

## **Dissertation Abstract**

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The recent wave of Islamist-inspired terrorism throughout Britain, Europe, and the Western world, as well as the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, has meant that the British Government has needed to respond to this security threat. One aspect of formulating a successful and effective security strategy is the political discourse which takes place amongst members of the elected Government when formulating the strategy to combat jihadist violence. This political discourse seeks to explain the current security context and to justify future security decisions. Thus, by understanding the foundational theoretical, philosophical, and political ideologies which underlie and influence this political discourse, future policy decisions can be better implemented.

This dissertation examines the political discourse of British Members of Parliament in the House of Commons relating to the securitization of British Muslims and Islam between 2014-2017 in the context of both the recent wave of Islamist-inspired terrorism within Europe and the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

The Parliamentary discourse of MPs is analysed through the political discourse framework advocated by Fairclough and influenced by Michal Foucault's concept of hegemonic "regimes of truth". Within this political discourse framework, the securitization of British Muslims and Islam is analysed. The Paris School of securitization, which stipulates that the construction and maintenance of security threats are perpetuated by the governing elite and institutions in societies, and is built upon an already existing "consolidated discourse realm", is also a key influence for this dissertation.

The "consolidated discourse realm" surrounding Islam and Muslims in Britain and the West can be traced back to the creation of the Westphalian State system in 1648, when the rational political sphere was to be protected from the irrational religious sphere, seen as the cause of so-much bloodshed in Europe. This "consolidated discourse realm", combined with more contemporary events such as the Salman Rushdie controversy, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the 7/7 London bombings have created the current security context by which Islam and British Muslims are securitized. The dissertation then examines four political discourses surrounding British Muslims and Islam: the British State, the political left, the political right, and finally the counter-hegemonic narrative of Islamist extremists.

Finally, this dissertation presents the four main findings of the political discourse analysis, which are:

- 1) British House of Common's MPs highlighted the brutal actions of jihadists and the Islamic State in order to construct the actions of Islamists as an existential threat to the UK, warranting a response from the British state.
- 2) British Muslims and the religion of Islam were disassociated and defended from the actions of Islamists. This is because after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and 7/7 the British Government resolved to defend all British citizens, including British Muslims, from further Islamist-inspired attacks and from right-wing reprisal attacks. Therefore, a process of de-securitization had taken place.
- 3) The issue of jihadists inspired by political Islam was discussed as a problem which needed to be solved. Efforts were needed both to assert liberal democratic values and to help British Muslims adopt these values and reject extremist narratives.
- 4) The issue over how far the British State should assert itself in its defence against Islamist extremists was heavily debated. Whilst many MPs argued that the Government has a duty to protect its citizens, others were worried that the use of force would only inflame the problem of radical Islamism.