



International Monterrey Model United Nations Simulation

American School Foundation of Monterrey



European Council

Topic: Preventing the further rise of radical Islamic extremism, prioritizing the modification of jail systems in Europe.

Director: Evaristo Cano (MS)

Moderator: Isabela Fernández (MS)

I. Committee Background

The European Council traces its roots back to early 1961 as informal summits made by the leaders of influential European nations. This arrangement continued until the summits were established in the year 1975 and formalized in 2009 with the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon. The European Council is composed by the heads of government of all EU member states along with the president of the council, and the president of the EU Commission. Usually, meetings are held in the Justus Lipsius Building in Brussels, Belgium and take place at least twice every six months. The president of the Council is elected for a two and a half year term with the option of being elected for a second term. The current president is Herman Van Rompuy. After every Council meeting, the president must brief the European Parliament.

Even though the European Council possesses no formal powers, the influence of the heads of state is sufficient for its effective functioning. Its main purpose is to provide impetus for development and settle issues outstanding from discussions at the lower level in EU foreign policy, which includes ratification of important documents and negotiations of treaty amendments. In addition, the Council exercises the power to appoint the President of the European Central Bank and the High Representative of the Union of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Because of its influence and power, the European Council is regarded by many, as the Union's supreme political authority.

II. Introduction

Description and Definition of the Topic

Within the last decade, Islamic extremism has been increasing exponentially all over the world to the point where it has reached the walls of prison cells. According to the British government, Islamic extremism is defined as "any form of Islam that opposes democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs." (Dominic Casciani, 2014).

Al Qaeda, now known as The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is currently the strongest Islamic extremist organization in the world. ISIS is located all throughout the Middle East, specifically in the countries of Iraq and Syria. Largely populated cities in both of these countries like Raqqa, Mosul, and Fallujah are now under the control of ISIS. Syria and Iraq have

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previously disapproved the rise of the Islamic State (IS), but have not been effective in putting a stop to it.

There are a number of different ways that Islamist extremists have managed to spread their religion and ideals. Recruitment, propaganda, and fear are some of the most common and popular methods. However, recently it has been noticed that they have even managed to spread within prisons. For there to be a rise in radical Islamic extremism inside prisons, there first must exist one thing, an introduction to the faith. One of the ways this takes place is through the proliferation of the Koran: “The Saudi government, which has made the propagation of radical Islam in America a top priority, has shipped tens of thousands of Korans to U.S. jails in recent years” (Malkin, 2017). Islamic groups have fought to have access to the Koran (the Islamic sacred book) in prison libraries over in the Middle East, Italy and the United States. This has helped the spread of radical Islam in prisons. Since the Koran was introduced into prison systems in the United States, over 135,000 American inmates convert to Islam every year. After being introduced to the religion either through the Koran or through other inmates, then network recruiters within the prisons begin to radicalize them and soon enough they become jihadists. According to Prof Khosrovkhavar, who carried out a survey within French prisons, it is estimated that about 40-50% of inmates are Muslim.

Since 2011, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has been warning Syria about the threat Islamic extremists pose. However, since his government has not managed to do anything about the situation, people want him out of the presidency. The United States is only one of twenty three other nations participating in military intervention in Syria and Iraq (Khosla, 2014). Other countries include Australia, Russia, dozens in Europe, and Canada. Islamic extremism has been increasing rapidly, and nations have not been able to put a stop to this life threatening issue. Due to the inefficiency of short term solutions, and the way this problem has been addressed in the past, the rise of atrocious Islamic extremists has not only been slipping away, but has continued to increase within prisons all over the world.

The Problem

The rise of radical Islamic extremism and the need for the modification of jail systems in Europe dates back to the Wahhabis of the 20th century. Wahhabism is Saudi Arabia’s leading and most dominant faith of Islam. It is also the faith where radical Islamic extremism originated. “Strict Wahhabis believe that all those who don't practice their form of Islam are heathens and enemies” (n.a. 2014). For Saudi Arabia, a biased education system makes this such a difficult issue to resolve. In school, Saudi children are taught that they have to options: they either follow the Wahhabis who will go to heaven, or don’t, and will be hated, persecuted, and in some cases even killed. Because these children don't have options to choose from, they practically grow to follow radical Islam.

Like Saudi Arabia’s educational system, jail systems inadvertently give way to the creation of Islamic extremists. Inmates seeking to find their way to a prosperous life end up being radicalized behind prison bars. A common misconception is that inmates will go to prison

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and find it in themselves to live a life within the law, but millions of inmates in Europe and all over the world have converted to extreme Islamic lifestyles. After serving their time, these radicalized inmates often join extremist group such as ISIS, and participate in taking away the lives of many innocent people. After being radicalized inside prisons, when the inmates have served their time, they oftentimes commit acts of terrorism. This problem is best explained in the words of Hanna Kozłowska, a reporter for digital global business news outlet Quartz, “...many of the perpetrators in the highest-profile jihadist terror attacks in Europe in recent years had one thing in common—a stint in one of the region’s prisons. And those prisons have something in common as well. The major attacks have been carried out by men radicalized while held in overcrowded systems.” (Kozłowska, 2017)

Solutions can vary from something as simple as banning all books in prison cells to partitioning Syria from its leaders, all the way to an agreement to disengage in nuclear weapons. Of course, nations look forward to finding a peaceful and sustainable solution where innocent lives won't be put in jeopardy. Therefore, the committee should focus on respecting all human rights while settling on an efficient and reliable resolution to put an end to the rise of Islamic extremists in prisons once and for all.

III. History of the Topic Chronological History of the Topic

Jailing systems in Europe are based on the sole belief that public safety is ensured not simply by separating offenders from society, but by successfully reintegrating them. Certain countries such as Germany and the Netherlands rely heavily on alternatives to prison—including fines, probation and other community-service programs—and they impose much shorter sentences when there are no alternatives to incarceration.

Shifts in punishment philosophies resulted in the abandonment of corporal punishment methods and the introduction to incarceration. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the confinement of criminals in prisons expanded across Europe. As this became common practice, penal innovations influenced the development of 21st century ideals such as living conditions, which are regulated through various guidelines and laws that include: national criminal and penitentiary laws, international law principles, and constitutional provisions. Perhaps the most important event regarding incarceration systems happened in 1970s when the United States witnessed a change in its political climate causing a transformation in penal and sentencing policies. This had an impact on the world’s perception on incarceration and was the leading force that caused Europe to modify its incarceration system to what that are today.

In Europe there have been a number of mechanisms created in order to monitor the detention conditions inside prisons. The two main purposes of these mechanisms are to prevent the acts of torture and ill-treatment towards the prisoners, and to verify appropriate prison detention conditions. One monitoring mechanism was formed through the 1987 Council of Europe’s Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT). This is a preventive mechanism that monitors the active behavior of law

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enforcement authorities through the collection of allegations about abuse and violence. It also looks into the conditions of the prison itself, and verifies if the detention center complies with CPT standards. In 2002, the UN Convention against torture adopted an Optional Protocol, which consists of a similar monitoring mechanism as that of the CPT. The Optional Protocol obligates state parties to set up one or more national preventive mechanisms (NPMs) that are used to prevent torture; many EU member states are part of the Optional Protocol.

Currently, the recruitment of prisoners inside the facilities displays a serious flaw in the jailing system, not successfully reintegrating prisoners in a healthy manner into society. Radical Islam has been an ongoing conflict in both Western and European countries, specifically addressing life in jail systems since the Wahhabis in the 20th century. As mentioned above, they were a movement within Islam that later began the rise of radical Islam. Since then, Muslims have been stereotyped and the Islam religion is seen as “radical,” causing fear and hatred towards its followers.

Since January of 2015, after several people were killed in a series of terror attacks in Paris by soldiers of ISIS, France’s government vowed to act on what they considered to be a “major issue”, stopping radicalization in prisons. Nevertheless, their troubles did not end there. On November 13, 2015, France was attacked once again again by militants of ISIS. Since then, France decided to intensify its measures and began putting Islamic extremists in isolation. However, the problem’s perpetuation doesn’t stop there. The measures that have been taken have not been enough to halt the rise of radical Islamic extremism in jail systems in Europe.

Historical Case Study

Charlie Hebdo Attackers (France)

France’s prison population is reported to be 70% Muslim, making any non-Muslim prisoner a minority inside the facilities. As a consequence of this, other prisoners often convert to the Islamic faith and soon enough become radicalists. Since January of 2017, when the country heightened its security after French troops began fighting al Qaeda-related Islamist groups in West Africa, authorities began to worry about jail-grown militants in their own prisons (Sage, 2013). According to guards and prisoners, and despite France’s government’s approach to this problem, conditions behind bars are still turning young men into Islamist jihadists.

Clearly, Islamist recruiters are starting from prison grounds, just as Paris terrorists Chérif Kouachi and Amedy Coulibaly did. These men were the suspects of the Charlie Hebdo shooting in 2015 and reported being “brainwashed” prior to committing the shooting (Alexander, 2015). Both suspects had served jail time in France for other crimes involving shootings and bombings in 2001 and 2008. Chérif Kouachi was sent to Fleury-Merogis prison, Europe’s largest prison, in 2005. Behind bars, he met Djamel Beghal, nicknamed Abu Hamza, who served a ten year felony because of plotting an attack to the US Embassy in 2001. Kouachi also met Amedy Coulibaly, who was serving time for murder. Both Paris attackers were convinced and “brainwashed” by Beghal to commit the shooting, changing their attitudes towards France, their home country, and convincing them to do it in the name of Islam.

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The Possible Reformation of Prison Systems in the United Kingdom

As in many other European countries, inside prisons in the UK, there have been many cases where non-Muslim prisoners convert to Islam and become Jihadists. Over the last 10 years, the number of Muslim prisoners has doubled to 12,000, from which 100 are Islamic terrorists. Michael Coe arrived to prison as a gangster; during his sentence, he changed his name to Mikael Ibrahim and left with an Islamic faith. He converted after receiving the Dawah, an invitation to Islam given to him by Dhiren Barot, an Al-Qaeda terrorist. Furthermore, Jordan Horder, also known as Jamaal Uddin, was sentenced to jail for attempting to bring Sharia Law to eastern London. However, Horder wanted to be imprisoned, where he planned on converting other prisoners into Muslims by giving them the Shahada, their invitation to Islam (Rowe, 2014). Due to these conflicts, high security prisons in England and Wales have begun to consider the importance of preventing the spread of this radical beliefs, and acknowledge that prisoners with weak beliefs must be incapacitated from proselytising since they are prone to be influenced by dangerous Jihadis. For this reason justice secretary Michael Grove agreed to a plan to isolate Jihadis in special units of maximum security in prisons. Ian Acheson, head of a prison extremist review, said that “the intelligence was now sufficient to say that there was a small hardcore group of jihadi prisoners whose ‘proselytising behaviour’ among the 12,500 Muslim inmates in England and Wales was so dangerous that they should be separated from the rest of the prison population.”(Travis, 2017) On this matter, there was a switch in belief on what prisons should do in order to incapacitate and protect themselves against dangerous prisoners. In fact, this new belief is a step away from the 50-year-old policy of dispersing the most dangerous terrorist and criminal prisoners throughout the network of high-security jails (Travis, 2017).

Sami A. (Germany)

“German police believe there are 602 Islamists living in the country who could be capable of perpetrating a terrorist attack. Politicians want to crack down on possible extremists, but many of the measures under consideration are ineffective or legally dubious” (Baumgärtner, 2017). Another difficult situation for a country is one where a terrorist is not accredited enough evidence in order to be considered guilty. One example of this situation can be found in Germany, where Sami A., the man thought to have once provided security for the world's best-known terrorist, has been investigated by federal prosecutors to no avail. Also, the court ruled that, as a terror suspect, Sami A. was in danger of being tortured back home in Tunisia and therefore was permitted to stay in Germany where he is protected by the law. “Even in freedom, he is still required to report to the police between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. every day and was once arrested for violating his reporting requirement” (Baumgärtner, 2017). Like Sami A., other threats have been a major cause of insecurity among citizens, causing the federal government to agree on taking new measures to better monitor Islamic threats such as ankle monitors and surveillance teams. However, there is still a sense of fear in the population of Germany, who think many of these rules may not be enough, and believe an act of terrorism like the 2016 Berlin christmas attack is still very possible (n.a., 2016). To make this fear go, Germany, as all European countries, has to make sure no jihadists sprout from their jailing systems.

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Australia's Unique Approach

Although Australia is not a country of the European Union, it is important to evaluate their situation and their unique approach to the problem. Australia's most secure prison, Supermax, is so heavily populated with extremists it is often referred to as "Super Mosque" (Sutton, 2017). Even though Supermax holds most dangerous inmates in the country, it is no exception to the law, which requires prisons to free their inmates after they have completed their sentence. This has posed a serious threat, and new laws are currently being considered in order to change this. Aware of the danger that the inmates in Supermax pose, they have prepared 171 surveillance cameras, and inmates are monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week inside 3x4 metre cells. To this issue, Corrective Services Commissioner Peter Severin stated, "...I think it would only be logical to have continued detention powers, through legislation, where courts can make those decisions, like we already have with sexual offenders and extreme violent offenders" (Sutton, 2017).

Past UN Actions

In the past, the United Nations, has time and time again condemned all types of radical extremism. Recently, in 2014, the Security Council unanimously passed a resolution which asks member states not to allow any type of aid to travelers associated with any terrorist organizations. This includes the recruiting, equipping, transporting and organizing of individuals that are in a certain country for the purpose of any sort of terrorist activity. Each country is now responsible for the persecution of these people, in accordance to their own laws. However, with the death penalty being abolished in all but two European countries (Belarus and Russia, which have not practiced it since 1996), these people will regularly end up in prison. European prisons are famous for being comfortable for inmates and creating low possibilities of re-offenses. These prisons normally allow inmates to have more control of their lives inside of its walls, opposed to their intercontinental counterparts. This degree of freedom in the prison facilitates the sharing of extremist ideas and ideologies between inmates who have been incarcerated for those reasons. Because of this, the UN's past resolutions have backfired, and extremist messages have simply found a different crowd, one with a much more dangerous criminal history. Aside from cases such as these, the UN has not specifically addressed an urgent need for a change in European jail systems. This is mainly because these systems are actually very effective, as mentioned above, and have low reoffense rates. Plus, these systems are different for every country, and they each have their own specific set of standards to work with. Creating one, universal set of prison standards for all of Europe will take away some power from each country to run prisons the way they want to. As with any threatening issue, this is a challenging one for the UN since in order to come up with an effective solution, as it must satisfy many different points of view.

IV. Key Players and Points of View

Belgium

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Belgium is one of the most recent victims in a series of terrorist attacks across Europe. In 2016, three suicide bombers killed 32 people, and injured 300 more. These three bombs were coordinated, going off within one hour of each other in two different parts of the city of Brussels. The first one went off at the Brussels Airport in Zaventem, and the second explosion in the Maalbeek Metro Station in Brussels. Responsibility for these attacks was claimed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and there were other bombs found after investigations, that were also allegedly used. Most nearby attacks, including the 2015 Paris attacks, were also found to have been orchestrated in terrorist cells found in Belgium. As a consequence, many anti-terrorist raids have been carried out by local authorities with varying degrees of success. Seeing as most of terrorists who have been found end up in prison, there is an existing threat of the radicalization of non-muslim inmates inside prison cells.

Turkey

The death penalty has been abolished in Turkey for a long time but Turkish prisons are nowhere near as effective or as free as other western European prisons. In 2014, when Tayyip Erdogan took over as president, he chose to adopt a type of open-door policy to strengthen ties with neighboring Islamic countries. Turkey is a predominantly Islamic nation, so the move to find peace with other Islamic Middle-Eastern countries was not entirely accounted for. However, it was questioned and criticised, since Turkey is a key ally of the United States and a member nation of NATO. This move had disastrous results, since an enormous influx of radical jihadists into Turkey has had an overwhelming amount of negative effects on the country. ISIL and other extremist cells, have essentially found refuge in Turkey while they fight the forces of Bashar Al-Assad in Syria, and can now easily recruit and organize troops. These cells have, in the past, conducted terrorist attacks in Turkey, and are an ever-growing problem affecting the country economically, as well as security-wise. As a consequence of these actions, Turkish prisons are mostly filled with radical Islamic agents, which are spreading their messages through all the others around them, leaving Turkey in a very fragile and dangerous situation.

V. Possible Solutions

Several attempts have been made throughout the history of prisons to improve security and prevent dangerous repercussions in jailing systems, some of which include increasing surveillance, prohibiting travel, countering terrorist recruitment and incitement to terrorism via the internet and social media, and strengthening counter-radicalization programs. Furthermore, the 28-member European Union (EU) have taken significant steps in order to tackle the threat of the bloc's largely open internal borders which "permit individuals to travel without passport checks among most European countries" (Fas, 2015). The EU faces a range of challenges when it comes to keeping track of these individual travels and maintaining investigations due to European law, which states the requirement of high level proof of a possible threat before proceeding.

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A solution instituted to solve the spread of Islamic extremism is the Aarhus model which was implemented in Denmark, aiming to create trust between the authorities and the social circles in which radicals operate, and helping them find a way back into society. Under the program, individuals such as returning fighters or radicals who want to fight abroad are assigned trained mentors. They can also receive psychological counselling where radicals are prompted to think about critical life decisions and evaluate what they are about to do.

Another approach to stop the spread of Islamic extremism in jails has been the establishment of “jihad jails” which are separation centers designed to hold subversive prisoners considered to pose a risk to national security. “The centre will be physically separate with its own cells, exercise area and visiting facility. A dedicated specialist staff will be involved in delivering “a variety of interventions” including attempted deradicalisation programmes” (Travis, 2017). According to Acheson, the former prison governor appointed to conduct the inquiry of Islamic extremism in prisons. If the separation units are only used for punishment, they will fail, since it is strongly believed that, if this was the case, they would create “...the conditions for magnifying the sense of grievance that fuels some extremist behaviour” (Asheson, 2017).

Following this belief that punishment doesn't hold the answer, an investigation was made to research why it was difficult to stop the spread of extremism in prisons and two reasons were found. The first of these was that there is no single agency which can change the nation's prison system, since states are responsible for their own penitentiaries and each has its own religious programming. In addition, the second reason is that prisons are stocked with radical ideas in their bookshelves, such as the Noble Koran, an extreme interpretation of Islam's holy book that includes a call for jihad. To solve this problem, the investigation proposes national vetting standards for all religious clergy and religious text, and to set new rules that encourage the Bureau of Prisons to mandate and operate strict investigations of those who preach in the prisons and the material they are allowed to import (n.a., 2013).

VI. Current Status

Due to the deadly attacks by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Paris, Berlin, Brussels and London, amongst other countries in the past few years, fear about extremism has exponentially risen, along with the global concern about the issue. Recent polls on countries show their population's concern about terrorism; 50% in Italy and Spain, 47% in Germany, 46% in France and 43% in the UK (Poushter, 2017).

The majority of perpetrators in high profile Jihadists terrorist attacks have one thing in common: a recruiter in one or more of the region's prisons. A large number of these perpetrators are men that have been radicalized in overcrowded penal institutions; disillusioned inmates are prey for recruiters. France and Belgium, which have their detention centers in the Council of Europe's 2015 top four most overcrowded prisons, have experienced some of the deadliest terrorist attacks. Muslims make up for about 8% of France's population; nevertheless, they take up 60% of the prison population (Kozłowska, 2017). Because of this many right-wing

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conservative candidates have gained more popularity among European populations in countries like Germany, Italy, and Spain. European governments are also investing money to reform the prisons and create solutions on the problems encountered inside them.

The most recent terrorist attack was situated in Spain, inside and around the city of Barcelona. On August 17th, a van ran into tourists and residents on Las Ramblas, one of the most popular streets in the city, killing at least 14 people and injuring more than 100. After mowing down the people in Las Ramblas, the van took a detour and drove into pedestrians in the Cambrils seaside resort. It has been reported by witnesses that the driver “tried to hit as many people as possible”. The police quickly described the event as a terrorist attack, they later found the man whom might be responsible: Younes Abouyaaqoub (BBC News, 2017).

The urgency that this topic presents is evident. The committee should waste no time and get to work quickly to come up with the best short and long term solution to settle this pressing problem as soon as possible. The council should work together and build off of each others ideas to come up with solutions that all members of the council agree on.

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