GREASE
Religion, Diversity and Radicalisation

Webinar

Governance of religion and (violent) radicalisation in Germany and Belgium

16 June 2021

Online - Zoom - 12.00 - 14.00 GMT; 13.00 - 15.00 CEST

A regional workshop from the GREASE research project organised by University of Bristol

Introduction

Aims and purpose

Questions about the capacity of Western European countries to fully integrate and accommodate extra-Christian religious diversity have been brought into sharp relief in recent decades as issues of religiously-attributed radicalisation have come to the fore in these countries in relation to and with a focus on Islam and Muslims. Attacks targeting capital cities were given a further dimension when nationals of countries began travelling as 'foreign fighters' to take part in the wars in Syria and Iraq, with Belgium seeing the highest number of leavers per capita in the EU, and the return of these fighters has more recently become a significant issue.

Nevertheless, along with radical Islamism, more recently attention has also turned to radical Christian-identitarianism, especially that associated with the far-right, which targets minorities and especially Muslim minorities in a refusal of the accommodation and belonging of these minorities. While this has been evident across the region of Western Europe (as well as beyond), this has been a particular focus in Germany, which has experienced comparatively few violent Islamist related attacks but increasing extreme right-wing attacks aimed at (religious) minorities.

This workshop will focus on the two country cases of Germany and Belgium in order to illuminate the particular challenges and approaches in each. Both feature state-religion connections and both have also been accommodative of religious diversity and sought to institutionalise minority religions within existing systems and structures, while also facing particular challenges in doing so. Furthermore, a particular aspect of responses in these countries, as well as more widely, in responding to violent radicalisation has been increased regulation and interference over religious (mainly Muslim) institutions and organisations. We see, for example, extra conditions placed on Muslim organisations and mosques in institutional relations and recognition with the state, and also how security concerns creep into social and welfare work.

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Questions then arise about the link between forms of governance and policies that address security and those that address religious diversity and how one is affecting and being affected by the other. Amongst other questions, we can ask, for instance, how features of existing governance frameworks (such as institutional arrangements and prevention programmes) serve the purpose of security-focused measures or change to meet them, or if new forms and measures of governance are brought in and, if so, what this means for the wider picture of the governance of religious diversity?

Are countries that are accommodating of religion and religious diversity in the public sphere more or less likely to contain religiously-inspired radicalization? Alternatively, are these countries also more or less likely to contain far right Christian-identarian radicalisation?

This workshop will address this overarching issue through the presentation of research results that bring together the two arms of the GREASE project, the governance of religious diversity on the one hand, and religiously-attributed or inspired radicalisation on the other.

Policy Problem

Presented with growing Muslim communities, Western European states are searching for ways to include them appropriately in state-religion relations. Efforts at inclusion have so far had mixed results and have often been the subject of intense public debate. Both radicalisation and state strategies of anti-radicalisation are having a significant impact on this endeavour. Additionally, the rise of exclusivist nationalism in some countries is having a constraining effect on the accommodation of Muslims and diversity generally.

Policy Question

How can state-religion relations be developed in ways that contribute to bringing radical elements into more democratic forms of engagement?

Programme

12.00- 12.05   Introduction

Tariq Modood | University of Bristol

Thomas Sealy | University of Bristol

12.05 - 12.30   GREASE presentation

Tariq Modood | University of Bristol

Thomas Sealy | University of Bristol

12.30 - 13.15   **Tobias Cremer** | Pembroke College Oxford

Corinne Torrekens | Université Libre de Bruxelles

Olivier Roy | European University Institute

13.15 - 13.55   Q&A

13.55 - 14.00   Closing remarks