

Islamic Activism and the Counterterror state

The Impact of the Securitised Lens on Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain and Denmark

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Project Abstract

This project aims to answer the following research question: How has the development of a securitised lens impacted on Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain and Denmark? To achieve this, it will explore the construction of a securitised lens, the impact of securitisation processes and the difference between responses within Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) in Britain and Denmark through the following three sub-questions: 1. How do we know securitisation is an issue for Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain and Denmark? 2. How can we understand securitisation as creating patterns of repression through perception? and 3. What are the long-term effects of this experience of perceived repression in the different contexts? It aims to do this through an approach that brings together the two theoretical discussions of social movement theories and securitisation theories through the nexus of repression. This enables the project to understand patterns of repression and mobilisation response, as well as respond to the limitations of both theoretical facets – social movement theory’s difficulty in understanding subtler, long-term and multi-spatial forms of repressions and securitisation theory’s disposition to assume power only travels downwards, from monolithic repressor to repressed, without an interactive response amongst all actors.

The project took an empirical approach grounded in interaction with members, ex-members and those who operate in and around security – something considered particularly important in the study of an organisation that is semi-clandestine in its operation. This included attendance at demonstrations, public talks, da’wah stalls, Friday prayers and mosques talks, as well as halaqat (private study circles), social events, meetings at coffee shops, family meals, weddings and even participation in football practice, with fieldwork conducted between 2015 and 2018. Conceptually, the thesis is designed to fill gaps in contemporary study of the Islamic Activist organisation Hizb ut-Tahrir, updating the literature on an organisation that study has largely neglected in recent years but has become more relevant with the addition of discourse about ‘extremism’ in European counterterrorism. However, this thesis aims to offer a basic framework not just for understanding Hizb ut-Tahrir or even Islamic Activism, but for any forms of activism that are problematised under the increasing rubric of ‘extremism’, and explore how different groups from diverse movements change tactics in response to the threat or perception of repression by policies, practices or policing under the counterterrorism lens.

It suggests the following findings: 1. Increased securitisation has been instrumental in the decline of HT in Britain and Denmark; 2. However, securitisation has had different effects in the UK than in Denmark, leading to adaption and institutionalisation in the British context and a continuation of contention in the Danish context; and 3. This is because different perceptions of repression have been created by the use of different securitising mechanisms, suggesting that the concept of counterterror securitisation needs to be reconsidered as a more interactive and diversified process, to account for the quanta of securitisation and mobilisation responses produced.

The thesis is structured accordingly: Chapter one briefly outlines the questions to be addressed through the project. Chapter two explores the current literature on the topic and the gaps requiring redress. Chapter three details how the research was carried out and why such methodology was chosen. Chapter four outlines the theoretical tools used to understand what has been taking place. Chapter five details the case study of who is being researched, profiling Hizb ut-Tahrir ready for analysis. Chapter six explores the first sub-question: how do we know securitisation has become an issue for Hizb ut-Tahrir? Chapter seven responds to the second sub-question: how do we understand securitisation as creating patterns of repression for Hizb ut-Tahrir? Chapter eight analyses the final sub-question: what are the long-term effects of this experience of securitisation on Hizb ut-Tahrir and how can we understand this as an interactive process? Finally, chapter nine brings together all findings to determine the impact of the securitising lens on Hizb ut-Tahrir, examining alternative explanations and the limitation of this approach, as well as detailing the study's implications for the field and drawing recommendations for future research.

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Declaration

No material for this thesis has been previously submitted for a degree at this or any other University. The work is solely of that of the author, Richard McNeil-Willson.

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List of Abbreviations

ALM	Al Muhajiroun
AQ	Al Qaeda
BNP	British National Party
CP	Contentious Politics
CT	Counterterrorism
CVE	Countering Violence Extremism
DOS	Discursive Opportunity Structure
DCLG	Department for Community and Local Government
EDL	English Defence League
EU	European Union
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FEI	Further Education Institution
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HO	Home Office
HT	Hizb ut-Tahrir
HT1	Majority Hizb ut-Tahrir branch
HT2	Breakaway faction of Hizb ut-Tahrir
HTB	Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain
HTI	Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia
HTS	Hizb ut-Tahrir Scandinavia
ICSR	International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence
ISD	Institute of Strategic Dialogue
IS/ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
LTF	Loyal to Familia
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MCB	Muslim Council of Britain
MENA	Middle East and North Africa

MP	Member of Parliament
MPACUK	Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSM	New Social Movement
OBM	Omar Bakri Muhammad
POS	Political Opportunity Structure
PPM	Political Process Modelling
QF	Quilliam Foundation (now 'Quilliam')
RMT	Resource Mobilisation Theory
SMT	Social Movement Theories
SMO	Social Movement Organisation
TJ	Tablighi Jamaat
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

Glossary

<i>Allahu Akbar</i>	الله أكبر	God is the greatest (response to takbir)
<i>Ash'ari[sm]</i>	الأشعرية	Sunni doctrine based on clerical authority
<i>'Aqeedah</i>	عقيدة	doctrine
<i>Beyah</i>	بيعة	allegiance
<i>Dawah</i>	دعوة	invitation
<i>Deen</i>	دين	religion
<i>Emir</i>	أمير	leader
<i>Halaqat</i>	حلقة	circle, ring (in this case, 'study circle')
<i>Haram</i>	حرام	forbidden
<i>Hijab</i>	حجاب	religious code of modesty/headscarf
<i>Hizb</i>	حزب	party
<i>Hizb al-Wa'ed</i>	حزب الوعد	the Party of Promise
<i>Hizb ut-Tahrir</i>	حزب التحرير	the Party of Liberation
<i>Ikhwan</i>	الإخوان	the [Muslim] Brotherhood
<i>Imam</i>	إمام	Leader of the mosque
<i>Insha'allah</i>	ان شاء الله	'God Willing'
<i>Jihad</i>	جهاد	struggle
<i>Jilbab</i>	جلباب	robe
<i>Jamaat</i>	جماعة	group
<i>Kafir</i>	كافر	non-Muslim
<i>Kufr</i>	كُفر	denial or rejection of Islam
<i>Khalifa</i>	خليفة	Caliph
<i>Khilafah</i>	خلافة	Caliphate/Islamic state
<i>Khutbah</i>	خطبة	'Sermon'
<i>Majaal</i>	مجال	field
<i>Masjid</i>	مسجد	mosque
<i>Minbar</i>	منبر	mosque 'pulpit'

<i>Muhajiroun</i>	المهاجرون	the migrants
<i>Mukhabarat</i>	مخابرات	intelligence agency
<i>Mutamid</i>	المعتمد	the approved/the one you rely on
<i>Naaqitun</i>	الناقطون	‘those who drop out’
<i>Nafsiyyah</i>	نفسيه	disposition
<i>Niqab</i>	نقاب	a cloth which covers the face except the eyes
<i>Nusrah</i>	نصرة	victory
<i>Qadir</i>	قدير	qualified
<i>Riba</i>	ربا	usury
<i>Salah</i>	صلاة	prayer
<i>Salat al-jumu’ah</i>	صلاة الجمعة	Friday Prayers
<i>Salafism</i>	السلفية	Sunni revivalist movement
<i>Shab/Shabab</i>	شاب/شباب	young man/HT activist
<i>Shalwar Kameez</i>	شلوار قميص	baggy trousers and shirt traditional of Indian subcontinent
<i>Shari’a</i>	شارع	religious law/way
<i>Suria</i>	شورى	consultation
<i>Taariqah</i>	طريقة	the seeking of truth
<i>Takbir</i>	تَكْبِير	an invocation
<i>Ummah</i>	أمة	people
<i>Wilayah</i>	ولاية	state/province
<i>Wasatiyya</i>	الوسطية	centrism/‘the middle way’

1. Introduction

1.1 Key Questions, Themes and Discussions

In the 1990s and early 2000s, Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) in Britain were a vibrant 'Islamist' group, known for provocative political tactics, well-honed doctrinal texts, colourful large-scale conferences and significant presence in higher education institutions. The launch of a Danish branch in 1999 by British members and the huge Birmingham conference of 2003 pointed towards a future of growth and expansion.¹ However, this period turned out to be a high watermark, with Western branches increasingly receding in their membership, influence and scope.² The incomplete collapse of the party in Britain is comparable to the more recent, gradual decline of the Danish branch and the case studies offer an opportunity to understand how such Islamic activist movements have been degraded in a political environment that, whilst in many ways conducive to their party message and activism, has increasingly seen Islamic activism posited through a securitised lens.³ This project offers a means of addressing significant gaps in current literature on Hizb ut-Tahrir and the impact of securitisation processes on problematised (oft-called 'extremist') groups. Methodologically, the project was carried out using 43 in-depth interviews with HT members, ex-members and security services in the UK and Denmark, along with over 200 hours of ethnographic study of activist engagement at events, surveys of 250 members and activists at six official HT events, and discursive analyses of government policy and over 8,000 media articles. The project looks to analyse HT through the harmonisation of tools from two theoretical schools – securitisation and social movement theories – which are bridged by utilising concepts of repression. In a European context increasingly concerned about security – particularly Islamic activism and its cited links to 'extremism' – it is crucial for researchers, governments, citizens and activists (Islamic or otherwise) to understand the wide-ranging impacts of the expanding securitised lens on a variety of elements within Western societies and politics. The case study of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain and Denmark offers just such an opportunity to do this.

¹ Kathy Evans, "Radical Time-Bomb under British Islam," *The Guardian*, 7th February 1994.

² Ed Kessler, "If I Am Right, Must You Be Wrong?," *Independent*, 2nd September 2018 2018.

³ Jocelyne Cesari, "Securitisation of Islam in Europe," *Die Welt des Islams* 52 (2012).

The marked change and decline in the activism of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain and Denmark has taken place alongside new international articulations of terrorism and counterterror response. The attacks of 2001 in New York and Washington DC, the Madrid bombings in 2004 and the London bombings of 2005 ushered in the *War on Terror* and the new security paradigm of counterterrorism which is in place today.⁴ Whilst initial responses to the 2001 attacks were largely reactionary, utilising ‘hard’ articulations of power, since 2005 the expansion of counterterrorism structures has shifted focus towards ‘softer’ articulations of power, aimed at pre-crime prevention, to safeguard ‘vulnerable’ individuals from being drawn into ‘extremism’ or ‘radicalisation’.⁵ Critics see this as both legitimising wider securitisation processes in European societies and de-politicising the grievances of more radical political groups – as often espoused by Islamic activist organisations.⁶ This new context has had significant ramifications for Hizb ut-Tahrir, a non-violent but avowedly anti-democratic, anti-integrationist ‘Islamist’ organisation that has often openly courted controversy in the West.⁷ By studying two Western branches of HT – both alike in their organisational structure, ideational framing and political context – this project will draw out how processes of securitisation have impacted differentially on Islamic activist groups in the post-2005 international context. It will explore the adaptations that HT in Britain and Denmark have undergone in response to the securitised lens under which it finds itself, to answer the primary research question:

How has the development of a securitised lens impacted on Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain and Denmark?

Within this core question has been identified three sub-questions, which act to disaggregate explorations of the securitised lens and its impact, as well as the differing responses by Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain and Denmark. The first sub-question will ask why securitisation and the deployment of a securitised lens is significant for Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain and Denmark, with the following sub-question:

i. How do we know securitisation is an issue for Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain and Denmark?

⁴ Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth, and Jeroen Gunning, *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda* (London: Routledge, 2009).

⁵ Jade McCulloch and Sharon Pickering, "Pre-Crime and Counter-Terrorism: Imagining Future Crime in the 'War on Terror'," *The British Journal of Criminology* 49, no. 5 (2009); Commission for Countering Extremism, "Study into Extremism: Terms of Reference," ed. Sara Khan (Commission for Countering Extremism, 2018).

⁶ Scott Poynting and David Whyte, *Counter-Terrorism and State Political Violence* (London: Routledge, 2012).

⁷ Kirstine Sinclair, "Same Old Message, New Wrapping: Hizb Ut-Tahrir's Activities in Denmark," (Syddansk Universitet: Centre for Mellemøststudier, 2011).

Through interviews, surveys and analysis of national-level media, this thesis will map how securitisation has developed and how members and activists in and around Hizb ut-Tahrir perceive the importance of securitisation for their party and their activism. Members, activists and counterterror practitioners, policymakers and police, have all sought to shape the political and discursive opportunity context within which HT operate. This constant battle for control of the arena of Islamic activism has often been played out through authority counterterror (CT) measures and HT activist responses, designating it an important site of contestation for study in understanding party activism.

The second sub-question explores how the application of a securitised lens has created a perception of repression amongst HT members and activists, and how this has been articulated and performed in interactions between authorities and HT, using the following sub-question:

ii. How do we understand securitisation as creating the perception of repression?

This question will detail how specific mechanisms of repression have been constructed and perceived by members as directly or indirectly targeting Hizb ut-Tahrir activism in Britain and Denmark. Through interviews with HT members and with counterterror practitioners, policymakers and police, it will determine how downwards repression mechanisms have been developed, implemented and have sought to influence the party. It will furthermore examine the perception of these mechanisms from the perspective of the activists themselves. This also allows us to engage with securitisation in a way which begins to account for regional differentiation of its application, illuminating counterterror policy and practice variations to better define the lens. From identifying securitisation as a key issue in sub-question one, we now determine that this issue is linked to repression through counterterrorism and start to track how this has been articulated from the perspective of HT members and activists.

Finally, through a multi-level, cross-case comparison of party branches in different national contexts, we can draw out what the long-term effects of this perceived repression have been on HT, using the following question:

iii. **What are the long-term effects of perceived counterterrorism repression and securitisation?**

This question enables engagement with securitisation in a way which accounts for diverging responses to similar counterterrorism mechanisms by Hizb ut-Tahrir regional branches. It enables us to analyse why Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain (HTB) has chosen to adapt to the securitised lens through an institutionalisation of its activism, disengaging from contention, whilst Hizb ut-Tahrir Scandinavia (HTS) has chosen to maintain contention as a useful tactic. Using the findings on Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain and Denmark, we can thus reconstruct how similar securitisation processes have been articulated differently by authorities and responded to differently by HT. This will support findings for future researchers exploring the impact of the securitised lens on other problematised organisations – allowing for a series of recommendations into future research on securitisation mechanisms and ‘extremist’ social movements to be made – as well as determining the limitations of such a mechanistically-inclined approach.

1.2 Impacts of the Study

This project is designed to create three demonstrable long-term impacts for the literature: 1. To update the literature on Hizb ut-Tahrir in Western Europe; 2. To explore how counter-extremism legislation, discourse and practice has been perceived as targeting and impacting upon Islamic activism through repressive means; and 3. To theorise the long-term effects of this securitised interaction between counter-extremism authorities and problematised social movement organisations (SMOs) such as Hizb ut-Tahrir.

1.2.1 The literature on Hizb ut-Tahrir

Firstly, the project aims to inform the literature on the decline of Hizb ut-Tahrir – a party which has received relatively less research time since its radical politics became eclipsed by other ‘Islamist’ groups such as *al Muhajiroun* (ALM), *al Qaeda* and *Islamic State in Iraq and Syria* (ISIS). These more visually obtrusive manifestations of ‘Islamism’ have become the *plat du jour* of recent academic and non-academic research and

funding,⁸ as governments scramble to develop adequate policy which responds to the alarmist media cycle of 'Islamist terrorism'.⁹ Despite this decline in interest by researchers, Hizb ut-Tahrir has undergone significant and radical changes in their activism and influence in recent years, and it is important to update our understanding of what was once a more significantly observed and studied organisation. This also helps to inform our understanding of wider trends within European 'Islamism' in recent years, to consider how such non-violent 'Islamist' groups have developed within changing political contexts.

Another important reason for updating the literature is that consistent concerns have been raised from within academia about the quality of the research conducted on and around 'Islamist' groups, with a significant number of researchers avoiding direct engagement with members – either due to the perceived risk or difficulty in doing so, or from spurious concerns that such engagement would tarnish the data by amplifying and giving undue credibility to actors with problematic viewpoints.¹⁰ This research project is therefore designed to challenge this (mis)conception by engaging directly and unapologetically with members – both during the conducting of activism and in more 'everyday' situations – to understand how they operate within their current organisational, discursive and political context. In doing so, I hope to update the literature on Hizb ut-Tahrir through the words and actions of the party body members themselves, to provide a platform for voices rarely heard in similar research and to create a more accurate and comprehensive present-day assessment.

1.2.2 Repression through counterterrorism

Secondly, as well as updating the literature on Hizb ut-Tahrir's development, this project explores how counterterror approaches – particularly post-2005 – have been perceived by Hizb ut-Tahrir members, activists and ex-members, to conceptualise how repression can be understood within counterterrorism. The project takes a normatively-open (although not politically neutral) approach to the data by conceptualising Hizb ut-

⁸ As Breen Smyth states, whilst the orthodox 'terrorism' research can more readily access professional opportunities, such as jobs and research funding, 'the critical scholar, in comparison, ploughs a rather more difficult and lonely furrow'. Marie Breen Smyth, "Subjectivities, 'Suspect Communities', Governments and the Ethics of Research on 'Terrorism'," in *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda*, ed. Marie Breen Smyth & Jeroen Gunning Richard Jackson (London: Routledge, 2009). p.209

⁹ 'The relentless focus on terrorism and security in public discourse in the United States since [11th September 2001] has greatly exaggerated the threat it really poses – and concomitantly raised the level of fear terrorism can evoke' Ziad Munson, "Terrorism," *Contexts: All Politics is Social* 7, no. 4 (2008). p.78

¹⁰ Magnus Ranstorp, "Mapping Terrorism Studies after 9/11: An Academic Field of Old Problems and New Prospects," in *Critical Terrorism Studies*, ed. Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth, and Jeroen Gunning (London: Routledge, 2009). p.22

Tahrir members and activists as complex, 'reasonable' actors and individuals, neither a product of their structures nor their ideology.¹¹ It places key importance on understanding the party's political context, investigating how this context has been perceived by activists, how they have responded to it, and whether and how securitisation processes have contributed towards HT's change and decline. This offers a means of rationalising some of the reasons for changes within Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain and Denmark. In a wider sense, it also aids in conceptualising the impact of counterterrorism and counter-extremism legislation on groups that are problematised – though not directly targeted – by such policy, programmes and policing. With the rise of discussions over extremism and counter-extremism – and the legal and definitional fudge that this inevitably entails – it is critical that research engages with the impact that it has on a variety of legally-operating but problematised groups, of which Hizb ut-Tahrir is one example.

1.2.3 Theorising dialectical securitisation

Thirdly and finally, the project aims to create a more sophisticated dialectic between two distinct theoretical toolsets sets to analyse the long-term impact that securitisation has had on social movement organisations such as HT. By drawing together theories of mechanistic social movement theories and securitisation, using concepts of repression as a bridging device between the two fields, we can address problems and limitations in both theoretical toolsets. This enables us to flesh out elements of social movement theory (SMT) that have struggled to adequately conceptualise subtler, long-term forms of repressions that are multi-spatial and more difficult to observe, whilst also creating a more malleable conceptualisation of securitisation as dialectical and interactive, consisting of quanta of processes, rather than one rigid and monolithic process. It will suggest that the implication that securitisation is a single, easily-identifiable process is problematic and that a significant number of 'securitisations' exist and need to be accounted for.

¹¹ Andrew Silke, "The Devil You Know: Continuing Problems with Research on Terrorism," in *Research on Terrorism: Trends, Achievements and Failures*, ed. Andrew Silke (London: Routledge, 2004). p.58; on 'reasonable' actors, see also Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (2003); Robert A. Pape and James K Fieldman, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

The three impacts allow us to re-interpret recent developments in Western European Islamic activism to account for interactions between state authorities and social movement organisations and suggest recommendations for future analysis of such groups within the contemporary European counterterror state.

1.3 Case Study Introduction

The case study used to understand the impact of the securitised lens on Islamic activist groups is Hizb ut-Tahrir (or HT). Hizb ut-Tahrir, 'the Party of Liberation', was founded in Palestine on 17th November 1952 by Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, an Islamic scholar and judge in the *shari'a* appeal court in East Jerusalem,¹² with the aim of replacing the 'colonialist regime' in Jordan with a *Khilafah*.¹³ Its ideology was greatly shaped by al-Nabhani's interactions with Western-educated intellectuals 'modern in their thought on political organisation and activity', as well as socialist Ba'athist activists, who convinced him of the need for 'revolutionary change in the Arab world and the unification of all Arab states'.¹⁴ He combined this Ba'athist pan-Arabism with 'political-Islamic' elements which framed an Islamic (rather than Arab) identity as *the* common denominator in the region.¹⁵ Rejecting European and Arab nationalisms as external impositions, he also criticised socialism and capitalism as constituting elements of a continued ideological assault by Western powers aimed at controlling the Middle East through perpetual political insecurity.¹⁶

Initially a member of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Palestine, Al-Nabhani echoed Sayyid Qutb's prognosis of global affairs, asserting that the Islamic world's shortcomings can be remedied through the revival of Islam amongst the *ummah* as a comprehensive guide for daily life.¹⁷ However, he rejected the MB as too moderate and accommodating of Western influences. Largely comprised of the Levantine-Palestinian diaspora, HT initially found support in Islamic-majority countries under al-Nabhani, before he was succeeded as leader after his death

¹² Simon Ross Valentine, "Monitoring Islamic Militancy: Hizb Ut-Tahrir, 'the Party of Liberation'," *Policing* 4, no. 4 (2010). p.412

¹³ al-Khilafah, "The Departure of the Caravan of Hizb Ut Tahrir: 'The Blessed Light That Originated from Masjid Al Aqsa'," Al Khilafah, <http://www.khilafah.com/the-departure-of-the-caravan-of-hizb-ut-tahrir-qthe-blessed-light-that-originated-from-masjid-al-aqsa/>.

¹⁴ Suha Taji-Farouki, "Islamic Discourse and Modern Political Methods: An Analysis of Nabhani's Reading of Canonical Textual Sources of Islam," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 11, no. 3 (1994). p.369

¹⁵ Kirstine Sinclair, "The Caliphate as Homeland: Hizb Ut-Tahrir in Denmark and Britain" (University of Southern Denmark, 2010). p.23

¹⁶ Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, *Political Thoughts* (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 1999).

¹⁷ Ihsan Yilmaz, "The Varied Performance of Hizb Ut-Tahrir: Success in Britain and Uzbekistan and Stalemate in Egypt and Turkey," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 30, no. 4 (2010); Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones: Ma'alim Fi'l-Tareeq*, ed. A.B. al-Mehri (Birmingham: Maktabah, 2006); *ibid.*

in 1979 by another Palestinian cleric, Abu Yusuf Abdul Qadim Zalloom. In 2003, the organisation came under the current leadership of a third Palestinian, Ata Ibn Khalil Abu Rashta (alias Abu Yasin).

The party has grown and expanded and is now active throughout many parts of the world, with operative branches in at least 43 countries.¹⁸ In the Middle East, main bases of operations include Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Palestine and many Gulf countries, along with Jordan where the global leadership is based; however, its operational capacity has become increasingly constrained and it is banned from operating in most Muslim-majority countries.¹⁹ HT has also established a significant base in Central Asia, exploiting the ideological and political vacuum following the fall of Soviet communism, along with widespread socioeconomic poverty and disparity.²⁰ The party has furthermore founded bases for operations in Europe, the first European national branch established in West Germany in the 1960s, before the arrival of more significant branches in countries including Britain and Denmark in recent decades.

Despite their recent decline and the concurrent dwindling of research conducted on their activism, Hizb ut-Tahrir offers an interesting and relevant case study. Their recent activism in Western states has increasingly centred around concerns over the impact of counter-terrorism on Muslim and other minority groups in the West, and they have become highly engaged in the critical debate over Western state security.²¹ A semi-clandestine organisation, they are Janus-like in their operations, with both a relatively visible presence in both the UK and Denmark including public events and media presence, coupled with a closed, cell-based membership, requiring many years of commitment and learning to officially join. Whilst being an active 'Islamist' party and taking a hard-line, non-integrationist, anti-democratic stance within Muslim communities, they are avowedly non-violent – a view confirmed by even their most ardent of critics.²² Yet they operate within a space that is becoming increasingly problematised by growing counter-extremist discourse.

¹⁸ Houriya Ahmed and Hannah Stuart, "Hizb Ut-Tahrir: Ideology and Strategy," (London: The Centre for Social Cohesion, The Henry Jackson Society, 2009).

¹⁹ Emmanuel Karagiannis, "Political Islam and Social Movement Theory: The Case of Hizb Ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan," *Religion, State and Society* 33, no. 2 (2005). p.318

²⁰ Yilmaz. p.502

²¹ Peter Osborne, "'Extremist Is the Secular Word for Heretic': The Hizb Ut-Tahrir Leader Who Insists on High Right to Speak," *The Guardian*, 24th July 2015.

²² William Scates Frances, "Why Ban Hizb Ut-Tahrir? They're Not Isis - They're Isis's Whipping Boys," *the Guardian*, 12th February 2015.

Whilst attempts have been made to proscribe the party in recent years in both the UK and Denmark under counterterrorism legislation, and limitations on membership or public activism have been put in place in other European countries, they have not yet faced a legal ban – although debate still occasionally erupts on the matter in both Britain and Denmark.²³ Hizb ut-Tahrir therefore represents an invaluable case study for understanding the impact of the securitised lens on Islamic activism: ‘Islamist’ yet avowedly non-violent; legal yet problematised; public yet semi-clandestine; anti-democratic yet engaging with national politics (and, in some cases, politicians); situated within discussion on highly-relevant public debates, yet in serious long-term decline. There is a need, therefore, to understand and disaggregate these sets of competing states within which the party finds itself.

1.4 Case Study Rationale

The cases of Britain and Denmark have been chosen for a comparative study of Hizb ut-Tahrir within a securitised lens for the following reasons: 1. the shared organisational, ideological and historical links of HT in the countries; 2. the similar patterns of securitisation and counterterrorism articulated by Britain and Denmark; 3. the different relationships evident between the state and minorities in Britain and Denmark; and 4. the differing articulation of activism and protest tactics that have developed by HTB and HTS. The similar ideological, organisational and political opportunity structures that surrounds the two bodies allows the project to delve deeper into how and why the same movement has diverged differently and why the tactics used by the two HT branches have not shifted in parallel with each other. This should be conducive to a more nuanced exploration of securitisation processes and impacts.

1.4.1 Shared organisational links

Their shared ideology and organisational structure, coupled with their regional operational independence, enables us to compare social movement organisations (SMOs) in a way which removes some of the variables of more divergent group analysis. That the organisational bodies share a historical link enables the researcher to

²³ Sinclair, "Same Old Message, New Wrapping: Hizb Ut-Tahrir's Activities in Denmark."

explore external factors with more confidence. A comparative study offers the opportunity to examine divergence between the two groups within a context of a shared origin. Sharing common ancestry, we can suggest that tactical shifts by HT in Britain and Denmark are more likely to be in response to variables that reach beyond simplified interpretations of organisational make-up or ideological tenets. This allows us to challenge essentialist readings of Islamic activism that have bedevilled scholarship by their problematic explanatory approaches to contentious activism as the result of ossified textual interpretation.

1.4.2 Similar counterterror context

Secondly, similar patterns of securitisation and counterterrorism from the state in different political contexts allow for greater disaggregation of securitisation processes in national and regional matrixes. Whilst the Danish approach to terrorism has largely been characterised as ‘softer’ in comparison to many Western approaches – particularly following the implementation of what has become known as the ‘Aarhus model’ in response to the foreign fighter phenomenon in Syria and Iraq²⁴ – both Britain and Denmark have adopted a similar civil society-based approach to counter-extremism. Denmark has implemented European frameworks based on the British CONTEST programme which prioritise early ‘pre-crime’ deradicalisation and counter-extremism approaches;²⁵ meanwhile, the ‘joined-up’ approach of the Danish authorities – in which counterterrorism is built outwards from existing public service structures – is increasingly being followed in Britain, most notably seen in the 2015 British Channel Programme and ‘Prevent Duty’ which shifts focus onto the public sector to act as a vanguard against and first form of response to so-called ‘extremist’ behaviour. As such, there has been a strong exchange of ideas and approaches and, despite the obvious differences between the size and structure of the states, a comparative similarity of counterterrorism seems fair considering their CT links.²⁶

1.4.3 State-minority relations

²⁴ Anothony Faiola and Souad Mekhennet, "Denmark Tries a Soft-Handed Approach to Returned Islamist Fighters," *The Washington Post*, 19th October 2014; Manfred Ertel and Ralf Hoppe, "A Danish Answer to Radical Jihad," *der Spiegel*, 23rd February 2015.

²⁵ Municipality of Aarhus, "International Radicalisation Conference" (paper presented at the Buidling Resilience to Radicalisation and Violence Extremism II, Aarhus, 17th-19th May 2017).

²⁶ See for instance, Strong Cities Network, "Strong Cities Network," <https://strongcitiesnetwork.org/>.

Whilst broadly similar counterterror approaches have been observed, different historical experiences have contributed towards different state approaches to immigration and integration from the British and Danish state. Britain has traditionally sought a ‘multicultural’ approach (at least openly until around 2010), promoting different cultures and communities rather than imposing one ideal-type as a means of building national cohesion. Denmark, meanwhile, has sought to balance the French idea of *laïcité* with the British-form of protection for ethnic groups’ rights: on one hand, there is a pervasive focus on integration within Denmark through a delineation and adaptation of secular-leaning ‘Danish values’; on the other, the Danish church and state religion has become a ubiquitous (though largely invisible) pillar of society.²⁷

Contextually, the Muslim communities of Britain and Denmark have very different compositions in terms of their cultural heritage due to historical migration patterns. In Britain – largely due to colonial expansionism – most British Muslim communities have historical-family ties to the Asian subcontinent: Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. In Denmark, meanwhile, the country’s different colonial practices – more focussed on facilitating the sugar and slave trade beyond the borders of Denmark – led to much more limited early modern Muslim migration, with significant migration into the country only beginning much later. Denmark’s first immigrants were invited guest workers from Turkey, Morocco, former Yugoslavia and Pakistan, whilst many have since been received as refugees since the 1980s, following conflicts in Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Sudan and Afghanistan.²⁸

1.4.4 Differing HT tactics

Thirdly and finally, despite the similarities of the two branches and of counter-terrorism approaches in general, different articulations of activism and protest tactics have developed in HT since 2001. In terms of ability to conduct activism, both HT party bodies have declined in recent years in terms of membership, activism and influence within a context of growing securitisation. Whilst both declines have seen a visible diminution in their ability to engage in activism and mobilise supporters, there are marked differences in the way in which HT party bodies in Britain and Denmark have responded to the decline. In Britain, a ‘quietening’ or institutionalisation of protest tactics has occurred, the party engaging less in contentious, high-profile activism, eschewing the

²⁷ Sinclair, “The Caliphate as Homeland: Hizb Ut-Tahrir in Denmark and Britain.” p.13

²⁸ Ibid. p.13

publicity stunts of the late 1990s.²⁹ They have also increasingly sought to engage in partnerships with other organisations and individuals on single-issue platforms and shifted towards attempting to become a more low-profile, grassroots organisation.

HTB has, in recent years, sought to stay within strict limitations set by the British Government, engaging in a complex dance with the Home Office, politicians and police to ensure that their activism can continue legally, despite a growing political problematisation of all forms of 'Islamism'.³⁰ In contrast, the Danish branch has continued to take part in more high-profile, contentious acts, often deliberately attempting to provoke a public backlash from media and politicians.³¹ Whilst consisting of a small membership in real terms, HTS not been prone to the same competition for influence than in the more crowded UK Islamic activist scene,³² and has cultivated a rejectionist attitude to the media, adopting a generally hostile, tactical disengagement from mainstream press rather than seeking to publicly refute accusations it sees as misrepresentative, in contrast with HTB.

*If there are 300 people in the party in Denmark - as I said, there may be 80 members, and if they all have 5 students, then - it's not difficult to assemble them, to convince them that they have to come to the demonstration or conference. So, in reality, you will have at most 50 - on a good day perhaps 100 new people - who may disagree with them, the message.*³³

As such, the similarities between the Danish and British branches and their contexts, as well as their different patterns of decline, mean that the Islamic activist organisations offer an apt and interesting set of international case studies which can be compared without too many reservations.³⁴ Comparative studies between the branches have been carried out before by Sinclair who finds that 'comparing activities in two neighbouring European branches serves to emphasise... similarities (for instance, ideology and organisational structure) and differences (for instance, language, political focus, members' ethnicity)'.³⁵ Alternative European Hizb ut-Tahrir

²⁹ Saul Dibb, "Tottenham Ayatollah," (London: RDF Television, 1997).

³⁰ Nomaan Hanif, "The Securitisation of Hizb Ut-Tahrir: A Comparative Case Study" (University of London, 2014).

³¹ 'Hizb ut-Tahrir says that Muslims "should not" distance themselves from the violence', as in "Most Muslim Organisations Condemn Weekend Terror Attack," *CPH Post Online*, 16th February 2015.

³² Kirstine Sinclair, "Islam in Britain and Denmark: Deterritorialised Identity and Reterritorialised Agendas," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 28, no. 1 (2008). p.47

³³ XI, interview by Richard McNeil-Willson, 2017, Copenhagen.

³⁴ Sinclair, "The Caliphate as Homeland: Hizb Ut-Tahrir in Denmark and Britain." p.12

³⁵ Ibid. p.12

regional bodies were ruled impractical due to reasons of access: the case study of Germany was too difficult for data collection due to a government ban on open activism (though not membership) by HT since 2003, whilst examples such as Russia and Ukraine were deemed problematic due to severe and overt state repression and the subsequent risk it would pose to researcher and subjects.

1.5 Methodological Overview

Studies that have engaged with the impact of CT on organisational tactics tend to fall into two camps: either they have taken an *orthodox, security-centric* approach evaluating the *effectiveness* CT; or they have adopted a *civil rights* approach which highlights the *societal impact* of security measures on civil liberties.³⁶ This study will seek an alternative route, charting a course between the two by analysing an 'Islamist' SMO problematised by CT legislation but not directly targeted; it will neither seek to problem-solve 'extreme ideologies', nor evaluate the ethical implications of CT on human and civil rights; rather, it will explore interactive processes that have taken place between authorities and challenger as a means of understanding organisational change and decline, determining the most relevant arena of research to be the point of contact between HT and authority actors.³⁷ To achieve this, a total of 43 intensive, semi-structured interviews were carried out with both Hizb ut-Tahrir members, ex-members and the security services of, and counterterror practitioners in, the UK and Denmark.

Interviewees from Hizb ut-Tahrir branches in the UK and Denmark were at a variety of levels of association and activism, although there was some bias towards mid-level and upper-level activists due to the 'elite'-level knowledge they hold on the party's activism and history. Interviews were gathered through snowball sampling methods, with contacts made through early pilot study engagements with activists at public HT events – such as demonstrations, talks, *da'wah* stalls and mosques – which led to 10 'gatekeeper' contacts being made. These gatekeepers were instrumental in the securing of the final 43 interviews, almost all of which took place either in London or Copenhagen. Interview data was accompanied by over 200 hours spent at party events and with party members in a variety of different public and personal settings, building an ethnographic understanding of their

³⁶ Smyth; David Miller and Rizwaan Sabir, "Counter-Terrorism as Counterinsurgency in the UK "War on Terror"," in *Counter-Terrorism and State Political Violence*, ed. Scott Poynting and David Whyte (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

³⁷ Graham Macklin and Joel Busher, "Understanding 'Reciprocal Radicalisation' as a Component of Wider Conflict Dynamics," (Radicalisation Research, 2018); James M. Jasper and Jan Willem Duyvendak, *Players and Arenas: The Interactive Dynamics of Protest, Protest and Social Movements* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).

activism and involvement. The notes from ethnographic fieldwork that were deemed relevant have been added to this thesis, to add context to the events and, in some cases, to complexify the subjects. Other information on the party was garnered from short surveys of 250 members and activists conducted at events, and was further supported by online sources, national and local media, government policy and debates, and social media. This has enabled the formation of a holistic snapshot of the party in Britain and Denmark within the current, securitised context.

1.6 Theoretical Overview

Theoretically, this project brings together social movement studies and securitisation theories to address some significant gaps and limitations within contemporary scholarship. This includes limitations on research conducted on articulations of so-called 'softer' forms of political repression (with focus often placed on highly visible, immediate examples of repression) and the impact that long-term securitisation processes – as exemplified in the post-2001 counterterror paradigm – have on organisational mobilisation.³⁸ Current research also fails to account for relevant actors beyond the state-challenger nexus – such as non-state actors or media, and their role in repression.³⁹ Such an approach encourages an interactive, holistic approach towards the decline of Islamic activism within a CT context. To achieve this, this project combines mechanistic elements of social movement studies with theories of securitisation by using repression as a key means of bridging these two different schools of thought.

1.6.1 Social Movement Theory

Social movement theory (SMT) was developed to investigate processes of activist mobilisation within a variety of forms of social protest and represent an important vehicle in exploring activism by Hizb ut-Tahrir. It was

³⁸ Jennifer Earl, "Political Repression: Iron Fists, Velvet Gloves and Diffuse Control," *Annual Review of Sociology* 37 (2011); Myra Marx Ferree, "Soft Repression: Ridicule, Stigma and Silencing in Gender-Based Movements," in *Repression and Mobilisation*, ed. Christian Davenport and Hank Johnston (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

³⁹ Jennifer Earl, "Tanks, Tear Gas and Taxes: Towards a Theory of Movement Repression," *Sociological Theory* 21, no. 1 (2003). '[researchers] tend to look at media coverage as a simplistic information-gathering and distribution process and as a by-product of contention and not the other way around.' Charles Davenport, "Introduction, Repression and Mobilisation: Insights from Political Science and Sociology," in *Repression and Mobilisation*, ed. Christian Davenport, Hank Johnston, and Carol Mueller (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005). p.xi

developed in response to the civil rights movements of the late 1960s, the organised and progressive nature of which challenged the then-paradigmatic study of movements and their manifestations as a subversion of politics – ‘dysfunctional, irrational and inherently undesirable’ and ‘alternatives to, rather than expressions of, politics’.⁴⁰ The subsequent development of social movement theories led to new strands or tools of analysis being created which sought to understand elements of activism, including: how social movement organisations utilise human and material resources (Resource Mobilisation Theory, or RMT); how social movement organisations respond to their political context (Political Opportunity Structures, or POS); how rhetorical ideas are appropriated by social movements (Framing); how and why social movements chose to engage in violence (Contentious Politics, or CP); and how interaction develops between social movements and surrounding structures (mechanisms).⁴¹

With an increasingly wide palette derived from SMT, social movement theories have come to play a significant role in the successful untangling of complex political events, becoming a paradigmatic mainstay for social scientists. Social movement theories have been, for instance, praised for their potential to de-exceptionalise violence by locating it in broader contexts and complex processes.⁴² However, despite some successful application to studies of ‘Islamist’ groups – mostly beyond the borders Western-democratic states – this approach remains somewhat limited; as Olesen states, social movement research has largely ‘focused on red, green and rights activism; or to put it slightly provocatively, research has focussed on the kinds of activism scholars sympathise with’.⁴³

1.6.2 Securitisation Theory

In this study, elements of SMT will be combined with securitisation studies, as developed by the Copenhagen School (a small group of scholars formerly based at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute in Copenhagen, most notably Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan) and furthered by the Welsh School (a group of security studies

⁴⁰ David S. Meyer, "Protest and Political Opportunities," *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (2004). pp. 126-7.

⁴¹ See Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, second edition ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006); David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi, *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

⁴² Donatella della Porta and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, "Patterns of Radicalisation in Political Activism: An Introduction," *Social Science History* 36, no. 3 (2012). p.313

⁴³ Thomas Olesen, "Social Movement Theory and Radical Islamic Activism," in *Islamism as Social Movement*, ed. Thomas Olesen and Farhad Khosrokhavar (Aarhus University: Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation (CIR), 2009). p.7

researchers linked to the University of Aberystwyth).⁴⁴ Concepts of securitisation have been given increasing relevance and importance in recent years with the expansion of wide-ranging counterterror structures and the explosion of counterterrorism and security rhetoric. It has a strongly discursive foundation and gives language a central role in justifying and enabling the emergence of structures of security.

*The main argument of securitisation theory is that security is an (illocutionary) speech act, that alone in uttering "security" something is being done... A securitising actor, by stating that a particular referent object is threatened in its existence, claims a right to extraordinary measures to ensure the referent object's survival. The issue is then moved out of the sphere of normal politics into the realm of emergency politics, where it can be dealt with swiftly and without the normal (democratic) rules and regulations of policymaking... [Thus] Security is understood to be a social and intersubjective construction.*⁴⁵

1.6.3 Theoretical Recommendations

This project will propose the following suggestions for further developing the theoretical facets available for understanding actors such as HT when operating within a CT context:

1. *Theoretical Harmonisation:* The harmonisation of social movement theories with concepts of securitisation is analytically useful in understanding how 'Islamist' and other problematised organisations respond to counterterrorism.
2. *Repression as a Bridge:* Repression offers the means of bringing these theoretical facets together, as both can be used in concert to describe different aspects of the same process: securitisation, to conceptualise the discursive, structural and long-term, covert elements of counterterrorism-based repression; social movement theories to illuminate the security mechanisms used as part of short term, overt forms repression, as well as accounting for SMO response and the challenge of such articulations of power.

⁴⁴ Rita Floyd, "Towards a Consequentialist Evaluation of Security: Bringing Together the Copenhagen and the Welsh Schools of Security Studies," *Review of International Studies* 33, no. 2 (2007). p.329-333

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.329

3. *Interactive Securitisation*: This reveals that the securitising lens, when understood as a combination of these theoretical facets, is comprised of a far wider range of actions than is currently accounted for, and so a securitisation needs to be diversified, the refracted mechanisms from this lens properly understood not as one monolithic or easily identifiable process, but as a plethora of actions and interaction – conceptualised broadly here as quanta of securitisation.

1.7 Definitions of Key Terms

There are five terms which require clarification prior to analysis within the thesis – terms either present in the primary research question or central to the subsequent research: 1. Islamic activism; 2. The securitising lens; 3. social movement organisations (SMOs); 4. repression; and 5. mechanisms.

1.7.1 Islamic Activism and Islamism

The term ‘Islamic activism’ is used throughout this project, often to represent what is commonly termed ‘Islamism’ – although the terms differ in hue. It’s important, at this stage, to discuss the different implications of these terms and how they will be used throughout the course of this thesis.

With regards to general usage, whilst ‘Islamism’ is used throughout mainstream political discourse, reportage and even large sections academia, it has been critiqued as problematic, carrying Euro-centric and Orientalist implications. The term ‘Islamism’ has a long history, but largely began its modern incantation with the Iranian revolution, before gaining traction amongst mainstream Western discourse following the September 2001 attacks in the US.⁴⁶ It has recently been used as a replacement for ‘political Islam’ and ‘fundamentalist Islam’ by scholars such as Roy and Kepel (despite their other disagreements), and represents only the most recent manifestation of an attempt by commentators and researchers to capture a complex set of phenomena which has been otherwise termed: Islamic fundamentalism; Islamism movements; political Islam; Islamic revivalism or

⁴⁶ ‘It is almost certain that the etiquette of “Islamism” was used for the first time by French writers at the end of the seventeenth century. *Le Petit Robert* gives 1697 as the first reference to the word. The Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire is one of the first writers to use the term: “this religion is called *Islamism*”. In a work from 1838, Tocqueville found the “root of *Islamism* in Judaism”...’ Mehdi Mozaffari, “What Is Islamism? History and Definition of a Concept” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 1 (2007). p.18

resurgence; and new religious politics.⁴⁷ Mozaffari, in interrogating the definitions of several significant late-20th and early-21st Century scholars, posits that 'Islamism' could be seen as 'a religious ideology with a holistic interpretation of Islam whose final aim is the conquest of the world by all means'.⁴⁸ However, determining it a 'holistic', 'religious ideology' assumes that we can successfully and definitively delineate the religious from the secular – a practice which involves uncritically accepting some problematic post-Westphalian European norms⁴⁹ – whilst focussing in on the holism of Islamism obscures the nature of other 'ideologies' which often have similar holistic interpretations (as can be said of conceptualisations of liberalism, capitalism or nationalism, for instance). Furthermore, the idea that Islamism requires a 'conquest of the world by all means' is shown to be fundamentally problematised by studies of Islamist groups that have engaged with democratic structures (such as Ennahda in Tunisia or the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt), have localised regional and national focusses (such as The Justice and Development Party in Turkey or Hamas in Palestine), or those who consistently condemn violence or expansionist oppression (such as Hizb ut-Tahrir).

The problems with the term 'Islamism' extend deeply into discussions on political Islam and counterterrorism. It creates a presumed connection between Islam and violence due to its usage in discussions over terrorism and extremism and perpetrates wider Liberal and Neoliberal assumptions that the presence of 'religion' in general, or Islam in particular, makes political groups more violence prone.⁵⁰ This is also echoed in other similar terms prevalent within counterterror discussions, such as 'moderate/radical Muslim', which tend to problematise the legitimacy of open Islamic articulations of identity in the context of political engagement, particularly in the West. This creates a process whereby Muslims are discouraged or barred from accessing mainstream political platforms, with greater scrutiny and more 'redlines' placed on the speech of those that are identifiably Muslim.⁵¹

'Islamic activism' has been used by social movement scholars in place of and as a means of addressing some of the limitations that plague contemporary definitions of 'Islamism'. In doing so, it aims to complexify the subject,

⁴⁷ Olivier Roy, *Jihad and Death: The Global Appeal of Islamic State* (London: C Hurst & Co Publishers Limited, 2017); Gilles Kepel, *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West*, Princeton Series in Muslim Politics (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017).

⁴⁸ Mozaffari. p.21

⁴⁹ William T. Cavanaugh, "The Violence of 'Religion': Examining a Prevalent Myth," *Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies* 310 (2004); *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁵⁰ Jeroen Gunning, *Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2007). pp.4-7

⁵¹ Jonathan Githens-Mazer, "The Rhetoric and Reality: Radicalisation and Political Discourse," *International Political Science Review* 33, no. 5 (2012).

to describe a wide palette of views and behaviours, and to ‘account for the inclusion of various types of activities, political, social and cultural, that emerge under the rubric of Islamic movement’.⁵² Wiktorowicz is one of the key authors in this shift, destabilising the term to refocus the definition onto forms of activism rather than belief, and describing Islamists as those ‘who attempt to re-Islamise society by encouraging individuals to practice Islam in daily life and bridge the gap between religious discourse and practical realities’.⁵³ Bayat extends this definition, offering further clarity on the activism, which he sees as ‘... *extra-ordinary*, extra-usual practices which aim, collectively or individually, institutionally or informally, to cause social change. When those practises cease to become extra-ordinary, when they become usual practices of everyday life, they no longer constitute “activism”’.⁵⁴ Use of the term ‘Islamic activism’ sidesteps some of the more problematic assumptions of ‘Islamism’ by substituting ideological elements of definition for a practical focus on observable political activity – engagement in public events, protests or da’wah, for instance. By placing the identification of ‘Islamism’ within a wider pool of other comparable activism, we to some extent de-essentialise the definition, removing the oft-supposed *sui generis* and irrational nature of ‘Islamism’.⁵⁵

There are limitations with the term ‘Islamic activism’, as it still contains conspicuous vagaries and, whilst it attempts to shift focus onto activism, it risks in turn glossing over its common ideological tenets. ‘Islamic activism’ is, however, preferred by the author of this work, as it has generally nullified some of the more securitised connotations associated with ‘Islamism’ – such as the implicit linking of Islam and violence – and was viewed by the author as more representative of the phenomenon under examination. However, there are points at which ‘Islamism’ has been used, mostly where it was deemed important to reflect the language of interviewees or where ‘Islamism’ offered more clarity in a specific context. In cases where it has been used, the author has placed the term in inverted commas (as in, ‘Islamism’), to represent the reflexivity required in employing such a contested and problematic concept.

With regards to Hizb ut-Tahrir, the party are still often described (largely by detractors) as an ‘Islamist’ organisation. Yet, whilst it is generally used in the pejorative, the term ‘Islamist’ was still sometimes present

⁵² Asef Bayat, “Islamism and Social Movement Theory,” *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 6 (2005). p.893

⁵³ Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004). p.168

⁵⁴ Bayat. pp.893-4

⁵⁵ Wiktorowicz.

during interactions and interviews with members (albeit often in a way that stressed a second-hand usage). Some interviewees, indeed, even self-identified as 'Islamist' during discussions, despite the term being so often negative in its use. This implies that there was some reclamation of the term, albeit on a very minor level. The security connotations of the term, whilst creating valid criticisms within some Muslim commentators, was also shown to be highly relevant when speaking with counterterror practitioners and policymakers. Whilst not used extensively amongst HT activists, the term is a significant mainstay of counterterror stakeholders, present in contemporary policy, analysis and practice. Considering the use of the term by actors outlined above, the complete negation of 'Islamism' throughout this thesis was deemed to be unrepresentative of some of the discussions and debates that define Hizb ut-Tahrir.

As the author of this work, it was not within my scope to determine whether HT is an 'Islamist' organisation, nor to speak on behalf of the interviewees. I made the decision, therefore, not to exclude the term completely with regards to this thesis on Hizb ut-Tahrir but to emphasise its problematic nature throughout. It is referred to when considered necessary and to allow the interviewees space to identify and define themselves or others as they feel fit. However, just as the term is important to preserve in some senses to reflect the securitised context within which it is used, so must the pejorative connotations that it brings with it be clearly and critically marked. As such, I consider it more accurate to refer to HT as an Islamic activist organisation – partly as a replacement for the term 'Islamist' but partly to show their focus on forms of public and private activism – but to allow space for the term 'Islamist' to be used sparingly when necessary to convey certain securitised connotations.

1.7.2 Securitising Lens

This project aims to explore the impact of counterterrorism on Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain and Denmark through theoretically constructing the 'securitised lens'. The 'securitising lens' is a term with a strongly discursive foundation, which aims to describe the way in which language is used to problematise certain movements, organisations or ideas as within a security paradigm. With the creation of this term, the author aims to bring together descriptive strands of securitisation under one umbrella, to account for the following elements: the actions of authorities; the response by social movement organisations; and the engagement of actors beyond the repression-mobilisation nexus. The 'securitising lens' describes the application of securitising mechanisms

towards certain groups, individuals or forms of activism. However, it modifies slightly some current conceptualisations of securitisation by emphasising the greater scrutiny that securitised groups face from national governments and security agencies, *as well as non-authority actors* such as print and investigative media, researchers and academics, and the 'wider public'. This slightly differs in the way 'securitisation' is applied to Hizb ut-Tahrir by scholars such as Noman Hanif, for instance, as it aims to account for the potential impact of securitisation on both the organisation under study – in this case, Hizb ut-Tahrir – and the perception of their forms of activism (ergo, their activism can be securitised, whilst the organisation itself can be de-securitised).⁵⁶ The securitising lens can, therefore, impact increasingly on an organisation even whilst authority actors de-escalate official rhetoric against a specific organisation. As such, the use of a 'securitised lens' was deemed to represent a more appropriate term for this project than 'securitisation' in isolation.

1.7.3 Social Movement Organisation

This project will often refer to Hizb ut-Tahrir as a 'social movement organisation' (or SMO). Any organisation involved in a social movement dynamic may be regarded as a 'social movement organisation' and, in this case, HT represents an SMO operating within the wider social movement of (European) Islamic activism.⁵⁷ What exactly constitutes a SMO has proven to be ambiguous, taken to have different meanings by different authors.⁵⁸ However, McCarthy and Zald offer a useful conceptualisation, as 'a complex, or formal, organisation which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or countermovement and attempts to implement these goals'.⁵⁹ Snow, Soule and Kriesi build on this further, determining SMOs to be:

... collectivities acting with some degree of organisation and continuity outside of institutional or organisational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority,

⁵⁶ Hanif.

⁵⁷ Porta and Diani. p.26

⁵⁸ John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilisation and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (1977).

⁵⁹ Mayer N. Zald; John D. McCarthy, *Social Movements in an Organisational Society: Collected Essays* (New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1987). p.140

*whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organisation, society, culture or world order of which they are a part.*⁶⁰

The term ‘social movement organisation’ – as with ‘Islamic activism’ – has been chosen for this project to de-essentialise and de-escalate language on ‘Islamist’ groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir. It also highlights the theoretical foundations upon which this project is built, drawing on social movement theories (SMT) to conceptualise Hizb ut-Tahrir as a ‘change-making’ vehicle which challenges existing power structures within a wider milieu of actors and activists. Whilst it is necessary broad in its scope – sometimes used vaguely or misappropriated by scholars – it is favoured in this study due to its prominent role in social movement studies.

1.7.4 Repression

Repression has a broad swathe of meanings and the approach we adopt has profound implications for the study. Tilly and Tarrow (2015) define it as ‘the attempt by a state or its agents against challengers in order to end their challenge by arresting them, harassing them, or destroying their organisations’.⁶¹ Were the study to accept this conceptualisation, it would be of limited use in this context, as HT has suffered little if no examples of direct arrests or harassment, whilst attempts to proscribe the party in the UK and Denmark have, to date, been stifled or abandoned. Yet, members in both case studies consistently report experiencing state repression through alternative means – surveillance, disruption and the fomenting of wide-scale anti-Muslim sentiment. Despite offering this limited definition, Tilly and Tarrow do recognise that states can engage in non-violent forms of repression,⁶² including ‘legal prosecution, employment discrimination, surveillance, infiltration, and other forms of harassment that avoid physical repression’, and that ‘repression in its extreme form’ has been ‘used to defeat the forces of violent Islamism by the United States and its allies’.⁶³ As such, there seems an initial case for the relevance of the term. Particularly, value has been found in this work for the definition, developed by Goldstein, for repression:

⁶⁰ David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi, "Mapping the Terrain," in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, ed. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006). p.11

⁶¹ Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, second ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). p.37

⁶² ‘... lawmakers make laws banning some kinds of assemblies, police arrest unruly demonstrators, judges try people for seditious claims, and officials intervene when their clients of constituents are fighting collectively.’ *ibid.* p.13

⁶³ *Ibid.* pp.37-8

... as a technical and neutral term classifying, and not judging, government action. When this action grossly discriminates against the holders of certain beliefs, it is categorised as political repression, whether it succeeds or fails, is 'justified' or 'unjustified'.⁶⁴

In this understanding, counterterrorism can indeed be strongly implicated as a formation repression. Certainly, UK and EU practices built around the Prevent programme discriminate against the holders of beliefs – be those openly violent, anti-democratic, anti-Westphalian or generally incendiary. It is important to stress that no normative claim is being made in the use of the term in this thesis, and the use of 'repression' – analysing mechanisms used by authority or authority-linked actors – therefore rests on a purely technical basis, describing attempts to limit or degrade the activism of groups designated or implied as being 'extremist' by authority actors, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir in this instance.

1.7.5 Mechanism

Finally, this project will use the term 'mechanism' throughout in the analysis of the actions and events being analysed. Eruditely and adequately defining 'mechanisms' has proven a difficult task – even the founders admit that too many mechanisms lack scrutiny and clarification – but, for the purposes of this project, it will take the founders' definition of mechanism and processes from McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow:

Mechanisms are a delineated class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations. Processes are regular sequences of such mechanisms that produce similar (generally more complex and contingent) transformation of those elements.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Robert J. Goldstein, *Political Repression in Modern America: From 1870 to 1976* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978). p.xxx

⁶⁵ Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2001). p.24

The 'mechanistic' lens has been developed by Hedström, Kuorikoski and Mahoney, and linked to social movement studies through the work of McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow.⁶⁶ Whilst hardly a recent approach, the use of mechanisms has gained notable traction as a means of understanding large-scale sequential actions:

*... to explain an event is to give an account of why it happened. Usually... this takes the form of citing an earlier event as the cause of the event we want to explain... [But] to cite the cause is not enough: the causal mechanism must also be provided, or at least suggested.*⁶⁷

Mechanisms offer an innovative means of understanding sets of actions, sidestepping some of the more problematic issues of causality by attempting to also represent the scholar's interpretation of events – based on the information available to them – rather than a truly definitive determination of causation. Since various factors (overt and obscure, empirical and perceived) contribute towards certain actions being made by social movements and authorities, it is most likely impossible to accurately determine the full causes for events in a social science setting. A mechanistically-informed approach encourages the drawing together of sets of events through the scholar's research to consider what combinations of actions are most likely to have resulted in subsequent outcomes. This process is, therefore, just as reliant on the data gathered as on the researcher's own interpretation, and so we create a reflexive process whereby the researcher is openly cast in playing as significant a role as the other actors situated within the project. This dispels the need for creating a 'smoking gun' of causality, replacing it with the more moderate (but infinitely more achievable goal) of finding reasonable association.

Such a mechanistic approach has been likened to Darwin's evolutionary theory: the context within which species are operating, the kinds of competition they face from others and the decisions that species make in response, act together in concert to result in the preferencing of certain adaptations over others.⁶⁸ Whilst these can be

⁶⁶ Ibid.; Peter Hedström and Richard Swedberg, "Social Mechanisms," *Acta Sociologica* 39, no. 3 (1996); Jaakko Kuorikoski, "Two Concepts of Mechanism," *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 23 (2009); James Mahoney, "Review Essay: Beyond Correlational Analysis: Recent Innovations in Theory and Method," *Sociological Forum* 16, no. 3 (2001); "Toward a Unified Theory of Causality," *Comparative Political Studies* 41, no. 4-5 (2008).

⁶⁷ Jon Elster, *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). pp.3-4

⁶⁸ Peter Hedstrom, "Explaining the Growth Patterns of Social Movements," in *Understanding Choice, Explaining Behaviour: Essays in Honour of Ole Jorgen Skog*, ed. Jon Elster, et al. (Oslo: Oslo University Press, 2006); John Maynard Smith, *Did Darwin Get It Right?* (London: Penguin, 1993).

surmised with some degree of confidence, the precise causes for certain adaptations cannot be truly ascertained. Such an approach broadly describes mechanisms, which have been subdivided into the environmental, relational and the cognitive, and broken down further into, amongst others: brokerage, diffusion, polarisation, repression and radicalisation.⁶⁹ The following mechanisms have been assumed from analysing the data, to be further developed and utilised throughout the subsequent analysis. These are divided into authority action mechanisms and SMO tactical response mechanisms:

1.7.5.1 Authority Repression Mechanisms

- i. *Threat Identification*: The development of hostile frames against specific actors (in this case, understood as the expansion of the 'securitised lens').
- ii. *Resource Depletion*: The inversion of resource mobilisation to erode the capacity of social movements and diminishing their ability to engage in contentious politics.⁷⁰
- iii. *Stigmatisation*: The attachment of discrediting attributes to the character, nature or reputation of an individual or group.⁷¹
- iv. *Divisive disruption*: The forced creation of splits within or amongst social movement organisations to prevent alliance building.⁷²
- v. *Intimidation*: The threat of force against social movement organisations to prevent activist engagement.
- vi. *Emulation*: Actions to alter social relations, within other spaces of dissent, to explain to dissident or potentially-dissident citizens why they should not engage in contentious or problematised politics.⁷³

1.7.5.2 SMO response mechanisms

⁶⁹ McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly. pp.25-26

⁷⁰ Jules Boykoff, "Limiting Dissent: The Mechanisms of State Repression in the USA," *Social Movement Studies* 6, no. 3 (2007). p.294

⁷¹ Ibid. p.296

⁷² Doug McAdam, "Beyond Structural Analysis: Toward a More Dynamic Understanding of Social Movements," in *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, ed. Mario Diani and Doug McAdam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁷³ Boykoff. p.287

- vii. *Alliance Building*: The development of strategic open alliances or closed organisational front groups.
- viii. *Contentious Tactics*: The use of contentious or institutionalised forms of activism and political engagement.
- ix. *Radical Framing*: The use of more 'radical' or more 'moderate' frames in mobilising activists or potential activists.

These mechanisms, built on previous research by scholars such as Boykoff, represent the different constellations of responses used by both authority actors (1.7.5.1) and Hizb ut-Tahrir (1.7.5.2) identified in the project data. They will form the basis for modelling interaction between the actors at a later stage of the project.

1.8 Conclusions

This thesis will seek to develop a response to the question of how the development of a securitised lens has impacted on Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain and Denmark by determining the significance of the role that securitisation has played, analysing how securitisation has been interpreted as repression, before using this information to map how this has impacted the two case studies in Britain and Denmark in different ways. Firstly, the project will find that securitisation is central to the changing patterns of activism and decline of the Hizb ut-Tahrir groups under examination, tracked through media and government analysis and confirmed through interviews with members. Secondly, it will find that Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain and Denmark have faced a securitisation of their discourse and activism, and this has been perceived and felt as repressive because of the ways in which it has targeted either the group directly or their ability to engage in activism. Thirdly, the different repression mechanisms used by authorities have led to different responses in Britain and Denmark, suggesting that processes of securitisation differ greatly in different contexts through the mechanisms used by authorities and the tactical responses of SMOs responding to the securitised lens.

1.9 Personal Remarks

Finally, I consider it important to offer some personal remarks on my viewpoints and biases, which will no doubt be inherent within this study. I have tried to take a politically-open view of the data and analysis, without indulging too much in my own prejudices nor uncritically amplifying the biases of my interviewees or research subjects. Having spent time with Hizb ut-Tahrir members, I have developed invaluable links in both Britain and Denmark to persons without whose help I could not have completed this project. Whilst I strongly disagree with some of the viewpoints of those I have interviewed, I am grateful to all those who took the time to discuss their work, activism and passions, and I aspire to reflect these complex viewpoints and characters in the work. I am generally critical of the way in which counterterrorism operates, having worked within some counterterror structures and seen some of the impacts that discussions over security have on some of the most vulnerable individuals and communities. As such, I must confess I sympathise with some of HT's grievances, if not their end goal. Whilst this may suggest a lack of objectivity, I take Sara Roy's invaluable advice on academic writing within an unequal political context: that pure objectivity is not only unobtainable but undesirable, and that the harbouring of aspirations of objectivity 'results in ideological warfare and political gamesmanship where the stronger party... predominates'.⁷⁴ Therefore, I hope I have given each actor – from HT member to authority actor – their own unique (albeit anonymised) voice, as is due. This research also takes place within a rising tide of Islamophobia and far-right populism, in which the state is arguably implicit. As one member poignantly said in an interview:

It's constantly the case that politicians... dehumanise Muslims – politicians, the media. When you have interaction, you start to break prejudices down... And when you have interaction, you start to see Muslims, or 'Islamists', as complex human beings. And when you see the complexity of someone, they become human. It's impossible for one human to watch another die and do nothing. But when you can dehumanise them, you can pass any law you want: like how they passed anti-refugee legislation; or stopping boats from rescuing refugees in the Mediterranean...⁷⁵

It is just such complexity of the individual – which I consider key to dissecting the human relations that surround us – that I have aspired towards throughout this thesis, and this quote acted as my guide for much of the research

⁷⁴ Sara Roy, *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (London: Pluto Press, 2007). p. xv

⁷⁵ HP, interview by Richard McNeil-Willson, 2017, Copenhagen.

process. I proclaim neither objectivity nor political neutrality, but complexity and its conveyance, as my battle standard for this work.