

Standing Committees for

- Humanities (SCH)
- Social Sciences (SCSS)

ESF Exploratory Workshop on

Youth Radicalisation and the Role of Secular and Religious Ideologies in Legitimising Politically Motivated Violence

London (United Kingdom), 25-27 June 2008

Convened by:

Nick Mai ①, Martijn de Koning ② and Sara Silvestri ③

① *Institute for the Study of European Transformations, London Metropolitan University, UK*

② *International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, Leiden, NL*

③ *Centre for International Politics, City University, London, UK*

SCIENTIFIC REPORT

1 Executive summary

In the current political and economic climate, phenomena as different as young people's recourse to politically motivated violence in the US (9/11), the UK (7/7), Bali, Morocco and even the 2005 'Paris riots' tend to be conflated in public perceptions and in parts of the media in a confused and often conspiratorial way. This conflation risks obliterating:

- the inextricable interconnection between the secular, the political and the religious dimensions in contemporary as well as in historical experiences of young people's organized recourse to politically legitimised violence;
- the resilience and specificity of national and local understandings of what constitutes oppression and liberation and of nationally based experiences of young people's organized recourse to politically/religiously motivated violence;
- the extent to which current experiences of 'radicalisation' are embedded within global transformations of youth culture and of established forms of authority in both Western and non-Western societies.

The workshop was a unique opportunity to compare different current and past experiences of radicalism and violence and to understand their relation with both secular and more religious frameworks. One of its main aims was to problematise the argument of those who would insist that current forms of legitimation for recourse to political violence differ inherently from those of the past because they subscribe to a supposedly less 'secular' and more 'religious' (Muslim) ideological framework; and because their focus is supposedly global/transnational, rather than national.

The workshop explored the parallels and disjunctures between the 'secular' and more 'religious' commitments of young people who took part in politically motivated violent activities across different historical moments. These included the 'terrorisms' of the 1970s

in Italy and Germany; the Irish/UK 'troubles' of the 1970s-1990s; and the post 9/11 scenario in the UK/EU. In particular the workshop aimed at shifting the focus of contemporary research on the changing social (age, class, gender, education), cultural (lifestyles, cultural repertoires, media consumption) and economic dimensions framing the experience of youth, rather than on any specific ideological repertoire.

2. Scientific Content of the Event

Co-convenors

Each of the three convenors of the workshop – Dr Nicola Mai (London Metropolitan University), Dr Sara Silvestri (City University and Cambridge University), and Dr Martijn de Koning (ISIM, Netherlands) – had a solid background in a particular social science (Sociology, Political Science, Anthropology) and had already worked extensively on a specific aspect of the broad chosen theme, from migrant youth and youth culture (Mai), to Political Islam and Islamist networks in Europe (Silvestri), to Moroccan migrants and *jihadi* movements in the Netherlands (de Koning). Having had the occasion to work together before in different initiatives, and being part of a number of research and policy networks, the three workshop co-convenors were able to maximize the interdisciplinary perspective of the ESF research meeting and to prepare well-focused questions for discussion, by building on their previous collaborative research as well as on their multiple networks.

Participation

In total 15 invited speakers, including the three co-convenors, attended the workshop, which took place over 2 full days at the Institute for the Study of European Transformations (ISET) of the London Metropolitan University. The three co-convenors also delivered a paper each and chaired the sessions, with the contribution of the Director of ISET, Prof. Mary Hickman. The 15 invited speakers came from five European countries (France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, UK) and from Morocco. Their nationalities include those mentioned above and Poland. They were selected according to their expertise about a specific historical, geographic and/or theoretical outlook regarding

the issues examined in the workshop and as representatives of academic institutions offering a high potential to develop forms of co-operation in the future. The participation of two scholars from Morocco was particularly useful, as it allowed extending the focus of analysis of youth radicalization beyond the context of European societies. In addition, the workshop was attended by: 2 ESF observers; two London-based researchers and three ISET members working on topics related to the workshop, and by the Imam of London Metropolitan University, who is also an academic. Altogether 23 people attended the workshop.

The warm welcome, the relaxed but punctual and professional atmosphere of the meeting, and the moments of conviviality during the meals (the hotel was pleasant and central and the two dinners were organized in convivial restaurants in the Bloomsbury area of London) also contributed to facilitating friendly contacts and informal exchange. The success of the workshop is also demonstrated by the fact that the participants got on very well with each other and engaged in very intense discussions around the topic of the meeting also during breakfast and by staying up in the hotel lobby till 2am! One of the aspects that the participants enjoyed most was the interdisciplinary, multi-country and historical perspective of the workshop, which enabled people to think across and question each other's work in a very fruitful way.

All participants brought added value to the project and in turn declared to have benefited greatly from this meeting. They all shared in the conclusion that it is crucial to look at agency, ideology, rational choice and structural factors in parallel. They found this meeting an important starting point but definitely not the end point of this long-due effort. So it was suggested to continue the dialogue begun in this workshop and to build on it with a series of follow up projects: from publications to joint research projects, to a series of conferences/workshops, each organized around one specific theme/question – among the many which emerged in this London meeting (see section 3). The two ESF delegates were very helpful in presenting the general remit and the range of programmes of the ESF and in actively contributing to the discussions taking place during the workshop.

Programme

The workshop was deliberately not structured chronologically or geographically but around 5 sub-themes that were identified as central issues that should be taken into account across time and across countries. This is because the organizers started from the assumption that there is no one single explanation for radicalization and wanted the possible causes to emerge from the analysis of the paper givers and from the common discussion. Participants contributed by keeping their papers to the required 20 minutes and thus ample space was given both to clarificatory questions and to general discussion in each session. Everybody participated very lively, thus demonstrating that such a joint effort was extremely valuable and opening many avenues for future research.

The first session was devoted to the role played by the globalization of youth lifestyles in the emergence of radicalized youth movements. The panel brought together a variety of studies focusing on different historical and (trans)national experiences of young people's involvement in politically motivated violence. The discussion that followed the presentations focused on the comparison between specific and similar experiences of youth that underpinned the case studies examined by each speaker. These encompassed a great variety of contexts, including: extreme right wing groups in Italy and Germany (Caiani); urban youth violence in France, Russia and Poland (Jurczyszyn); young Moroccan-Dutch Muslim youth negotiation of identity through their internet practices (de Koning); young people's search for greater political and religious freedom in Morocco (Touhtouh) and the specific role played by age and knowledge in young people's involvement in the 'Irish troubles' (Shirlow).

The second session focused more specifically on the comparison between current and past experiences of the political dimension by bringing together two specific but interrelated presentations. The first presentation (de Graaff) offered a comparison between 1970s supposedly more 'secular' forms of terrorism and current Islamicised forms of radicalization, by focusing on dynamics of self-glorification as an element of continuity. The second presentation (Loperfido) explored the religious and ideological

discourses and practices underpinning the fundamentalist stance of an Italian neo-fascist group which operated until the early 1980s. The discussion that followed examined the tensions and similarities between religious and secular discourses and practices in the development of radical agendas and movements.

The third panel engaged more directly with theoretical definitions of what constitutes radicalization, through the juxtaposition of two presentations referring to two different levels of analysis and disciplines. The first presentation (Silvestri) provided an overview of the main concepts at the heart of the Salafi Islamic movement to examine to which extent its ideas constitute a threat or a resource for the process of democratisation. The second presentation (Mai) juxtaposed three different individual case studies from Albania, Morocco and the UK to examine the psycho-social underpinning of youth radicalization. The discussion that followed these two presentations focused on the relation between the individual/psychological and the political/social dimensions of radicalization.

The fourth panel examined in more detail the specific role of the secular and the religious dimensions in past and current forms of radicalization. The first presentation (Rolston) problematised the fine line between the political and the religious dimensions in the unfolding of the Northern Ireland conflict, while the second (Meijer) examined the secular and political dimensions of Jihadi-Salafi movement. The third presentation (Elhachmi) addressed the role of state authoritarianism in the interplay between youth identity, violence and urban life in Morocco.

The fifth panel focused on the way the experience of young people's political engagement develops in time and according to changing political and socio-cultural circumstances with reference to: post-1970s Italy (de Sario); post-1968 Germany (Langguth); and the evolution of contentious actions in Northern Ireland between the late 1960s and the mid 1970s (Bosi). The discussion that followed addressed the role of wider political and social transformation in the development of radicalized youth movements.

The final session was dedicated to a collective discussion of the results of the workshop and of ideas and initiatives to further develop the research in the future. The outcomes of this final session will be summarized in the following section.

3. Assessment of the results, contribution to the future direction of the field

Social scientists doing research in the field of politicization and radicalization of identities and movements are often segregated along national and thematic lines. There are not many contacts between, for example, scholars doing research on contemporary 'Muslim' radicalization and others researching groups such as the German RAF or the IRA in the UK. This workshop brought together scholars from different thematic fields and different disciplines in order to explore the differences and similarities in the process of radicalization across communities, the use and consequences of violence and the different ways in which states have responded to these challenges.

Several important themes were identified that merit further exploration in the future:

- 1) The specific experience of youth. At first sight an obvious and often mentioned aspect of radicalization and violent movement. Nevertheless the question of why it is mainly youth that are attracted to such movements is seldom addressed and thoroughly explored. Issues that should be addressed are for example inter-generational relations, migrations and the role of individualisation and globalisation in the emergence of new and differently politicised youth identities.
- 2) Gender. The role assigned to women and men within radicalised formations reveals and embodies key aspects of their wider political and social characteristics. Strategic themes deserving further discussion include: the interaction between men and women in radicalised political and social formations; the relation between masculinity, femininity and the use of violence; and the challenging and reproduction of established gender roles and hierarchies through the engagement in radical politics.

- 3) Representation. Much of the public discussion about radicalization finds its way through the media, which plays a key role in the dissemination of stereotypical and marginalising representation of politically engaged youth. The way radicalization processes are (mis-)represented in the media is a third important theme that emerged during the conference. On the other hand, it is important also to address the way radicalised formations represent themselves to their audiences in the pursuance of their objectives and in conformity with their socio-cultural and political groundings.
- 4) State. Radical ideologies, religions and identities can be seen as oppositional phenomena challenging state power. At the same time the policies of the state have important consequences for the process of radicalization as they can exacerbate the conflicts underpinning radicalisation and provide a space wherein radical movements can flourish. The specific role of the state in the emergence of and response to radicalised movements deserves further research and analysis and was seen as an important aspect to further discuss by most participants.

It was decided that these four dimensions should be addressed in a series of follow up workshops, which will foresee the collaboration between the academic institutions to which the participants of this workshop are affiliated. In these events the same mix of senior and junior researchers as well as the interdisciplinary focus characterising this ESF exploratory workshop will be maintained. During the final discussion, the ESF Research Networking programme was identified as a potentially ideal framework for the further development of the themes that emerged from this exploratory workshop as well as of the good institutional and interpersonal relations that underpinned its success.

In addition, a selection of the papers presented at the workshop will be published in a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal. The three convenors of the workshop will take the initiative for both the follow up workshop programme and the editing of the special issue of the journal. Following the suggestion of one of the conference participants, Dr.

Peter Shirlow, we will explore publishing a selection of the papers presented at the workshop in a special issue of the journal 'Terrorism and Political Violence'.

4. Final Programme

WEDNESDAY 25 JUNE

20.00 Dinner at Carluccio's restaurant for early arriving participants

THURSDAY 26 JUNE

09.00-09.30 Coffee and tea available

09.30-10.00 **Welcome by workshop convenors**

Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF) Dalina Dumitrescu (ESF Standing Committee for the Social Sciences - SCSS) and Jon Olafsson (ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities - SCH)

10.00-11.30 **Panel Session:**
Youth, lifestyles and the legitimation of political violence

There will be two 20' presentations followed by questions and discussion

Radicalization processes of young people: the analysis of extreme right groups in Italy and Germany
Manuela Caiani (European University Institute, IT)

The Interplay Between The Signification And The Mediation Of Contemporary Urban Youth Violence In France, Russia And Poland
Lukasz Jurczynszyn (EHESS, Paris, FR)

11.30-12.00 Coffee/Tea break

12.00-13.30 **Panel Session:**
Youth, lifestyles and the legitimation of political violence

There will be three 20' presentations followed by 30' for questions and discussion

Identity in transition. Understanding Internet practices of Moroccan-Dutch Muslim youth
Martijn de Koning (ISIM Leiden, NL)

Youth in the Muslim Space: In Search of a Political and Religious Liberating Voice

Rachid Touhtouh (University of Fez, MA)

Action Before Ideology': Understanding the role of age and knowledge in the 'Troubles in Northern Ireland/Ireland'

Peter Shirlow (Queen's University Belfast, IE)

13.30-14.30 Lunch

14.30-16.0 **Panel Session:**

New and old experience of the political: 'radical' Islam and the anti-capitalist and anti-colonial movements

There will be two 20' presentations followed by questions and discussion

Self-glorification, the missing link is jihadist terrorism? A comparison between the terrorism of the 1970s and present day terrorism

Bob de Graaff (University of Leiden, NL)

Sacralization of community, violence and death in a non-religious fundamentalism" Symbolic functioning and radicalization of neo fascist "spontaneista" movement (Rome, 1976-1982)

Giacomo Loperfido (EHESS)

16.00-16.30 Coffee/Tea break

16.30-18.0 **Panel Session:**

What is radicalisation? Contested representations of radicalism, political participation and social exclusion

There will be two 20' presentations followed by questions and discussion

Who are the radical, who are the moderate Muslim? Preliminary reflections on concepts and case studies of Islamic politics and dissent in Europe

Sara Silvestri (City University, London, UK)

The sustainability of heterogeneous thought: a psycho-social analysis of the relation between social transformation, youth and radicalisation.

Nick Mai (London Metropolitan University, UK)

- 18.00-19.00** Wine reception
- 19:30** Leave for Dinner at Tas Restaurant

FRIDAY 27 JUNE

- 09.00-09.30** Coffee and Tea available

- 09.30-11.0** **Panel Session:**
*The specific role of the secular and the religious
dimensions in past and current forms of radicalization*

There will be three 20' presentations followed by 30' for questions and discussion

Radicalisation, religion and the Northern Ireland conflict
Bill Rolston (University of Ulster, UK)

Dutch Moroccan Jihadists and the exhilaration of Salafism
Roel Mejer (Radboud University, Nijmegen, NL)

*Youth face to face with neo-authoritarianism: the interplay among
identity, violence and urban life*

Mohamed Elhachmi

- 11.00-11.30** Coffee/Tea break

- 11.30-13.0** **Panel Session:**
*The relation between politics, social change and
violence: post 1968 radicalisations*

There will be three 20' presentations followed by 30' for questions and discussion

*Lost in translation? Youth cultures and radical politics in the post-1970s'
transition of the Italian activism*
Beppe de Sario (University of Urbino, IT)

*The cultural and social contexts of German 1968 student protests and of
1970s terrorism*
Gerd Langguth (University of Bonn, DE)

*Motivations Toward the Armed Struggle, Provisional Volunteers in
Northern Ireland between 1968-72*
Lorenzo Bosi (European University Institute, IT)

13.00-14.00 Lunch

14.00-16.00 Plans for common publications and further research

16.00 End of meeting and departure

5. Final List of Participants

Lorenzo Bosi

Robert Schumann Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Florence, Italy

lorenzo.bosi@eui.eu

Manuela Caiani

Department of Sociology and Political Science, European University Institute
Florence, Italy

manuela.caiani@eui.eu

Bob de Graaff

Leiden University, The Netherlands

bobdegraaff@yahoo.com

Martijn de Koning (co-organiser)

International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM)

Leiden, The Netherlands

m.dekoning@isim.nl

Beppe de Sario

University of Urbino, Italy

beppedesario@inventati.org

Dalina Dumitrescu (ESF)

ASEBUSS - The Institute for Business and Public Administration Bucharest, Romania

dalina@asebuss.ro

Mohamed Elhachimi

Université Mohamed Ibn Abdellah de Fès, Morocco

elhachimimohamed@yahoo.fr

Lukasz Jurczyszyn

Centre d'Analyse et d'Intervention Sociologiques (CADIS), EHESS, Paris

lukasz.jurczyszyn@ehess.fr

Gerd Langguth

Institute of Political Sciences and Sociology, Bonn University, Germany

gerd.langguth@uni-bonn.de

Giacomo Loperfido

IRIS-EHESS, Paris and Università degli Studi di Bergamo (Italy)

Giacomo.Loperfido@ehess.fr

Nick Mai (co-organiser)

ISET- Institute for the Study of European Transformations, London Metropolitan University, UK

n.mai@londonmet.ac.uk

Roel Meijer

Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands

Roel-meijer@planet.nl

Jon Olafsson (ESF)

Faculty of Social Sciences, Bifrost University, Iceland

jonolafs@bifrost.is

Bill Rolston

University of Ulster, Belfast, UK

wj.rolston@ulster.ac.uk

Peter Shirlow

School of Law, Queen's University Belfast, UK

p.shirlow@qub.ac.uk

Sara Silvestri (co-organisers)

City University (London) and Cambridge University, UK

sara.silvestri.1@city.ac.uk ss384@cam.ac.uk

Rachid Touhtouh

Université Mohamed Ibn Abdellah de Fès

Morocco

rachidtouhtouh@yahoo.fr

6) Statistical Information on the Participants

Age bracket: 25 to 65 yrs

Gender: 2 female, 13 male

(One of the ESF representatives and 5 of the extra invited people were female)

Countries of origin:

France 2

Germany 1

Italy 3

Morocco 2

The Netherland 3

United Kingdom 4

Nick Mai

Sara Silvestri

Martijn de Koning