

Center for Studies of Islamism and Radicalisation

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Islamism and Radicalisation. *The Denmark-School*

The ambition of the Denmark School is to remedy the fragmentation between different fields of research in Islamism. Some scholars concentrate on the study of *terrorism*, others focus on Islamist movements and organizations, others investigate the ideological affiliation of Islamists. Much of the available research is highly valuable, but what often lacks is the establishment of cumulative communication between these research sectors, in order to provide a better understanding of the whole. Hence, the Denmark-School wants to explore the phenomena of 'Islamism' in its different manifestations, and to highlight the mechanisms of radicalisation processes among Muslim youth in Europe. One of the innovative approaches is the linkage between 'soft security' and 'hard security'. 'Hard security' encompasses physical security, and is directly linked to terror and other forms of violent actions. 'Soft security' encompasses the 'soft-ware' of society, its values and social cohesion, and how Islamism may erode or distort these phenomena through political activism. While other projects mainly focus on *terrorism*, this project first of all focuses on *Islamism*. One of the hypotheses of the project is that conversion to Islamism is the crucial step on the way to radicalisation. Thus, while the identification of social and anthropological circumstances are important to the understanding of radicalisation, they must be considered in relation to the ideological structures of Islamism. The contributing scholars come from political science, anthropology, sociology and humanities.

Identification

The identification of Islamism requires distinction between three possible phases: 1) Ideology, 2) Movements 3) Political Regimes. The components of Islamist ideology will be analyzed and considered in relation to the political and social contexts in which it was formulated in the past and expressed today. The ideology *per se* does not represent a threat, unless it is activated and realized by a social-political movement or a political regime. Therefore, it is essential to understand the functioning of the Islamist movements and states, based on well-defined criteria, such as the definition of the rights of the individual, principles of political legitimacy and the justification of violence.

Mechanisms

Ideologies are at interplay with social-anthropological mechanisms, which may encourage individuals to join the existing Islamist organisations, or encourage a group of individuals to create a new Islamist cell. Globalization renders the mechanisms of radicalisation all the more complex, as Islamism may manifest itself on four different, but inter-related levels: *local, national, regional* and *global*. How these levels interact must be circumscribed in a forth-running process and with basis in a number of cases. A comparative study of Great-Britain and France will highlight whether the different integration models, the British multicultural model or the French secular model, influence the development of mechanisms of radicalisation. In relation to this study, it will be considered how a country like Denmark can profit from the British and French experiences.

The project is composed by the following elements:

1. Islamist ideology

Ideological roots

The attraction of Islamism cannot be isolated from the Islamic history of ideas, as Islamist movements legitimize their ideology and actions through references to specific currents in Islamic law and theology. How these contribute in forming Islamist world views must be disentangled. From a point of view of political philosophy, contemporary Islamist movements present features which gives relevance to a comparison with European totalitarian ideologies – Fascism, Nazism and Bolshevism.

Euro-islamism

The study of Islamist ideology will be considered in a contemporary European context, and it will be discussed whether Islamist movements in Europe can be considered from a revisionist point of view. As these movements adapt to local contexts and attract a number of European converts, they will be considered not as an “exotic” phenomena, but as a “home-grown“ social and political movement. The

study is based on a mapping of Islamist organisation in Europe, their ideology, networks and activities, as well as European reactions to these.

2. Social movement and radicalisation

Islamism as a social movement

The latest events in Denmark and other European countries indicate that radicalisation is spreading among young Muslims in Europe. The question is whether research in social movements may contribute in enlightening the processes of Islamist activism, and to which extent there is a need of developing new parameters. This part of the study will focus on the importance of institutional frames, individual networks, biographical characteristics and moral choc as triggers of radicalisation.

Radicalisation: Anthropological field work

The anthropological part of the project will mainly focus on *processes* of radicalisation, on how radicalisation manifests itself gradually, through adaptation of new world views, values and lifestyle. Data will be collected through field work and surveys. The main hypothesis is that interaction between an individual in search for identity and a radicalised group play an important role in the process of radicalisation.

3. Islamism and international politics

Islamism as a new global actor

The study of Islamism in international relations is usually limited to treating only one aspect of Islamism as a transnational actor, namely terrorism and its corresponding anti-terror measures. But Islamist ambitions and strategies are expressed through a number of other means, such as boycotts, crises, strategic alliances and perhaps even the acquisition of WMD. These must be mapped in order to provide an empirical

basis for studying contemporary Islamist world views and conceptions of international relations.