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# ETHNO-CONFESSIONAL IMMIGRANT GHETTOS AS A NATIONAL SECURITY PROBLEM IN DENMARK'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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*The ghettoisation of immigrant areas in Denmark is a lengthy and objective process of the emergence of ethno-religious 'parallel societies' in the state. Cultural and religious principles that are often at odds with the democratic values of Danish society guide the actions of ghetto residents. Danish social and political discourse pictures this ideological difference between the host society and Muslim immigrant minorities as a potential threat to Denmark's national security caused by a combination of political, social, and economic factors. The ensuing social disunity and violation of the country's territorial integrity take the problem to a regional and international level. Through analysing public speeches of Danish social and political actors, this article reconstructs key stages in the development of parallel societies in Denmark. Another focus is official government strategies to prevent isolated immigrant areas from turning into ghettos: the Government's Strategy against Ghettoisation (2004), Return of the Ghetto to Society: Confronting Parallel Societies in Denmark (2010), and One Denmark without Parallel Societies: No Ghettos in 2030 (2018). The escalation of the social conflict calls for the Danish authorities to take decisive action against the enclavisation of segregated immigrant communities. This study employs discourse analysis to evaluate the efficiency and identify the shortcomings of government action to integrate ethno-confessional minorities into society. Particular attention is paid to analysing public reaction to the criteria for identifying ghettos as well as to annual publications of official ghetto lists.*

**Keywords:**

parallel society, ethno-religious immigrant ghetto, Muslim communities, Denmark's immigration policy, Denmark's national security

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## **Introduction**

“Parallel” society in Denmark is an objective social, economic, and political phenomenon. Over the course of several decades, this has influenced the development of government social strategies as well as the formation of foreign and domestic policy of the state. In the modern Danish social and political context, “parallel” society is synonymous with “immigrant ghetto”. The ghetto residents are predominantly represented by first- and second-generation immigrants of non-Western origin who practice Islam. Such segregated ghettos as a factor of social tension are the subject of numerous political debates, while the Danish government presents them as a potential threat to national security and international stability in the European region. The long-term ineffectiveness of the state integration policy has led to the disruption of the unity of Danish society and the emergence of an ideological confrontation between the democratic majority society and the isolated communities of immigrants with their own legal norms, cultural and religious values. The escalation of this conflict between the government authorities, the political opposition, Danish society, and the ghetto residents determines the relevance of the study of the problem of ethno-confessional immigrant ghettos in the context of Danish social and political discourse.

The theoretical basis of the article is the researches devoted to various social and political aspects of the integration of non-Western immigrants in Western European countries [1-4]. Particular attention is paid to studies that analyze the influence of cultural and ethnic factor on political and public reaction to the problem of integration of immigrants and refugees into Danish society [5-10], and to papers that reveal the importance of the religion for the national identity of Muslims in Denmark [11-14]. Thus, the article aims to disclose the following issues: the reconstruction of key stages in the development of ghetto problems in Denmark; the analysis of ghetto as a potential threat to national security in the speeches of Danish social and political actors; the overview of government acts aimed at countering the ghettoization; the assessment of public response to the ambiguity of approaches to the compilation of the official ghetto-lists. This study assesses the effectiveness of the actions of the Danish authorities to prevent threats to the social well-being of Danish society, national unity, and the state security from the side of ethno-confessional immigrant ghettos.

## **The history of the emergence of ghetto as a social and political phenomenon in Denmark**

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The concept of “ghetto” first introduced into Danish social discourse in the XVIIth century. This was due to the official permission of Christian IV of Denmark to found a Jewish settlement in 1634 on the territory of Gluckstadt as a part of Danish lands. The lower level of anti-Semitism against the backdrop of the Danish reformation movement allowed Jews to gradually obtain permission to organize their communities in large cities such as Fredericia, Aarhus, and Copenhagen. Nevertheless, in 1692 the Danish authorities rejected a proposal by the Copenhagen police chief to create a Jewish ghetto out of Jewish residential areas [15]. But the right to live beyond native city was granted to Jews only in 1809; while civil rights they received in 1814 [16, s. 111]. Despite the absence of officially recognized ghettos in Denmark until the 20th century, the compact residence areas of the Jewish were considered mainly within the framework of this concept.

In the early 1900s, the concept of ghetto took on a distinctly negative social connotation due to the massive migration of the Russian Jewish population. This situation was provoked by a series of Jewish pogroms in the Russian Empire after the death of Alexander II in 1881. As a result, about 3 thousand newly arrived Jews were never accepted by their fellow believers with already established Danish roots. They settled in the suburbs of Copenhagen, predominantly in the slums of Borgergaard and Adelgade [17]. Danish society had been extensively discussed the situation. An example is a note in the daily newspaper “Dagbladet” dated May 3, 1918: “And now they [the Jews] form their own sad city, a randomly populated ghetto like a little dark bird nests high above. On the 3-4-5 floors above each other they live as close as rooks. And like this black bird, during the day they roam in large flocks beyond the City” [Cit. on: 17, p. 81]. Even those Russian Jews who had settled in the prosperous districts of Copenhagen quickly became associated with the newly formed ghettos residents. Ghettos were covered by the media with similar negative traits: poverty, low standard of living, uncomfortable living conditions, increased epidemic and fire hazard [17, s. 82]. Residents of such Jewish areas remained committed to their own cultural and religious traditions. Yiddish was the primary language of communication in contrast to Danish, which was not required in their daily life. Subsequently, the local press began to publish in Yiddish [18, s. 102]. The Jewish ghettos were culturally and ethnically isolated from the majority society. This was fraught with the destabilization of public order and a potential cause of social disadvantage within ghetto. There was also a specific

threat of the spread of the communist and socialist convictions by refugees from Russia. However, only mass labor migration to Denmark from third world countries in the 1960s-1970s provoked a broad social and political discourse on the problem of the ghettoization of immigrant communities in Danish society.

From the middle of the 1960s, the concept of ghetto in Denmark has undergone significant changes due to the new social and political context. This situation was aggravated with the appearance in Danish social and political discourse of numerous debates about the problem of importing a large number of labor migrants. Despite the obvious need of the economies of Western and Northern Europe for labor resources, the process of accepting large numbers of foreign workers on Denmark was fraught with many difficulties. The most important problems were the cultural adaptation of migrants in the Western democratic society and the limited housing stock for the settlement of *gastarbejdere*. In this regard, the chairman of the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions Frands Petersen pictured the position of the Danish authorities in his published statement about the inadmissibility of housing priority to immigrant workers: “the best solution would be [for migrants] to stay in a camp” [Cit. on: 19, p. 403]. Thus, the concept of “ghetto” in the Danish discourse of the 1960s mainly denoted the compact residential area of labor migrants.

Based on this approach to ghetto problems, cultural sociologist Peter Duellund examined this phenomenon from the position of a “parallel” society in the context of Danish social and political discourse. In 1968, Duellund published his article “Parallel society as a new political strategy” [20]. In this paper, the Danish cultural sociologist refutes the popular idea of an alternative society as a powerful argument in the fight against the prevailing social and political guidelines in society. Duellund doubts the possibility of the emergence of “parallel” society in modern conditions: “It is utopian to believe that the parallel society can free itself from society by creating its own institutions” [21, s. 56]. According to Duellund, the isolation within society of a large group of people with their own system of cultural and religious attitudes, social norms, and methods of legal regulation, leads to the emergence of ghetto [21, s. 55]. Thus, the idea of “parallel” society had gradually transformed, and by the end of the 1970s it lost its significance as a social movement ideologically opposed to the majority society.

## **Transformation of the immigrant ghetto into ethno-confessional “parallel” society in modern Denmark**

Since the early 1990s, ghetto has once again been considered in the social and political context as a disadvantaged residential area. The majority of the ghetto residents were immigrants from Asian and African countries: refugees, labor migrants with temporally or permanent residency, and their relatives who came under the family reunification programs. Most of them remained committed to the cultural values and legal norms of Islam. At the same time, the crisis of the multiculturalism policy in Western Europe contributed to the escalation of social unrest. Subsequently, the concept of a “parallel society” in Denmark turned into a counter-discourse for the ideas of multiculturalism as the basis of cohesive society [16, s. 234-235]. The published in 1996 article “For Turkish youth in Germany, Islam plays an important role” by Wilhelm Heitmeyer illustratively described these events [22]. In this paper, the German sociologist presented the segregation of Turkish Muslim communities as “difficult to understand “parallel society” beyond the majority society” [22, S. 6]. According to Heitmeyer, the Turkish young people are particularly at risk due to the increasing influence of fundamentalist groups on isolated Muslim communities. Such religious and political groups in the form of “parallel” society appear because of external social processes, and as a result of adherence of immigrants to their cultural, and religious values. This is fraught with a potential threat not only to the national security of the state, but also to the international community.

The modern social and political interpretation of the concept of “parallel society” goes back to the speech of the former member of the European Parliament from the Danish People’s Party Mogens Camre. On September 10, 1998, Camre gave an accusatory speech on the DR1 TV channel towards the Social Democrats’ immigration policy. He pointed to the factual inability of Denmark to successfully integrate the ever-growing number of immigrants from the third world. Camre noted that they have no interest in Danish cultural values and are focused on the isolated Muslim ghettos within the state borders [Cit. on: 16, p. 78-79]. Subsequently, Camre identified as the main reason for the emergence of a Muslim parallel society the reluctance of immigrants to integrate into democratic Danish society and their intention to “enforce rules from the backward Muslim countries and counteract the integration as official policy” [23]. His position united the concepts of “ghetto” and “ethno-confessional parallel society” within the framework of Danish social and political discourse. This value and ideological political concept formed the

basis of an argumentative strategy against the key aspects of official Danish immigration policy. Danish researcher Anna M. Freiesleben described this approach as “dystopian political discourse” [16, s. 100]. In this context, “parallel society is a term for the segregated immigrant societies, mainly Muslim and with non-Western backgrounds, that are perceived as a threat to national and cultural unity” [16, p. 94]. Thus, the concept of “parallel society” identified the problem of segregation of Muslim ghettos as a potential threat to social cohesion, territorial integrity, and other aspects of national security.

### **The modern ethno-confessional ghetto in Denmark: the key stages of the development of social and political discourse**

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The key stages in the development of social and political discourse on the problems of Muslim ghettos are going to be centered on the events in 2004, 2010, 2012, and 2018. Particular attention is paid to analyzing the New Year’s speech by the head of the Danish government Anders Fogh Rasmussen (2004), and a series of public speeches by the Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen (2010-2018). This made it possible to identify the dynamics of the development of the problem of ethno-confessional ghetto in Denmark.

In 2004, during the New Year’s speech, A.F. Rasmussen recognized the existence of “immigrant ghettos” as an example of a negative aspect of social reality: “Many years of failed foreign policy have led to the emergence of immigrant ghettos, where men are unemployed, women are isolated, and families speak only the language of their homeland” [24]. According to Rasmussen, children are the most vulnerable part of the ghetto residents insofar as they do not have sufficient knowledge of the Danish culture and language; children disdain Danish society and democratic values and they disdain Danish society. Rasmussen introduced into official circulation the concepts of “immigrant ghetto” (*indvandrerghetto*) and “ghettoization” (*ghettoisering*) as a political and ideological concept. In this way, ghetto discourse has given the necessary legitimacy for the Danish authorities to develop and implement decisive action towards resolving social unrest. Rasmussen’s New Year’s speech was followed by the publication of “The Government’s Strategy against Ghettoization”<sup>1</sup>. This paper considers ghettoization as a serious obstacle to the integration into democratic Danish society of migrants, ref-

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<sup>1</sup> *Regeringens strategi mod ghettoisering* (2004). URL: [https://www.stm.dk/index/mainstart.asp/multimedia/Regeringens\\_strategi\\_mod\\_ghettoisering.pdf](https://www.stm.dk/index/mainstart.asp/multimedia/Regeringens_strategi_mod_ghettoisering.pdf) (accessed 21.02.2020).

ugees and their descendants with their own cultural and religious values. At the same time, it is important to note that the category of refugees since 1991 officially falls under the concept of immigrants according to the position of Statistics Denmark: “An immigrant is defined as a person born abroad whose parents are both (or one of them if there is no available information on the other parent) foreign citizens or were both born abroad. If there is no available information on either of the parents and the person was born abroad, the person is also defined as an immigrant”<sup>2</sup>. The segregation of communities of non-Western immigrants is the problem of physical and psychological isolation of ghetto from society, when such communities turn into “actual ethnic enclaves or parallel societies without significant economic, social, and cultural contact with society”<sup>3</sup>. Thus, the state strategy to counter the ghettoization was aimed at solving large-scale social problems in isolated immigrant areas. As a result, this became a formidable obstacle to the practical solution of specific aspects of the problem.

Political debate on ghetto problems renewed in 2010 with the speech by the Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen at the opening of the autumn parliamentary session. By this time, the developed in 2004-2008 recommendations<sup>4</sup> for preventing social threats from disadvantaged residential areas revealed their practical ineffectiveness.

During his speech, Rasmussen notes the particular importance of democratic values in the structure of Danish society: “In Denmark, we have for generations built a safe, rich, and free society. Increased prosperity and material progress are of great importance here. But the most important thing is our values” [25]. Fundamental Danish values are summed up in the concept of “entrenched democracy”. However, Rasmussen points out the presence of “holes” (huller) in “the Danish map” that contradict this concept. According to Rasmussen, these holes are “areas that are not Danish in their values” [25]. Rasmussen called for decisive measures to resolve the ghetto problems: “It makes no sense to invest more money in painting the facades. We want to tear down the walls. We must bring ghetto back to the society” [25]. It is important to note that a similar position was shared by the Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel, the President of France Nicolas Sarkozy, and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom David Cameron [26]. To follow up on Rasmussen’s

<sup>2</sup> *Documentation of statistics for Immigrants and Descendants*. Danmarks Statistik. URL: <https://www.dst.dk/en/Statistik/dokumentation/documentationofstatistics/immigimmig-and-descendants/statistical-presentation> (accessed 22.06.2020).

<sup>3</sup> *Regeringens strategi mod ghettoisering* (2004). P. 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Fra udsat boligområde til hel bydel*. Sammenfatning, November 2008. URL: <http://docplayer.dk/205175-Fra-udsat-boligomraade-til-hel-bydel-sammenfatning-november-2008.html> (accessed 13.03.2020).



speech, the Danish government developed and published another strategic plan called “Return of the Ghetto to Society. Confronting Parallel Society in Denmark”<sup>5</sup>. In 2010, there were 29 such disadvantaged residential areas in confrontation with Danish society. These areas met the main criteria for defining ghetto: the majority of the residents are non-Western immigrants or their descendants, the high level of crime and unemployment<sup>6</sup>. The title of this strategic paper indicates the impossibility of further ignoring by the Danish authorities the problem of the existence of “parallel” society as an objective threat to the security and well-being of Danish society. Based on Germany’s experience with the segregated Muslim Turkish communities, the Danish government has made social and legal work with children and young people the priority area for bringing ghetto back to the Danish society<sup>7</sup>.

Nevertheless, Rasmussen’s plan to “bring ghetto back to society” faced a serious obstacle – ideological opposition “friends and foes” as the basis for the relationship between parallel and majority societies. The dystopian social and political discourse in Denmark is largely based on the widespread idea of an impersonal “ethnic and religious other” ghetto resident who intends to undermine the foundations of Danish society with his adherence to cultural and religious values that are contrary to the democratic way of life. According to this idea, such resistance of “Danish culture” is a deliberate choice of this “other”. But initially such self-isolation was provoked by the economic and social disadvantage of migrants living in their isolated communities. In addition, the voluntary segregation of migrants from Muslim countries paved the way for the development and widespread dissemination in Danish discourse of numerous “conspiracy theories” of “parallel” societies [16, p. 244]. These ideas became an instrument of ideological influence on public sentiment. Such “conspiracies” imply centralized control from the Arab states over the creation and covert activities of parallel Muslim societies that undermine the Danish and European security. One of the “conspiracy” scenarios is the concept of the “state-in-state”. This implies a social group that has separated itself from the state, and adheres to its own legal and political principles in opposition to the majority society [27, p. 7]. The analytical review of the discourse on “parallel” society in the Scandinavian countries also revealed an analogy between “disadvantaged residential areas” and “failed states” as social groups that “isolate themselves and firmly oppose to society, the state

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<sup>5</sup> *Ghettoen tilbage til samfundet. et opgør med parallelsamfund i Danmark*. København: Socialministeriet ( 2010). URL: [https://www.stm.dk/multimedia/Ghettoen\\_tilbage\\_til\\_samfundet.pdf](https://www.stm.dk/multimedia/Ghettoen_tilbage_til_samfundet.pdf) (accessed 22.06.2020).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. P. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. P. 6.

and judicial authorities. This is expressed, for example, by using violence against the police when the police cross the border of the group's 'territory'" [28, s. 21]. Nevertheless, according to the official position of the Danish government, "parallel" society is only a "risk area", which is still under the general control of the state authorities and the police.

Another aspect of the issue of integrating Muslim ghetto into Danish society is the problem of violation of a social minority's rights in the democratic state. The respect for the rights of minorities is one of the fundamental principles of democracy, but in Denmark the attitude towards minorities has a mixed picture. The events of the end of 2012 showed a significant difference in attitudes towards the "Danish" minority in comparison with an isolated immigrant community with its own legal norms, cultural and religious values. In Kokkedal, the Danes are in minority while the main part of the city population is residents of Arab and Turkish origin in the first and second generations. The widely reported conflict in November 2012 occurred due to the refusal of the city administration from the traditional installation of a Christmas tree in the central city square in order to save the city budget. This situation was complicated by the fact that the members of the commission who voted for the abolition of the installation of the Christian symbol of Christmas were predominantly Muslims. The Danish media pictured the situation as a deliberate provocation and maintained social tension for a long time. This is illustrated by the newspapers headlines and informational Internet resources: "Muslims cancel Christmas"<sup>8</sup>; "Muslim residents blow away Christmas tree tradition"<sup>9</sup>; "Muslims cancel Christmas tree in Kokkedal"<sup>10</sup>, "Muslims deny non-Muslims Christmas tree"<sup>11</sup>, "Muslims kill Christmas"<sup>12</sup>, etc. Many of these articles emphasized that the Muslim majority in the city council refused to spend DKK 5,000-7,000 after the Eid al-Adha with a budget of DKK 60,000. This fact has

<sup>8</sup> *Muslimere aflyser julehygge i boligforening* // DR.dk Nyheder. 07.11.2012. URL: <http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2012/11/07/042932.htm> (accessed 15.01.2020).

<sup>9</sup> *Juletræstradition afblæst af muslimske beboere* // Berlingske Tidende. 07.11.2012. URL: <http://www.b.dk/nationalt/juletraestradiation-afblaest-af-muslimske-beboere> (accessed 16.01.2020).

<sup>10</sup> *Muslimere aflyser juletræ i Kokkedal* // Lokalavisen.dk. 07.11.2012. URL: <http://hoersholm.lokalavisen.dk/muslimere-aflyser-juletrae-i-kokkedal-/20121107/artikler/711089913/> (accessed 16.01.2020).

<sup>11</sup> *Ballade i boligforening: Muslimere nægter ikke-muslimere juletræ* // BT. 07.11.2012. URL: <http://www.bt.dk/danmark/ballade-i-boligforening-muslimere-naegter-ikke-muslimere-juletrae> (accessed 17.01.2020).

<sup>12</sup> *Tom Behnke i det røde felt: Muslimere slår julen ihjel* // BT. 07.11.2012. URL: <http://www.bt.dk/danmark/tom-behnke-i-det-roede-felt-muslimere-slaar-julen-ihjel> (accessed 17.01.2020).

significantly aggravated the cultural and religious confrontation. The conflict resulted in the dissolution of the city administration and the return of the Christmas tree to the city square as a symbol of Danish culture.

Many public and political actors confirmed the conflict nature of the situation with their speeches. For example, the parliamentary deputy of Liberal Alliance and the founder of the social movement “The Democratic Muslims in Denmark” Nasser Khader called the Christmas incident in Kokkedal “a classic example of how parallel societies can threaten the Danish, democratic values” [29]. Khader’s statements indicate a negative attitude towards the problem of segregated Muslim ghettos in Denmark not only from the “Danish” population of the country, but also from those Muslims with immigrant roots who have successfully integrated into Danish society. This in practice proves the possibility to accept the cultural and democratic values of Western society while preserving one’s religious beliefs. In addition, Khader clearly stated that “there is a fundamental difference between a minority in one’s own country and in a foreign one. It is assumed that one must adapt to local customs while staying in a foreign country” [29]. At the same time, the parliamentary deputy from the Danish People’s Party Marie Krarup insisted on the need for the Danes to adhere to their own social norms without concessions in favor of the identity of ethno-religious minorities: “We have to get used to standing firm on our own principles and kindly let Muslims understand how these principles work in Denmark. Now you have to adapt to them if you want to live in our country” [30].

It is worth noting that such ambiguous assessment of the priority of the minorities’ rights depending on their nationality is a significant obstacle to the successful integration of “parallel” societies into Danish society. In this situation, the Kokkedal Christmas tree is not only a Christian symbol discriminated against by Islamic values, but a cultural and national symbol of the struggle for Western norms and values. While the social and political conflict around the Christmas tree is the cultural and national struggle for an integration scenario acceptable for Danish culture. In the context of cultural discourse on the issue of Muslim ghettos, the concepts of “Islam” and “Muslim” are elements of the special culture that contradicts “Danish” culture. This is the basis of collective way of thinking and a guide to action of the opposing parties. The key aspect of the integration problem within the framework of cultural discourse is the inability of immigrants to adapt and reconcile their own values with “Danish” values. This leads to the cultural incompatibility of the ghetto residents with Danish society [5]. Consequently, the Kokkedal Christmas tree indicates a cultural confrontation based on the ideological opposition of “our” and “others” values rather than a religious struggle in Danish society.

The next stage in the actualization of ghetto issues in Danish socio-political discourse was in 2018. L.L. Rasmussen in his New Year's speech again touched upon the concept of ideological and cultural social confrontation "friends and foes": "There are parallel societies throughout the state. Many people with the same problems came together. This creates a negative spiral. The counterculture. In which one avoids to responsibility, shies away from use the opportunities available to Denmark and remains outside [society]" [31]. In addition, Rasmussen stated the need to decisively confront the problems associated with the emergence of Muslim ghettos on the Denmark map: "we must drop the illusion that parallel societies and ghettos will disappear if we just give them time" [31]. However, the strategic paper followed this speech "One Denmark without Parallel Societies: No Ghettos in 2030"<sup>13</sup> emphasizes that decisive government measures are intended for residential areas in which the problem of ghettoization is most urgent: «We do not want to restrict the majority to take action against the few. In this way, we can act more rigidly and consistently against parallel societies»<sup>14</sup>. For this, the government structures began to focus primarily on four main activities: 1) to eliminate or transform the disadvantaged residential areas into areas with more comfortable living conditions; 2) to tighten control over residents of such areas; 3) to improve safety in ghetto by strengthening the presence of the police and increasing punishment for offenses; 4) to improve the quality of life of children and youth. As part of the decisive struggle against the "parallel" society in Denmark, the Rasmussen's government presented the official ghetto list included a new special category – "severe ghettos" (*hårde ghettoer*).

### **Criteria for determining ethno-confessional ghettos**

The concept of "severe ghetto" denotes disadvantaged residential areas that have been on the ghetto list for over four years. According to the annually published data, the 2019 ghetto list contained 28 disadvantaged residential areas with 15 "severe ghettos"<sup>15</sup>. The main criterion for determining ghetto is a residential area with at least 1000 residents, where the proportion of immigrants and their descendants with non-western origin exceeds 50%. In this case, the

<sup>13</sup> *Ét Danmark uden parallelsamfund – Ingen ghettoer i 2030*. København: Økonomi-og Indenrigsministeriet. 2018. URL: <https://www.regeringen.dk/nyheder/2018/ghettoudspil/> (accessed 23.06.2020).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. P. 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Liste over ghettoområder pr. 1. december 2019*. P. 2. URL: <https://www.trm.dk/publikationer/2019/liste-over-ghettoomraader-pr-1-december-2019/> (accessed 23.06.2020).

residential area must meet at least two of the following four conditions: 1) the proportion of residents aged 18-64 who are not connected to the labor market or education exceeds 40%; 2) the proportion of residents convicted of offenses under the Danish Penal Code is at least three times the national average; 3) the proportion of residents who only have a basic education exceeds 60%; 4) the average gross income of taxpayers aged 15-64 is less than 55% of the average gross income for this region<sup>16</sup>. Depending on compliance with these conditions, residential areas may be included in the ghetto list or excluded from it. Compared to 2018, in 2019, two residential areas entered and three residential areas left the ghetto list. However, the number of “severe ghettos” that have been on the ghetto list for over 5 years is increasing every year.

These criteria have become one of the most pressing issues in Danish social and political discourse. They are regularly criticized by the government opposition and the ghetto residents. Among political opposition, the parties the Red-Green Alliance and the Alternative most consistently express their negative attitude towards the ghetto criteria [32, p. 47]. The opposition representatives emphasize the arbitrary nature of the ghetto criteria – in some situations, only a couple of dozen residents influence the inclusion of a residential area in the ghetto list.

The analysis of the ghetto criteria reveals that the practice of artificially creating such special residential areas devalues and averages out the personal qualities of their residents. For example, the Danish artist and public activist Aisha Amin as a resident of the “severe ghetto” Gellerup shared her experience of pressure of the social and political system on the individual: “Your skin colour and name suddenly imply whether or not you are improving or degrading your neighbourhood. You become a percentage rather than a human being” [33, p. 6]. This personal experience shows that the ghetto residents for the state are negative numbers that form tables of criteria for the lists of ethno-confessional “parallel” societies. In addition, Amin expresses doubts about the appropriateness of one of the key ghetto criteria: “The majority of us may have non-western backgrounds, but we are Danish citizens. What is a statistic like this supposed to prove? That having a non-western background is shameful?” [33, p. 8]. The rejection by many ghetto residents of the criteria for including areas on this list led to a number of public protests. The most pressing protests in recent years include the appeal of the residents of Tingbjerg (Copenhagen’s “severe ghetto”) to the Minister of Transport, Building and Housing Kaare Dybvad. The residents of this ghetto urged the ministry to stop

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<sup>16</sup> *Liste over ghettoområder* pr. 1. december 2019. P. 2. URL: <https://www.trm.dk/publikationer/2019/liste-over-ghettoomraader-pr-1-december-2019/> (accessed 23.06.2020).

publishing official ghetto lists<sup>17</sup>. This appeal was signed by more than 6,000 Danes who believe that the residents of the so-called ghettos are not “a virus in Danish society”, but are equal citizens. But such government acts against the “parallel” society make ghetto residents undesirable in a country that has already become their home. Nevertheless, the Danish authorities avoid open discussions with the protesters and adhere to their own tough political strategy aimed at preserving the integrity of Danish society and eliminating the ethno-confessional ghetto.

## **Conclusions**

The concept of ghetto as the ethno-confessional parallel society in Danish social discourse appeared in the second half of the XVIIth century with the official permission of the government authorities to create Jewish communities in the cities of the Kingdom of Denmark. Until the XXth century, the problem of ghetto as a source of social tension did not receive wide public discussion despite the negative attitude of Danish society towards the isolated residential areas of ethno-religious immigrant minorities. The analysis of the social and political discourse on ghetto as a potential threat to national security reveals the actualization of the problem in the middle of the 1960s and the growing interest in this issue since the early 2000s. The escalation of social tension in the 1970s was a consequence of the ineffectiveness of the state integration policy in relation to labor migrants from the third world. The high number of immigrants led to a range of social and housing problems that were worsened over the next decades. These circumstances contributed to the emergence of isolated Muslim enclaves as “parallel” societies. The residents of such areas have adhered to fundamentally different legal norms, cultural and religious values. This is the key factor in the emergence of a threat to public security and the state territorial integrity from the ghetto as “parallel” society.

The crisis of the multiculturalism policy in Western and Central Europe has become a powerful impetus in the development of social and political discourse regarding ethno-religious ghettos. The emergence of “parallel” societies was an indicator of the ineffectiveness of official Danish immigration policy. The segregated Muslim communities represented by immigrants and their descendants have become the main arguments in political debate. The political opposition widely exploited ghetto problems as an ideological and political strategy in op-

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<sup>17</sup> *Opråb* til regeringen. Unge i Tingbjerg samler underskrifter mod ghettolisten // Arbejderren, 27.11.2019. URL: <https://arbejderren.dk/indland/unge-i-tingbjerg-samler-underskrifter-mod-ghettolisten> (accessed 27.03.2020).

posing the official authorities. Thus, Muslim ghettos have come to be associated with a direct threat to the national unity of Denmark, the state territorial integrity, and international stability in the European region.

The analysis of the public speech by the head of the Danish government in 2004 showed that the need for official recognition of the ghettoization problem was due to the ineffectiveness of housing legislation and immigration policy regarding the integration of non-Western immigrants into Danish society. However, the initial package of measures was insufficient to counter the threats to Danish democratic values as the foundation of society. This contributed to the deep development of the concept of social confrontation based on mutual rejection of the “ethnic and religious other” and Danish society. This conflict has been exacerbated by the inequality of minority rights in a democratic society in depending on the nationality of their representatives. The government’s strategy of decisive action to bring ethno-confessional ghetto back to Danish society led in 2010 to the publication of the ghetto list based on ambiguous criteria. For example, the classification of ghettos as residential areas of immigrants with non-Western origin caused a wide public outcry from the political opposition and the residents of these areas. Despite the efforts of the state structures aimed at social and legal work with children and young people, this category of the ghetto residents participates in the largest number of social protests appealing for the elimination of the ghetto lists as a factor that hinders their personal development and successful socialization in Danish society. Nevertheless, the Danish government is firmly committed to its strategies of liquidating segregated ethno-confessional “parallel” societies in the state. These processes are accompanied by a gradual tightening of control and countermeasures against “severe ghettos”.

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