

Radicalisation of Young Muslims in Medium Size European Cities: Birmingham, UK

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Since the London bombings of July 2005, the problem of home-grown radicalisation has become a top priority for politicians, policy makers and communities in the UK. Since then, there have been scores of arrests, including in Birmingham, of those suspected of attempting to carry out acts of violence, and in the last twelve months many individuals have been found guilty of terrorism offences and have been sentenced to lengthy terms in prison.



We are beginning to understand more about the causes and drivers of radicalisation, but there remain many unanswered questions. Why do some individuals choose this path? What factors are most important in their radicalisation? Where do they operate? And what kinds of interventions could prevent young people from resorting to violence to resolve their problems?

This project – part of a Europe-wide research programme – takes a geographical approach to this question. It aims to answer these questions with specific reference to a medium-sized city in each of the participating countries. The UK part of the study will focus on Birmingham, the UK's second largest city which is home to 10 per cent of Muslims in the UK. It is also one of the recognised hot spots for radicalisation and has been the scene of arrests in recent times.

The research will take a collaborative approach. Researchers will work with community members, local authority officials, police officers and other local bodies to answer the core research questions. It will involve in-depth interviews, background research, discussion forums and seminars. The project is interested in mapping overall trends and patterns, not individual behaviour, and will observe the confidentiality of all those involved. A final report will summarise the findings for all the cities, but a UK/Birmingham specific report will also be produced.

***Biography:**

The UK/Birmingham part of the project will be conducted by Rachel Briggs. Rachel is a freelance researcher and writer with considerable experience in the areas of security, terrorism, and community cohesion. She was formerly Head of Identity Programme Demos, where she authored a number of reports on this theme, including the influential *Bringing it Home: Community-based approaches to counter-terrorism* which has helped to shape UK Government policies.

She is Honorary Senior Research Associate at University College London and Senior Research Fellow at the security think tank, RUSI, and works on a freelance basis for other organisations. Her current clients include the Home Office, Department for International Development, Shell International, and The Barrow Cadbury Trust. She is also part-time director of Hostage UK, which supports families during a kidnap.

Her forthcoming publications include the chapter ‘Radicalisation Among Muslims in the UK’ in a book to be published by CEPS in December 2008, a chapter in the forthcoming book *Democracy and Violence* on how political participation can be a tool in fighting violent extremism, and a paper for Oxfam on social cohesion and education. She has also recently edited a special volume of the journal *Renewal* on the future of foreign policy. Before joining Demos in 2003, Rachel was Head of the Risk and Security Programme at The Foreign Policy Centre.

Rachel Briggs is a member of the advisory board of Wilton Park (an executive agency of the UK Foreign Office), a council member of the Risk and Security Management Forum, and a member of the advisory board for the journal *Renewal*.

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