

France Dropped the Ball with their Murderous Jihadi.  
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In a violent French shootout on March 22, Mohamed Merah, killer of four men and three children in Toulouse, was shot while shooting his way out of his hideout. The standoff riveted the world, which was precisely what Merah had intended. Now comes the exploration over how such a thing happened.

What we know.

Mohamed Merah was born in Toulouse France, to an Algerian mother. He became a petty criminal in his adolescence, rather common in the Muslim immigrant districts of large cities, and spent some time in prison. This is where the story changes. The prisons are not only full of immigrant delinquents, but are also notorious jihadi recruitment venues. In the misguided notion that religion can turn a thug into a responsible citizen, the French have apparently ignored the real motivations of these prison clerics. Merah was hooked, as was his brother.

Some American prisons have the same problem as the European prisons today: radicalizers on the hunt for vulnerable young men, outliers of the mainstream culture to which they do not completely belong. In the US, Young Black inmates are converted to Islam, which gives them a purpose. Unfortunately, recruiters do not tell them that Islam was responsible for Black slavery long before the Europeans ever thought of it.

Both France and the United States are worried about \223lone wolves,\224 young men who self-radicalize by being immersed in the jihadi web sites that play on their resentments. We should discard the notion of \223lone wolf\224 here. Once radicalized, these testosterone-poisoned youth are fully tutored from abroad and are provided with the money to travel to Afghanistan and Pakistan. And why is nobody having a hard look at applications for visas to Afghanistan and Pakistan?

The Travel Problem.

One unnamed French official complained that \223thousands of French Muslims travel to Afghanistan and Pakistan each year.\224 I hope that is an exaggeration, because if it is not, France is in even more trouble that it realizes. The only reasons that young men would go to those countries is either \223to bring back a wife,\224 or to get jihadi training. Both are terrible for France. The wives are not love matches, not part of \223family reunification.\224 They are arranged marriages for producing children, supported by French taxpayers. As for jihadi training, it takes money from somewhere for weapons needed to launch a terror attack. While holding off the police, Merah phoned a TV reporter, who asked why he committed his murderous rampage when he did. He said \223the money had just arrived.\224

In Afghanistan, Merah had been arrested by Afghan police and was handed over to the Americans, who then handed him over to the French. He was put on the American No-Fly list, which should have alerted the French. But French jihadis do not need to fly to do havoc in Europe.

Both Merah and his brother were on a French watch list, but the authorities underestimated them. There is keen pressure in France to be religiously tolerant (something they have not always been). Being tolerant toward people who happen to be Muslim but are otherwise French is not the same as being tolerant of radical jihadis. When the behavior of a young thug changes to religiosity, beards, special clothing, and addiction to jihadi web sites, you have a problem. European counter-terrorism officials estimate about 400 of these potential terrorists all across Europe.

President Sarkozy has unwisely proposed closing down the jihadi web sites. Intelligence operatives do not want this. By watching the sites (and the mosques and the university Muslim clubs), they at least have a handle on preventing the next murderous attack. That has worked in the United States, despite the howls from civil liberties activists, including Islamists groups who want only their civil liberties protected.

There is a big difference between freedom of speech and assembly, which are essential to our values, and being blind to serious internal enemies bent on using our liberties to mask their activities. To ignore this abuse of freedom is to be suicidal.

672 words

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