin (ICG, 2007). Without effective regulation and monitoring of terrorist offenders, they have tended to 'gravitate towards one



another', which has helped them foster their radical ideologies. Terrorist offenders are also often highly regarded among the prison populations (including prison guards) because they are thought to be devout religious men willing to sacrifice their lives for Islam. This has helped cement a reputation as being dangerous and 'fearless of death' and has established respect from prison guards and prisoners alike (Ungerer, 2011: 12).

The dynamics of life in Indonesian prisons are also affected by social structures and inmate culture. While each prison varies, participation in gangs is common and often crucial for daily survival. In Cipinang Prison, for example, two main gangs dominate. These include Gang Arek, which comprises ethnic Javanese criminals, and Gang Korea, which consists of mainly ethnic Batak from Sumatra. In order to prevent intimidation by these two gangs, many terrorist offenders have joined forces to create the Ustadz Gang (or the Islamic scholars gang). The Ustadz Gang quickly gained a reputation for being fearless due to their opposition to the other gangs. They also gained respect from the other gangs because of their defiance of the Indonesian and Western governments (Ungerer, 2011).

As in Philippine prisons, inmates in Indonesian prisons depend on cash for survival. Money provides protection, better food, improved living conditions and other privileges not available to poorer inmates. Whether an inmate is a member of a terrorist group or a criminal gang, all are dependent on money. For inmates without external sources of income or internal earning mechanisms, prison gangs and their illicit activities provide a means to acquire money. Without money, even the most senior and well-respected inmates quickly lose influence in a prison population. The ICG (2007: 5) provides an interesting example of the importance of money where in 'Cipinang prison, a JI leader named Adung, who was briefly caretaker leader (*amir*) of the group in 2003, was said to be losing influence because he had no steady income source'.

As terrorist offenders usually hold significant status in Indonesian prisons, it is easy to assume that this will attract other inmates and make prison radicalization likely (Brandon, 2009b). However, the ICG example is particularly important for this study because it identifies the role of money and basic survival needs as being possibly paramount to prison radicalization. Even though the dominant religion in Indonesian prisons is Islam, becoming radicalized and joining a terrorist group is not a foregone conclusion. The possibility of joining a prison gang (such as Gang Korea and Gang Arek) and adhering to a gang's customs and norms as a means of survival, rather than adopting militant ideologies, may be equally possible as a means of adapting to the prison environment in Indonesia.

While there is a relatively high recidivism rate of terrorist offenders in Indonesia, this study has not identified any confirmed cases where inmates, who have been radicalized in Indonesian prisons, have been formally recruited into terrorist groups and then gone on to commit acts of terrorism following release. However, it is important to acknowledge the ICG who cite a case of a convicted terrorist, Aman (Oman) Abdurrahman, who was initially housed in Sukamiskin Prison in Bandung, but later moved to Cirebon Prison because of his alleged

recruitment activities. Abdurrahman was thought to have recruited up to nine inmates who were only two months into their sentences before being detected and was also responsible for publishing and distributing radical Islamist literature in Sukamiskin Prison. Authorities eventually dispersed the group's key players to other prisons, but it is unknown if these players have continued with militant activities. Oman has been isolated from other prisoners and placed under close supervision. However, if he still has access to money, this isolation strategy can be easily circumvented (ICG, 2007).

Like in the Philippines, the corruption of prison guards by inmates in Indonesian is a factor that can facilitate terrorist activity. In a report by the George Washington University and the University of Virginia (2006), researchers identified a case of para-radicalization (described earlier) where a prison warden at the Keborokan Prison in Bali helped smuggle a laptop into the prison for the late Bali Bomber, Imam Samudra. In this case, the laptop was subsequently used to plan the second Bali attacks from the inmate's cell (Ungerer, 2011). As guards' salaries are extremely low, particularly compared to western standards, they often search for alternative sources of income. This is often found through inmates paying off guards to obtain privileges, bribes to perform tasks or money from direct involvement in illicit inmate activities. In this latter category, guards have direct involvement in supporting or facilitating terrorist activities.

Even though the dominant religion in the Indonesian prison system is Islam, there are indicators that suggest the integration of terrorist offenders with the general prison population does not necessarily result in prison radicalization. This may be attributed to the close scrutiny of terrorist offenders in the Indonesian prison system, coupled with powerful social pressures within the prisons/jails.

## **Pakistan**

Pakistan's prison system has more than 100,000 inmates occupying 73 jails, which were originally built to hold only 36,000 persons (International Centre for Prison Studies, 2012). Overcrowding is common, with most jails operating over capacity (US Department of State, 2011). Pakistan's prison system was established in the 1850s and 'is the legacy of its British colonial past' (ICG, 2011: 6). Prisons are largely managed by the provincial governments, whose style and rules are punitive rather than rehabilitative. This approach includes the use of shackles, chains and bars, whipping, extended periods of isolation and torture. The ICG claims that these prisons have become a breeding ground for criminality and militancy, with prisoners more likely to return to crime than to abandon it (ICG, 2011).

The out-dated prison system, coupled with ineffective management and poorly trained staff, means there are no available data on the number of terrorist offenders, the number of inmates associated with the various religious denominations or any other social groupings within the prisons. Much of the data on Pakistan's prison system, particularly when they concern terrorist offenders, are also tightly

held by the government because of security concerns over ongoing attacks by the Taliban to release fellow militants. The recent attack on Bannu Prison in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where 384 prisoners escaped after the prison was attacked by Islamist militants provides a case in point (Khan, 2012).

Prison conditions are archaic, with many facilities lacking sufficient provisions for sanitation, ventilation, temperature adjustment, lighting and potable water. Most cells are heavily crowded, except those where wealthy or influential prisoners are held, and it is not uncommon for up to 100 prisoners to share one toilet. Sub-standard food and medical care have led to chronic health problems among inmates and malnutrition is a common problem for those unable to supplement their diet through business endeavours, manipulation of the system or family help. As a result, Pakistan's prison system fails to meet international human rights standards (ICG, 2011).

Like the Philippines and Indonesia, Pakistan struggles to keep pace with a rising crime rate and an ineffectual judicial system (Neumann, 2010). Approximately 74 per cent of all inmates are on remand, resulting in their prisons being grossly overcrowded, understaffed and poorly equipped. Prison authorities lack skills to manage and separate the various classifications and types of inmates, meaning that hardened prisoners, violent inmates and sexual offenders are mixed with minor and first-time criminals (ICG, 2011).

The mixing of offender types along with a lack of adequate security means there is a high prevalence of sexual abuse and violence among inmates. For example, minority groups, such as Christian and Ahmadi inmates, are more likely to be abused and afforded poorer facilities than Muslim inmates – the dominant religion in Pakistan prisons (US Department of State, 2011). Attempts have been made to separate terrorist offenders from the rest of the prison population to prevent radicalizing the majority Muslim population. However, a lack of provisions to monitor terrorist offenders, high levels of corruption and poor security make it easy for terrorist offenders to gain access to other prisoners. Many prisoners are vulnerable to radicalization because they often lack adequate education, come from under-privileged backgrounds and need support within the prison environment (Neumann, 2010). Terrorist groups are often the ones left to provide this support.

It is difficult to ascertain the number of terrorist offenders held in Pakistan prisons and jails, as statistics are limited and subject to change. For example, recent media reports discuss the escape of 384 inmates (mentioned previously), and one more dated study claims that the Pakistan government's 'recent successes in fighting domestic militancy have produced 4,000 additional inmates, of which 3,700 are thought to be affiliated with Al Qaeda or the Taliban' (Neumann, 2010: 30).

The al-Qa'ida linked terrorists are thought to have been behind some of Pakistan's deadliest attacks. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)<sup>5</sup> inmates, in particular, have allegedly asserted their authority over the guards and turned some jails into de facto Taliban strongholds (Bajoria, 2011). This has enabled them to operate some prisons as recruiting grounds and support bases for terrorist

activity outside. For example, the ease with which inmates obtain contraband, like mobile telephones, weapons and illicit drugs (such as heroin and hashish), has allowed terrorist offenders to continue to plan, fund and execute attacks and other criminal operations from inside prison (Abouzeid, 2010).

Karachi Central Jail, one of the largest prisons in Pakistan, houses approximately 200 Taliban detainees. The jail has a total population of approximately 3800 inmates, well over its capacity of 1800. Although Taliban inmates are theoretically separated from other prisoners, the prison's congestion makes it nearly impossible to enforce the Taliban's segregation. As a result, Taliban inmates have asserted their authority in the prison since being transferred there in mid-2010 and continue to do so. Taliban inmates have also been opposed to rehabilitation programmes, such as music and arts classes, declaring them *haram* (or forbidden) and threatening inmates wishing to participate in these programmes (Abouzeid, 2010). The jail also holds al-Qa'ida linked terrorist groups, such as Laskar-e-Jhangvi, Jundullah, Harkatul Mujahideen and Harkatul Mujahideen al-Alami. These groups have been behind some of Pakistan's deadliest attacks, including bombings, suicide attacks, kidnappings and murders. As a result of the large number of terrorist offenders, the jail is alleged to have become 'a hotbed for terrorists running a network of comrades, supporters and financiers outside its walls' (Siddiqi, 2010).

Karachi Central Jail is just one example of a prison within a system that, if left ignored, has the potential to exacerbate the problems of militancy in the South Asian region. The archaic conditions of most jails tend to reinforce grievances that led individuals to radicalize in the first place. The dismal conditions, combined with prisoner abuse, poor inmate security and high levels of corruption 'can be expected to allow criminal and terrorist networks to thrive and recruit from a large pool of vulnerable and aggrieved people' (ICG, 2011: 25).

There are many similarities between prisons in Pakistan and those in the Philippines and Indonesia, such as inhumane conditions, overcrowding, corruption and out-dated facilities. However, Pakistan's prison system also stands apart because of the political instability in Pakistan, which has resulted largely from 'social change' and the social unrest that has resulted. This social change reflects, in part, a struggle occurring between culture and ideology, sub-cultures and national culture, economic development and cultural preservation, and Islamization and moderation (Azam, 2009: 4). Consequently, there has been a rise in radicalization and popularity of Islamist militancy within the country, which has also had a bearing on its prisons and the inmates that occupy them.

## Radicalization and the prison environment

As Irwin and Cressey (1962: 145) explain in their seminal study into inmate culture, one cannot ignore the dramatic effect that 'external behavioural patterns have on the conduct of inmates in any given prison'. With very few apparent internal influences on inmate culture in Pakistan prisons, apart from inmates adapting to the

'pains of imprisonment' identified by Sykes (1958: 67), there is little to challenge militant groups wanting to radicalize and recruit prisoners. This sits in contrast to Philippine prisons, and to a certain extent those in Indonesia, where prison gang culture may act to neutralize or override militant ideology and terrorist offenders attempting to recruit other prisoners.

From these brief case studies, it is obvious that not all prisons are alike and there are vast differences between correctional systems, including ways of managing and confining inmates, the standards of incarceration, the objectives of punishment and/or rehabilitation, the degrees of control over inmate populations and the levels of staff integrity and professionalism. Prisons are also located in countries with diverse religious, cultural and political backgrounds, which have a bearing on the type of correctional facilities and the inmates that occupy them. Even prisons or jails within the same country often have different objectives and standards from one another, the Philippines being a primary example.

Noting these differences, it is also important to highlight the disparities between a country's ability to record and analyse data on prison populations. Without stating the obvious, some countries, such as the USA and the UK, are more technically advanced and capable of recording data on the various social and religious dynamics within their prisons. While Australian correctional services are just as capable, strict privacy rules and ethical standards hinder the collection of such data. The end result is that very little is known about the extent of prison radicalization in many countries. Considering the lack of data, the great lengths taken to develop special incarceration strategies preventing the risk of prison radicalization and recruitment are surprising. What is evident is that there is generally a very low ratio of terrorist offenders to other types of prisoners in the examined prison systems. Therefore, terrorist offenders normally represent a unique minority group within a prison environment. Generally, inmate minority groups face considerable pressures, and often hostility, from larger inmate groups unless the prison regime is designed to segregate them securely. Terrorist offenders who are dispersed into a prison population face the immediate challenge of having to improve their personal safety and chances of survival. If the number of terrorist offenders is small, they may be forced to group together to protect themselves from larger, more dominant groups or gangs.

These powerful social pressures are often overlooked in contemporary literature surrounding prison radicalization. The reasons for inmates becoming part of a group are many and terrorist offenders are not excluded from this phenomenon. As classic penological studies have concluded, all inmates, regardless of their offence or prison environment, are affected by incarceration (Sykes, 1958; Walker, 1983). Whether they are terrorists or common criminals, all inmates are exposed to the 'pains of imprisonment'. The extent to which terrorist offenders are affected will depend on the individual and the nature of the prison environment itself (Sykes, 1958: 67). Prison environments are generally hostile and unpredictable places where substance abuse and physical violence are regular features of daily life. Prisons also deprive inmates of 'the customary supports and behavioural

settings for their usual living habits' (Emery, 1970: 514). In particular, an inmate's 'prior loyalties, allegiances and friendships' are disrupted (Hunt et al., 1993: 398). As a result, Bondeson (2011: 32) argues that inmates respond by developing 'a network of adaptive solutions' to regain or maintain personal integrity and to cope with the stressful conditions of imprisonment. Inmates adapt by creating new relationships and bond or group with like-minded prisoners, establishing regular patterns of new social interaction. These 'informal groups', which can vary in size, commonly develop similar social attitudes, values, group loyalties and mutual interests (Caldwell, 1956: 649). However, the nature of the inmate social system will vary from prison to prison (Bondeson, 2011). Therefore, in countries like the UK and the Philippines, where the ratio of terrorist offenders to mainstream prisoners is small and when integrated with other prisoners, terrorist offenders may be forced to bond with groups of prisoners who may not be Muslim or militant in their beliefs, but may share other characteristics. As a result, new beliefs and attitudes tend to develop over time.

These new inmate social groups or gangs have a bearing on inmate culture (Goffman, 1961; Irwin and Cressey, 1962; Sykes, 1958). By referring to these and other classic studies surrounding inmate culture, this article extends research by Horgan (2009), who claims that prisons play a significant social and psychological role in providing the setting and context for significant personal change of terrorist offenders. In this context, the author acknowledges that their time in prison may mark the beginning of physical disengagement through adaptation to inmate culture, changes in group memberships and their subsequent re-socialization (McCorkle and Korn, 1954), which is sometimes into prison gangs.

Gangs that have emerged in US and Philippine prisons, for example, have developed particular customs and behavioural norms, often using their own slang and fashion codes (including identifying marks or tattoos) (Camp and Gaes, 2005). Gangs are obviously not exclusive to US or Philippine prisons and are 'an inescapable fact of prison life around the world' (Brandon, 2009b: 35). Depending on the permanence and size of the gang, particular gang cultures are reinforced by protecting specific territory within prisons. While most terrorist offenders are not obliged formally to join gangs, coercion, insecurity and a need for a new social identity often result in terrorist offenders formally joining a gang at some point (Jones and Morales, 2012). The extent to which gang membership works to disengage terrorist inmates is the subject of ongoing study by the author.

There are also country-specific factors, such as culture, religion and political climate, which impact on correctional policy and the extent to which external influences, such as street gang culture or even militant ideological influences, affect prison environments. For example, there appears to be very little control over external influences in Philippine, Indonesian and Pakistan prisons, which is often due to corruption and limited resources for prison reform. Despite prison walls, razor wire and other basic security measures, prisons in these countries seem more porous. It is therefore easy for inmates to reach the outside and for outside influences to reach the inmates (Dunleavy, 2011a).



Despite the variations between the prisons examined in this study, inmates commonly live by a form of code or 'inmate code' (Sykes, 1958: 143). This inmate code represents a value system that contains 'normative imperatives' about how prisoners interact with one another and with staff (Bondeson, 2011: 20). Sykes and Messinger (1960) argue that the inmate code also serves an important function for inmates in that it protects them from the psychological effects of rejection by society and the various deprivations of prison life. The inmate code also represents a system of group norms that are directly related to mitigating the pains of imprisonment.

The inmate code can also reflect outside cultural and social values that specify the immorality of a crime (Emery, 1970). For example, inmates tend to place rankings on various crimes based on the crime's morality, despite the fact that some had committed heinous acts. In prison, however, inmates tend to display a sense of justice and moral standards. Like ordinary citizens, inmates can experience a sympathetic reaction of outrage, shock, resentment and anger to certain crimes. For example, offences that are socially regarded as immoral in US, UK and Australian society, such as sexual offences or violence against children, are similarly regarded by inmates (Emery, 1970). Terrorist attacks on civilians, particularly women and children, are generally also condemned as immoral by inmates in these countries. Therefore, when terrorists are incarcerated in the USA, UK or Australia, it is unlikely that they will be held in high regard by other inmates. While this may reduce their chances of being able to befriend, radicalize and recruit others, it may also help keep terrorist offenders together or unified if isolated or segregated together. In contrast, in Indonesian or Pakistan, inmates may revere terrorist offenders due to their devotion to Islam, despite the acts some may have committed on the outside. In this case, it is argued that the chances of prison radicalization are increased.

From the case studies, there were also other interrelated factors, such as patriotism, social barriers and racism, which may inhibit prison radicalization. A study by Useem and Clayton (2009) in the USA, for example, found that 'inmate solidarity' may work to inhibit the incidence of prison radicalization. They suggest that terrorist offenders had difficulties finding other prisoners whom they could trust and radicalize without being reported to prison authorities. This form of solidarity against terrorist offenders reflected, in part, a general inmate population that displayed allegiance towards their country or patriotism despite the crimes they committed before imprisonment. Useem and Clayton (2009) claim that inmates generally did not seek to damage their country or risk their life or others. They did not 'perceive US society as their enemy', with some even going so far as to betray the inmate code of behaviour to 'snitch' on fellow prisoners by reporting terrorist cells to authorities (Useem and Clayton, 2009: 566).

In the UK, prisoners were often apprehensive about mixing with terrorist offenders because of their notoriety and fear that they might be 'stigmatised by prison authorities' and other inmates (Brandon, 2009b: 7). This has been partly blamed on a societal 'moral panic' about prisoners converting to Islam, as this could bring

them closer to being radicalized (Spalek and El-Hassan, 2007: 100). The moral panic reflects a broader sense of 'Islamophobia', particularly since the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks. This has also permeated prisons, where public perceptions of Islam outside have affected relationships inside between Muslim inmates, mainstream prisoners and staff. As a result, Muslim inmates felt disadvantaged and discriminated and saw themselves as targets of abuse (Spalek and Wilson, 2002: 97). Prison staff also tended to treat them as a group, rather than individuals, 'and too often through the lens of extremism and terrorism' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2010: 4). As a result, prisoners have distanced themselves from Muslim inmates, resisted conversion to Islam and marginalized terrorist offenders. These social barriers seem to inhibit radicalization in many of the US, UK and Australian prisons examined in this article.

## Conclusion

This article has provided an alternative perspective to contemporary discussion on prison radicalization, which appears to over-state the threat by viewing all prisons as 'schools' or 'universities' for terrorism. However, by examining a cross-section of correctional systems, this article has identified several factors that challenge common perceptions about the schools or universities for terrorism theory. It concludes that prison radicalization and recruitment for Islamist militant groups are more the exception than the rule and, when prison radicalization has occurred, the chances of these inmates then being recruited into a terrorist group are slim. In addition, once released, the relationship between these individuals committing acts of terrorism and their time in prison is tenuous at best.

As is evident from the case studies, not all prisons are the same because of significant differences in the way terrorist offenders are managed and confined. This is partly due to a country's religious, cultural and political characteristics, which shape the prison regime, the prison environment, the social dynamics and therefore inmate culture. As such, it is surprising that governments have paid little attention to understanding how the different strategies to incarcerate terrorist offenders (ranging from isolation to integration) affect them. From the case studies examined, it appears that only the UK has recognized that the disadvantages may outweigh the advantages when using a segregation model for terrorist offenders. The hard-won lessons with the IRA, from whom mainstream prisoners were generally kept separate, showed that there were powerful social pressures for inmates to conform to the majority IRA group. These pressures ensured that IRA inmates preserved their ill-feelings towards the British government and enhanced their motivations for militancy.

There is much that can be learnt from the various examined prison environments, such as their inmate cultures and associated social pressures. However, there has been very little empirical research undertaken that examines how these impact on the incarceration of terrorist offenders. Powerful social pressures exist in all prisons and affect all inmates in different ways, except obviously those placed

in isolation. Even in isolation, inmates try different strategies to communicate with others. In a general prison population, however, inmates have great difficulty avoiding others and cannot escape the demands of the prison environment. Therefore, social interaction and belonging to a group helps inmates escape some of the pains of imprisonment. Even when integrating or dispersing terrorist offenders with mainstream prisoners, the pressures to conform to the environment and the demands of the various dominant social groups seem unavoidable for safety and survival. For example, in NBP in the Philippines, joining a prison gang provides a vital means of protection and a source of income for terrorist offenders. Fitting in with gang culture becomes a primary objective for survival within the large prison population, whereas the radicalization of other inmates becomes a secondary consideration. Whether this counts as disengagement and whether it lasts beyond the period of their sentence is yet to be determined. However, if terrorist offenders return to their original social setting, such as Mindanao in the southern Philippines, the chances of remaining disengaged may be minimal.

The case studies also showed that, when terrorist offenders are dispersed into a prison population, part of the pressure on them to adapt or conform to various dominant social groups is to avoid the group's wrath. In the USA, the UK and Australia, there were also considerable stresses placed on inmates to proclaim inmate solidarity. One of the necessities of conforming to inmate solidarity is abiding by inmate codes, which comprise sets of behaviours and rules. These inmate codes see certain offences, such as child sex offences and terrorist acts involving innocent victims, as unacceptable and tend to be disdained by inmates, even though the crimes initially committed by the inmates may have lacked any moral regard. There was also an element of patriotism, which saw a majority of inmates in US prisons, for example, not wanting to commit crimes against their country and seeing it as their duty to punish or report terrorist offenders who intend to betray their country and continue to plan acts of aggression against it.

Based on the small number of cases detected so far, much of the discussion about the frequency of prison radicalization, whether through the media, government or academic circles, appears to have been over-emphasized. This is not to say that the threat does not need to be taken seriously, as it only takes one radical prisoner to launch a terrorist attack. However, a fear of Islam in the community (primarily unfounded) appears to have also rubbed off onto corrective service staff in many of the non-Islamic prisons studied here. Some of the ramifications have been that alternative strategies for improving the housing and treatment of terrorist offenders have not been sought and Muslim inmates have been treated poorly by other prisoners and prison staff alike. Very little attention has been paid to differentiating between Muslim inmates and the more radical followers; instead, prison staff have treated all with suspicion of being a terrorist and having terrorist connections. In the UK, for example, Muslim inmates have been victimized and ostracized by prison officers and inmates, making life inside and any attempts by actual terrorist offenders to radicalize others very difficult.

This is in stark contrast to Indonesian jails where terrorist offenders are often held in high regard among the prison officials and inmates. In the majority Muslim inmate population, terrorist offenders are viewed as devout religious men willing to sacrifice themselves for Islam. This has helped create a reputation among prison guards and inmates of being fearless of death and defiant of the Indonesian and western governments' counter-terrorism efforts. However, without money and a reliable source of income, even well-respected Indonesian terrorists can quickly lose influence in a prison population and therefore have difficulty radicalizing, recruiting and maintaining followers.

The ability of some terrorist offenders to attract new recruits also seems to be related to the size of the terrorist inmate population. For example, in Pakistan where terrorist offenders have been incarcerated in large numbers, the extent of prison radicalization and recruitment may have reached a point where effective management of some prisons is impossible, particularly when the prisons have become *de facto* Taliban strongholds. In contrast, in the UK or in the Philippines, for example, where the ratio of terrorist offenders to other prisoners is small and where inmates are dispersed into the prison population, the reverse is apparent. Terrorist offenders are more likely to spend their time improving their own safety and adapting to prison conditions through joining or co-operating closely with other groups or gangs rather than radicalizing and attempting to recruit others.

There has also been a sharp rise in popularity of Islamic conversion in US and UK prisons, which is worth noting. Many of these conversions have a positive effect with inmates generally looking for a new direction in life. However, there has also been a rise in radical young inmates ganging together, idolizing terrorism and viewing terrorist association (real or imagined) as status. Conversion and radicalization in this instance appears to occur primarily to improve an inmate's power and position within the prison environment and as a visible demonstration of defiance against the system and government. To date, the majority of these inmates leave prison and return to their original social setting, leaving radicalism behind. While this type of radicalization can be disruptive to prison management, it seems to have little impact on the threat of radicalization leading to terrorist acts.

Rather than terrorist offenders attempting to radicalize and recruit other prisoners, their incarceration in certain types of prisons may reduce the risk and instead mark the beginning of their disengagement. We have seen that inmate culture, the conditions of confinement and the prison regime all have varying effects on terrorist offenders. While there are those who may never change, for others their imprisonment may serve as a catalyst for positive change and transformation away from militancy. Therefore, in countries such as Australia and the USA, which have relied on strict segregation and/or isolation strategies, their policies maybe counter-productive and possibly even aggravate the factors that led individuals towards radicalization in the first instance.

## Notes

1. The term radicalization is defined as 'the process by which individuals (or groups) change their beliefs, adopt an extremist viewpoint and advocate (or practice) violence to achieve their goals' (Porter and Kebbell, 2011: 213).
2. The term 'terrorist offender' denotes those individuals incarcerated, whether on remand or convicted, for a range of offences associated with terrorism. This article will focus on Muslim terrorists but, of course, there are many other types of terrorist prisoners, such as animal rights, white supremacy, separatist or neo-Marxist groups. However, the concern for this article is Islamist militants who are commonly thought to be fervent proselytizers inside prisons. This article recognizes that the term 'terrorist offender' is problematic and that many of them may be better described as jihadists, in that they may believe Islam allows the use of violence under certain circumstances but not the indiscriminate killing of civilians through actions such as bombings in public places. Many terrorist prisoners in Indonesian jails, for example, have not been convicted of violent offences but, rather, for less serious crimes like giving sanctuary to a terrorist or withholding information from police. In the Philippines, in the absence of terrorism laws, many Abu Sayyaf Group members are incarcerated for criminal offences.
3. The Nation of Islam 'is a movement founded by Wallace Fard Muhammad in 1930 based on principles of Islam and black pride. It was led for more than 40 years by his disciple Elijah Muhammad, who taught that black Americans were descended from the ancient tribe of Shabazz.' The Moorish Science Temple of America 'is an American offshoot of Islam founded by Noble Drew Ali in 1913, Moorish Science draws on elements of Buddhism, Christianity, Freemasonry, Gnosticism and Taoism and is often distinguished from traditional Islam' (Pew Research Centre, 2012: 101–102).
4. Inmate count at New Bilibid Prison in the Philippines as of 17 October 2013.
5. Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is an alliance of militant groups in Pakistan formed in 2007 to unify groups fighting against the Pakistani military in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The TTP aims to impose a strict interpretation of the Koran throughout Pakistan and expel Coalition troops from Afghanistan. The TTP maintains close ties to senior al-Qa'ida leaders, including al-Qa'ida's former head of operations in Pakistan (Bajoria, 2011).

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### Personal communications

Personal communication, senior jail official, Metro Manila District Jail, 21 September 2010a.

Personal communication, jail guard, Metro Manila District Jail, 21 September 2010b.

Personal communication, senior official, BuCor prison administration, 17 July 2012a.

Personal communication, senior prison officer, BJMP, 19 July 2012b.

Personal communication, Indonesian government (counter-terrorism) official, Melbourne, Australia, 27 September 2012c.

Personal communication, New South Wales Corrections officer, 18 January 2013a.

Personal communication, senior officer Corrections Victoria, Melbourne, Victoria, 1 February 2013b.

Personal communication, New South Wales Corrections officer, Sydney, 15 October 2013c.

Personal communication, senior official, BuCor prison administration, 17 October 2013d.

Personal communication, senior official, General Directorate of Corrections Indonesia, 17 October 2013e.

### **Legislation**

Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2008 (NSW). Classification and designation of inmates.

**Clarke R Jones** holds a PhD from the University of New South Wales (Australia), which examined the blurring roles of the military and police in response to non-traditional security threats. Before moving to academia, he worked for the Australian government for 15 years in several areas of national security. His current research interests include prison gangs and the effects of the prison environment on the disengagement and de-radicalization of terrorist inmates in the Philippine and Indonesian corrective systems.