Abstract

Prislam, the fear that inmates in US prisons will become radicalized and take up arms against America in the name of radical Islamism, has led to claims that jihad can no longer be considered a “foreign” phenomenon. This paper undertakes an alternative reading of Prislam. Utilizing the Newburgh Four case – in which four African-American ex-convicts were convicted of a terrorist plot in 2010 – this paper examines the complex relationship between race, mass incarceration (and the cycle of imprisonment and want in puts into motion) and the tactics used to combat homegrown terrorism (particularly, the use of informants) to show the potential for their confluence to exacerbate the unequal experiences of citizenship of African-Americans. Ultimately, this paper argues that the American-ness of jihad lies not in the convergence of (black) criminality and terror but only in the tragic confluence of age-old racial anxieties, prejudicial policies and fears of infiltration.