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Studying Terrorism and Practicing Criticism

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CRITICAL METHODS IN TERRORISM STUDIES

Edited by Priya Dixit and Jacob L. Stump

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1

STUDYING TERRORISM AND PRACTICING CRITICISM

Jacob L. Stump and Priya Dixit

This introductory chapter accomplishes three basic tasks. The first is to locate this book in the context of the literature on terrorism, particularly what we call dissident literature that later became *Critical Terrorism Studies*. The second accomplishment of this introductory chapter is to briefly describe the contents of the book, focusing on the various ways that the chapters approach the topic of terrorism, what they argue, and the perspective they adopt. Third, this introductory chapter sketches out some of the implications of a number of themes raised by our authors for the production and dissemination of knowledge about terrorism.

The emergence of a dissident literature in the study of terrorism

The study of terrorism is one of the fastest growing areas of research with thousands of dissertations, reports, books, and articles published annually (Gordon 2004: 109). Yet the study of terrorism has been disparagingly called 'counterinsurgency masquerading as political science' (Schmid and Jongman, quoted by Jackson 2007b: 245). As a field of study, basic and largely unquestioned knowledge about terrorism is 'highly contestable and open to debate' and, Richard Jackson says, knowledge about terrorism 'functions ideologically to reinforce and reify existing structures of power in society' – such as the state (2009: 67).

Much of the knowledge about terrorism has been generated by a comparatively small group of scholars mostly in Western Europe and the United States. Ransborg referred to this cluster of disciplinarily diverse researchers as an 'invisible college' of 'experts.' Since the mid-1970s, they have been pivotal in circulating information about terrorism, advising government officials and policy-makers, and speaking in the media. '[I]t is not surprising,' Ransborg says, 'that there has been a relative absence of core debates and critical challenges of assumptions necessary to intellectually push the field forward with new waves of innovative research' (Ransborg 2009: 19).

The invisible college, which has constituted the defining boundaries of the study of terrorism, has effectively limited the possibility for more critically inclined research to develop (Stump and Dixit 2013: 18).

At the same time, even as the field of terrorism studies as a whole has remained less than innovative when it comes to theoretical development, we argue that a theoretically, methodologically, and empirically diverse array of dissident literature began to emerge in the 1980s. This dissident literature in the study of terrorism mirrors other developments in other related disciplines such as international relations (IR) (see, for example, the 1990 special issue of *International Studies Quarterly*, 'Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissidence in International Studies'). While IR and the study of terrorism have largely remained estranged from each other, which can 'probably be attributed to the fact that many non-specialists are turned off by the political bias and analytical shallowness on offer' (Ranstorp 2009: 24), a dissident literature did arise nonetheless. It was far less formally institutionalized than in IR. Just the opposite – alternative voices in the study of terrorism mirrored the dispersed and multi-disciplinary background of the invisible college. While the invisible college limited the knowledge about terrorism – both what counted as important for research and how to go about doing the research – this emerging dissident scholarship diversified research concerns and methods. However, dissident studies of terrorism were peripheral to significant debates taking place within the study of terrorism defined by the invisible college and peripheral to debates taking place in IR, the social sciences, or humanities more generally. Unlike the invisible college, which became increasingly institutionalized in think tanks, academic positions, and peer reviewed and professional journals, the various dissident studies on terrorism remained atomized and exiled.

Despite this, a series of publications began to appear. These studies primarily focused on various aspects of state-based terrorism – that is, a focus on state violence targeting certain non-state groups and populations. This refocusing effectively challenged the predominant focus on non-state acts of violence carried out against sovereign states. Take Herman's book, *The Real Terror Network* (1982), as one early and important example of a dissident voice. Herman shifted his focus to state violence against populations. In empirically rich detail, he depicted a US foreign policy called Operation Condor: a set of military and economic linkages between the US and various National Security States in Latin America – such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay. The state terrorism that Herman discusses consists of a coordinated system of surveillance and assassination carried out by domestic security services against groups deemed dissident and dangerous, especially domestic groups advocating Marxist, socialist, and democratic agendas.

Along similar lines, Lopez and Stohl's (1984: i) analysis of *The State as Terrorist* focused on the 'causes, consequences, and dynamics of that style of governance by force that has come to be known as state terror,' especially as it related to Latin America, the Philippines, and South Africa. A few years later, Herman and O'Sullivan (1989) analyzed the linkages between the US government, media corporations, and the growing number of 'terrorism experts.' They argued that this configuration of

government agencies, individuals and media sites effectively shaped public opinion and knowledge related to terrorism, creating and sustaining a propagandistic cover or mask for US state terrorism. Around the same time, Perdue (1989) located state terrorism in a global political-economic-media context of domination and subjugation. He focused on a number of different modes of state terror: the terror of nuclear weapon states, racial terror in apartheid South Africa, settler terrorism in Israel and the Palestinian occupied territories, US supported state terrorism in Nicaragua, and so on. Our point here is to highlight the burgeoning dissident literature taking shape in the 1980s, especially work focused on state-based terror targeting domestic and international populations. This vein of research remains rich and diverse, still focusing on a range of contexts, people, groups, and governmental institutions and policies (see, for example, George 1991; Sluka 1999; McSherry 2002; Selden and So 2004; Blakeley 2009; Jackson and Murphy 2011). In this book, one particularly fine example is Maher and Thomson's investigation of class antagonisms in Colombia, particularly the role of state terrorism in making possible and sustaining economic development that marginalizes the poor and working classes. Other chapters in this book that in different ways focus on state policies that terrorize certain populations of people include Joseph and Jackson's respective chapters illustrating Critical Discourse Analysis and Caitlin Ryan's chapter on women in the occupied Palestinian Territories.

During the 1980s, dissident voices developed in a variety of ways beyond the focus on state-based terrorism. Take for instance Wagner-Pacifici's (1986) book. She examines a wide range of public texts surrounding the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro (the former prime minister of Italy) by the Red Brigades in 1978. Notably, Wagner-Pacifici studies a non-state group's act of violence against former political leaders of a prominent Western state, which is a hallmark of the invisible college, but, alternatively, her study approaches the topic from an interesting new, theoretically and methodologically sophisticated angle. She conducts a dramaturgical analysis. To do this, Wagner-Pacifici drew from disciplines largely outside the regular repertoire of methods and methodological commitments sustained by the invisible college. Wagner-Pacifici cited work in sociology, symbolic anthropology, and literary criticism and she conceptualized terrorism – the actions depicted in the media, by political leaders, by members of the Red Brigades – as a social drama produced through the various public texts and their performance in social contexts.

Following in this interpretivist and effectively critical vein of analysis of terrorism were texts like Michael Taussig's (1991) seminal work on the terror associated with colonialism, shamanism and the violence connected with the use of indigenous labor to extract rubber from South America in the 1800s. Or books like Feldman's *Formations of Violence* (1991), which closely examined the relationship between political terror and the body in the context of Northern Ireland by drawing from political theorists like Lacan, Foucault, and Nietzsche. Similarly in the vein of dissident literature emerging in the 1990s were books like Oliverio's *The State of Terror* (1998). In it, she examines the mutually constitutive relationship between the state and terrorism, and how the discourse of terrorism can be deployed by political leaders and media sources to mask state-based violence and to highlight non-state violence.

Other significant interpretive pieces that appeared in this vein include Sangarasivam's (2001) excellent discussion of her experiences as an ethnographer in Sri Lanka, both in relation to her colleagues and to the state; Arexaga's (2002) insightful analysis of terror as a militarily and discursively constructed national thrill that resolves domestic instability and doubt about US identity and purpose; and Gunning's (2004) analysis of the transformative and emancipatory possibilities of peace with Hamas.

In other words, along with the developing focus on state-based violence, there was also another strain of dissident literature. This strain drew from Continental social and political philosophy, postcolonialism, symbolic interactionism, and materialism, as well as ethnographic field work and interpretive reading approaches. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, dissident voices deployed a rich field of methodological commitments, theoretical lenses, and methods of analysis to study the topic of terrorism.

The world political events that collectively came to be known as '9/11' or 'September 11' marked an important shift in the development of the dissident study of terrorism. The topic of terrorism became a 'growth industry' (Smyth *et al.* 2008: 1) for writers, researchers, and university teachers; this includes the more critically inclined approaches to the topic. By 2008, it was clear to several analysts studying the topic of terrorism that it had

become one of the most powerful signifiers in contemporary discourse. It is a term that generates vast amounts of social and political activity, induces powerful emotions and, though a vast array of social practices, constitutes a legal and political subject, a cultural taboo, a myth and an object of fear, hatred, surprise, administration, 'entertainment' and identity. (Smyth *et al.* 2008: 1)

It was out of this post-'September 11' context that Jackson (2005) published his book, *Writing the War on Terrorism*. In it, he closely examines the public language deployed by the Bush administration to justify the 'war on terrorism' to an American audience. He convincingly explains how rhetoric worked to normalize and institutionalize a violent and militaristic foreign policy – entailing multiple wars, military interventions, and torture.

Shortly thereafter, by 2006, the first gestures toward a more defined and reflexively aware critical study of terrorism became institutionally sedimented – especially with the establishment of a Critical Studies on Terrorism Working Group within the British International Studies Association, the organization of a conference ('Is It Time For a Critical Terrorism Studies?') and a published symposium in the journal *European Political Science*. This symposium made the case for a critical approach to terrorism (Jackson 2007a: 225–7), emphasized the role of state terror (Blakeley 2007: 228–35), identified the core commitments of such a research project (Jackson 2007a: 244–51), sketched out a critical research agenda (Smyth 2007: 260–7), highlighted the significance of emancipatory politics (McDonald 2007: 252–9), and reflected on the limits and problems associated with a critical approach (2007: 236–43). A new peer review academic journal, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, came online in 2007. Richard Jackson, a founding editor of the journal, also published a short online piece

that further justified the need for a critical approach to terrorism (2008) and he was also the lead editor of *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda* (Jackson *et al.* 2009), which outlines and critiques the predominant and orthodox approaches to terrorism and begins to sketch out what research in this new critical vein could look like.

Since then, a number of books, articles, and debates have been published that expand on various areas of the rather new and quickly developing area of study. Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS), a Routledge press series, for instance, started in 2009 and by the end of 2014 will have published nearly 20 books. These texts have primarily focused on introducing the field, conceptual and theoretical development, and empirical investigations of terrorism and terrorism-related issues in a variety of different contexts.

With all of this activity, comparatively little ink has focused on the methods of CTS, or how to systematically do this kind of research. Stump and Dixit (2013), seeing this gap in the literature, introduced students to the nuts and bolts of methods for studying terrorism from a more critical persuasion. This volume connects in with that endeavor: to have accomplished researchers describe how they came to adopt a critical mode of inquiry into terrorism, to describe their particular method and perspective, and to illustrate their approach with empirical examples. Our initial attempt was to provide a review of critical methodologies and outline critical tools that exist in the study of terrorism; this volume gives space to a diverse range of scholars who have used critical tools and outlines their ways of studying terrorism critically.

This book is about doing critical terrorism studies, about researchers putting methodologies and methods to work, applying them to some set of texts, some bits of data, some field site or field of inquiry. In this vein, there is a wide spectrum of approaches that, in a variety of ways, critically study terrorism. These authors' works are informed by different places, different histories, different experiences, and different ways of relating to and making sense of the world. As such, the chapters in this volume draw on different logics and they use different methods to gather up information and to analyze, explain, understand, critique, and interpret that information – and perhaps aligning with others to emancipate some person or group, or intervene in some way in some political matter relating to their study of terrorism. This book gestures toward a plurality of critical approaches studying terrorism and, moreover, it creates a space for the authors to explicitly reflect on their methodologies and methods.

Doing critical terrorism studies

In different ways, these chapters each reflect on their research tradition and methods and how they are applied to concrete examples. They illustrate the diversity and transdisciplinarity of dissident modes of terrorism studies. Subsequently, this section is organized to highlight the variety of methodologies and methods used to study the topic of terrorism that are illustrated in this book.

Take Chapter 3 by Maher and Thomson who focus on state terrorism in Colombia. Drawing from Marx's materialist conception of history and closely

examining a single case study, Maher and Thomson do a detailed process-tracing that provides a class-based explanation of violent attempts to contest and stabilize political and economic structures. Maher and Thomson argue that the state's perpetration of violence against poor and working-class people has created opportunities for both domestic and foreign capital to expand. The Colombian state has forcibly displaced poor people, cleared and developed spaces that the poor once inhabited, and systematically targeted armed and unarmed groups that oppose state intervention and capitalist development. They conceptualize terroristic violence as a specific kind of tactic used by state and non-state actors; it is dialectically entwined with capitalistic development and neoliberal globalization. As their chapter shows, historical materialism is particularly useful at explaining and critiquing state terrorism and elite domination of the poor and working classes and detailing the interconnections between terrorism and capitalism.

In contrast to the class-based analyses of Maher and Thomson, Jonathan Joseph and Richard Jackson reflect on Critical Discourse Analysis in their respective Chapters 2 and 6. CDA entails a focus on the relationship between discursive representations and social processes and practices. The critical aim of such a research perspective is to closely investigate how representations are socially consequential and how powerful social practices can warp discursive representations and have negative consequences for people's lives.

While both Joseph's and Jackson's respective chapters employ CDA and focus their analyses on the relationship between discursive representations and social processes, there are also some important differences between their approaches. Most clearly, perhaps, are their differences in methodological positioning, or the philosophical foundations that inform their perspective. Jackson, for instance, has made the case for a 'minimal foundationalist' perspective, which conceptualizes the label 'terrorism' as a social construct that is historically contingent and relevant to understanding and responding to certain kinds of violence associated with the present historical moment (2011). Joseph, however, works from a comparatively different methodology; one that adopts a more maximal foundationalist perspective. Such an approach emphasizes the extra-discursive over the discursive and thus works to critique how certain extra-discursive processes produce and interact with discursive representations of terrorism and counter-terrorism (Joseph 2009). Because Maher and Thomson's chapter works from a historical materialist perspective that also emphasizes the extra-discursive almost exclusively over the discursive, Joseph's particular discussion and application of CDA seemed to fit less well under the heading of discourse analysis. Nonetheless, Jackson and Joseph's respective chapters use the same method of analysis (CDA), but approach the method from a comparatively different angle, which we discuss here.

Take Jackson's chapter first. In his particular approach to CDA, Jackson emphasizes the discursivity of terrorism 'as an empty signifier' constructed through 'language usage and social practice.' Extra-discursive features of the social world can have causal impact, but Jackson 'takes reasons as causes,' where 'norms and rules structure or constitute – that is, "cause" –' interpersonal and institutional doings.

After laying out his approach, Jackson discusses the key findings of his wide body of research related to the war on terror – especially during the Bush administration. Among other politically significant topics, Jackson investigated the rhetorical processes through which the Iraq war and the torture of prisoners were justified by political leaders. In his chapter, Jackson reflexively sketches out how he came to use CDA, the specific methods and conceptual tools he employs, and the challenges of this approach in the critical study of terrorism. With CDA, Jackson has worked to 'deconstruct and challenge the core narratives of the war on terror, especially those that have directly resulted in human rights abuses' by Britain and the United States.

Similarly, Joseph focuses on UK anti-terrorism policy, particularly the implementation of the *CONTEXT: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism* document. Combining CDA with Foucault and Gramsci, Joseph describes the types of texts that he searches for, his process for selecting texts, and the analytical tools that he employs to examine them – looking for 'convergences of position, consistency of message, conflicts among statements and so on.' In the example Joseph depicts, he argues that the policy document 'constructs subjectivity in a certain way while promoting strategies that attempt to govern people from a distance.' This means that social cohesion is sustained through representations of 'us' positioned in a relation of risk and vulnerability to a 'radicalized other' who is 'Muslim' and threatening, and sustained through strategically implemented social practices that have negative consequences on Muslims in the UK. In particular, these anti-terrorist policies limit the availability of public subjectivities of Muslims (either as moderate or extremist), frame Muslims as of instrumental value to government security operations, and increase a sense of local suspicion among Muslim communities of the government's anti-terrorism strategy. The strategy governance represented in the *CONTEXT* document, Joseph says, 'works through the pretense of being helpful and solving problems, while containing an underlying authoritarianism which leaves little choice as to whether this is really necessary or whether alternative options are available.' Such state strategies also normalize relations between the state and (majority) society against others, often minorities and those depicted as different.

While conceptualizing terrorism as a social construction constituted through discourse, Alexander Spencer in Chapter 7 moves away from CDA and the historical materialism of Maher and Thomson. After describing the history and political significance of metaphors and their analysis, Spencer sketches out an approach to the study of terrorism that treats terrorism as a metaphor linked to other metaphors in popular discourse. That is, Spencer examines how terrorism has been described in various ways (as "war," "crime," "uncivilized evil," and "disease" respectively) between 2001 and 2005 in the German newspaper, *Bild*. This ongoing linking of metaphors in public discourse is the process through which terrorism (and other going concerns) is constituted as a threat to security. Critically, Spencer shows how this constitutive process functions to authorize certain modes of security and counter-terrorist policy as commonsensical – such as constituting military means as the only intelligible response to actions and individuals described as 'terrorists' while foreclosing alternative responses.

Still in terms of discourse, in Chapter 8 Erlenbusch approaches the topic of terrorism from a different angle. Focusing on the historical conditions surrounding the emergence and use of the word terrorism, she draws on Foucault's and Wittgenstein's insights. For Erlenbusch, the meaning of terrorism is entirely contextual, or part of a 'historical-political rationality'; it is a label 'given to variable discursive and non-discursive practices whose meaning is determined within a network of concepts, ideologies, interests, and rationalities.' Instead of popular newspapers or contemporary political elite discourse, her focus of analysis is on the words and actions of revolutionary French political leaders and how they deployed the label of terror. She argues that in revolutionary France, there were four different meanings associated with terrorism and each meaning constituted certain institutionally situated subjectivities. The critical aim of her approach is to illustrate the historically contingent and variable meaning of terrorism, which, critically, helps 'to undercut the determinism of ahistorical and essentialist accounts of terrorism and develop more productive ways of thinking about violence' in the present.

All of the approaches discussed thus far have primarily focused on gathering and analyzing textual-based data, such as governmental and non-governmental organization documents, political speeches, and newspapers. Other chapters in this book illustrate the value of fieldwork and the ethnographic sensibility in particular. These chapters, by focusing on the experiences and meanings generated by terrorists and other politically marginalized actors, also resurrect subaltern and subjugated knowledges but do so in slightly different ways to those which analyze textual representations.

Take Chapter 5 by Yamuna Sangarasivam as an example. She conceptualizes terrorism as a site or place defined by local and global histories, but also set within the broader cultural context of US imperialism. She looks closely at the relationship between Tamil nationalism (as embodied by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) and the Sri Lankan government's construction of the nationalist group as a terrorist organization. Drawing on documents, participant observation, and interviews, Sangarasivam puts together a set of vignettes that illustrate the production of transnational and transcultural subjectivities, like Tamil national identity and the terrorist. Found in the place of terrorism, she argues, are enduring racial and religious inequalities. Sangarasivam reflects on the implications of the embeddedness of the researcher in these inequalities and how the production of knowledge about terrorists and terrorism are constitutive of the global war on terror.

In Chapter 4, Harmonie Toros also adopts an ethnographic sensibility, but instead of anthropology she combines it with a psychological orientation toward person-centered therapy and the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory. The result is an 'empathetic ethnographic approach' that adopts an 'unconditional positive regard' toward the research co-participants who are labeled as terrorists – accepting them as whole individuals composed of violent and non-violent potentials, negative and positive emotions. There are emotional and research-based issues to navigate. Toros discusses a 'fieldwork crisis' or the difficulty of developing an empathetic connection with someone who has killed other people in conflict. Her research

goal, nonetheless, is to investigate the role of conversation in triggering empathetic and humanized relations toward those labeled terrorist. To illustrate her approach, Toros depicts fieldwork conducted in Northern Ireland where she interviewed and held meetings involving participant observation between loyalists and republican former and current paramilitaries. Critically, Toros argues that such an approach 'may produce knowledge that challenges established "truths" about terrorism and political violence, about actors engaged in such violence, and how it may be transformed.' The fieldwork experiences of Toros and others in the book explicate how resistance is often part of everyday actions and daily life, a point made clear by Ryan in Chapter 9 as well.

Catlin Ryan conducted field work and interviews with Palestinian women in the occupied West Bank, with an emphasis on the women's lives and experiences and the ongoing conflict. Moved by an 'inherent discomfort with the prevailing international perception that the Palestinian "other" is not to be trusted, taken seriously, or valued, because she/he is a "terrorist,"' Ryan draws on Edward Said and Franz Fanon. The reflexive postcolonial methodology that she discusses in the chapter critiques conventional ways of studying terrorism and highlights a myriad of ways in which Israeli 'counter-terrorism' has been experienced in daily life. She directs the reader's attention to the relationship between the processes of policy categorization – e.g. Palestinians as dangerous 'others' – and people's lives. In critical response to the asymmetric power relations, confusions, and insecurities, Ryan presents a subaltern narrative of resistance in Palestine that is accented by depictions of the daily insecurity experienced and represented by Palestinian people.

In Chapter 11 on 'Talking about Revolution: Ex-Militant Testimony and Conditions of "Tellability,"' Charlotte Heath-Kelly uses interviews with Italian and Cypriot persons who had waged armed campaigns to overturn British colonial rule, and she reflects on her own experiences and choices to pursue a critical approach. Heath-Kelly sketches out a poststructuralist feminist methodology. Her focus is on the relationship between what can and cannot be said and when. In particular, Heath-Kelly depicts how storytellers compose in the present a sensible story of their past 'militant' actions. Reflecting on the changing meanings of words in the interviewees' stories, such as 'victory,' 'defeat,' and 'war,' Heath-Kelly argues that a 'close inspection of militant violence and its subsequent tell-ability can help us to expose the constitution of illusory foundations for political authority, and the other histories which are silenced to give the appearance of coherence to the dominant narrative.'

Another chapter that sketches out a feminist perspective is Chapter 10 by Katherine E. Brown, 'Marginality as a Feminist Research Method in Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies.' She first traces out the history of marginality and its application in research, noting: 'By considering women's position in terrorism and counter-terrorism, it is possible to see more on the page of international relations.' By drawing from an extensive set of examples from a diverse range of sources, Brown foregrounds work that explicitly focuses on women's experiences and (generally) notes how women are marginalized in traditional research on terrorism.

Further, she illustrates how (and when) women refuse to acknowledge their marginal positioning and the implications of such a refusal. Critically, Brown argues that marginality is a feminist research position that can be used to understand and explain the meanings of terrorism in varying contexts, and from this feminist position she critiques the sociopolitical structures and institutions that compose orthodox Terrorism Studies and ignore the marginal and the everyday.

The last two chapters shift their focus away from written texts and ethnographic experiences. In Chapters 12 and 13 respectively Cynthia Weber and François Debrix engage with visual culture in the context of the US war on terror. Debrix's chapter reflects on the iconography of terror. The visual is conceptualized as both a site for analysis and a tool for illustrating questions about modernity and ethics, questions which are often made invisible in the practices of terrorism and counterterrorism. The chapter does not analyze a series of images in order to note their political or ideological underpinnings. Rather, Debrix uses visual depictions of events commonly labeled terrorism to interrogate contemporary American understandings of the 'war on terror.' In particular, he directs the reader's attention to the practices that underlie visual illustrations of dead, injured, and dying bodies, or what he calls: 'Falling Bodies.' Debrix critically argues that these icons serve to constitute specific meanings of the sovereign state and the terrorist and their relationships to society – the state that 'rescues' people and the terrorists who have no respect for human lives. These visuals of bodies and the war on terror served to legitimate state practices that violently and coercively target those labeled terrorists and other threats deemed significant.

Finally, a conversation between Priya Dixit and Cynthia Weber on film and terrorism rounds out the section on visual culture. They talk about Weber's use of visuals in response to the 'war on terror,' especially her thoughts on the practice of filming and her 13 short films, *I Am an American*. By allowing for different modes of depiction, including motion and color, Weber says that research questions can be answered filmically. In contrast to textual representations, film creates more possibilities by enabling the film-maker different and often more affective depictions of emotions and images. The practice of filming other persons raises a number of issues, which Weber reflects on. In particular, she says that filming prioritizes the question of 'whose point of view' is being visualized, and it highlights the question of the ethics of looking. These two points are important because the act of filming constitutes certain kinds of subjects and positions them within the context of the 'war on terror.' It is an act that gives voice and agency to the film-maker and the participants beyond the possibilities of written text. Critically, Weber says, a film or novel 'can move you to feel something,' they can 'implant a question in you, implant a doubt. It can move you emotionally and move you to action.'

So, the chapters in this book illustrate a variety of ways to study terrorism critically, from different methodological perspectives to different sources of information and different methods of analysis. CTS has historically been and, we argue, should continue to be an undertaking composed of multifarious possibilities – all of which offer interesting, theoretically and methodologically sophisticated analyses of terrorism.

Knowing terrorism

Knowledge of the social world, as opposed to knowledge of nature, is at the bottom of what I have been calling interpretation: it acquires the status of knowledge by various means, some of them intellectual, many of them social and even political. Interpretation is first of all a form of making: that is, it depends on the willed intentional activity of the human mind, molding and forming the objects of its attention with care and study. Such an activity takes place perforce in a specific time and place and is engaged in by a specifically located individual, with a specific background, in a specific situation, for a particular series of ends ... it will be evident that such unscientific nuisances as feelings, habits, conventions, associations, and values are an intrinsic part of any interpretation. (Said 1981: 155–6)

Said's words here succinctly summarize the aims and goals of an interpretive project such as ours: the social constructionist ethos, taking social practices and texts as foundational to meaning-making, and the reflexive orientation of the critical terrorism researcher. Said also directs attention to context and emphasizes knowledge-production and formation is a situated action. It is situated in the sense of being within particular cultures, whether this is the governmental culture that produced official texts, the media that frames 'terrorists' in particular ways or 'the field' where daily lives of people play out. The knowledge produced by the various chapters here are also 'situated' in the sense that they are part of the researcher's own actions and subjectivity and their own interests in asking particular questions in the first place.

But the implications of Said's words go beyond this – just before the paragraph quoted here, he describes how knowledge about the Middle East in the West has always been filtered through the lens of colonialism, wherein one party (those doing the representing, writing, and communicating) exerts power over those being depicted (people, actions, spaces in the Middle East). This is paralleled by scholarship on terrorism wherein the 'invisible college' set the terms for what counted as terrorism research and who would be appropriate subjects of such scholarship. As we discussed earlier, there has been a long history of dissident scholarship that challenges this practice but the institutional and government links, especially in the United States, remain dense in the post-9/11 era as well. In other words, many terrorism scholars enjoy close relationships with power – the power of the state in the United States for many. This can be problematic in terms of producing knowledge about terrorism, especially in terms of determining what knowledge counts as knowledge in the first place. It can also be problematic as the questions asked and the research then conducted is filtered through the interests of the state. Similar to Said's claim about imperialism and colonialism framing particular modes of knowledge production, the ways in which knowledge of terrorism becomes such are themselves situated within specific cultural, economic, class, and racial contexts. However, when the knowledge becomes popularized, such situatedness is unacknowledged and silenced.

How do we produce knowledge of terrorism? None of the chapters in this text purport to test hypotheses, measure variables or make necessary and sufficient causal claims about terror, terrorists, or terrorism. Rather, the knowledges produced by the methodologies and methods displayed in this book's chapters are informed by a variety of different epistemologies. The chapters illustrate historical materialism's emphasis on class antagonism and dialectics, discursive epistemologies that focus on the construction of meaning and its interaction with social processes and institutions, experiential knowledge of postcolonial and nationalistic politics and social processes, knowledge of postcolonial and nationalistic politics and social processes, feminist standpoint epistemology of the marginalized, de-colonial knowledges of subjugated populations, and filmically depicted stories of ordinary people. We hope to show that knowledge of terrorism can be produced through a number of methodological perspectives and by using a number of methods of information-gathering and analysis.

Similarly, this book does not attempt to provide a definitive definition of terror, terrorists, or terrorism, even though attempting to define terrorism and debate its ultimate and/or contingent features is a rather common practice. Just the opposite – each of the chapters conceptualizes terror, terrorists, and terrorism differently: conceptualizations range from a state and non-state tactic of violence bound up with capitalistic development, to terrorism as a metaphor or empty signifier, to an ethnographic site of colonial encounters, racial inequality, and violence. These respective conceptualizations of terrorism, we argue, should be thought of as analytical tools that are more or less useful at explaining, critiquing, or changing the social and political world in which we live. Following Stump and Dixit (2013: 8), 'a single, unified definition that claims to capture the total substance of terrorism or even the minimum foundation of terrorism is not required to study the practice of terrorism from a critical perspective.'

Returning to Said at the end of this introduction, it is worthwhile pointing out his caution that knowledge can and has been used as a tool for influence and domination, that particular 'regimes of truth' are produced and become entrenched over time, thus categorizing 'terrorism' as a non-state activity (for example) while states remain exempt from being defined as 'terrorist.' The task of critical scholarship, especially interpretivist methods and methodologies, is to expose these regimes of truth, to outline the ways in which the dominant modes of knowledge-production remain so and to centralize resistance. But, as the chapters that follow indicate, this dismantling of regimes of truth is not an easy task. For many of the authors in the pages that follow, their journey to a critical ethos began with realizing that the question they were asking was (a) often not deemed a legitimate or a researchable question in International Relations/terrorism studies and (b) that the available methods were unable to help them answer their specific research question. This, of course, exposes the hegemonic ways in which research on terrorism is conducted – the questions that are allowed (and others that are disallowed) and the methods that are deemed appropriate. Our book and the authors who have contributed their works here challenge this hegemony and begin dismantling the existing 'regime of truth.' As such, they (and we) see this volume as an ongoing step towards transforming the terrorism studies research project.

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PART 2

Critical Realism/ Materialism

14

CONCLUSION

Beyond terrorism?

Priya Dixit and Jacob L. Stump

Books on terrorism are produced at the rate of one every six hours. And yet terrorism scholars have acknowledged that the amount of research that goes into producing these books is minimal. Schmid and Jongman write, 'There are probably few areas in social science literature in which so much is written on the basis of so little research' (1988: 177). In addition to a lack of systematic research, there is also a lack of information summarizing and evaluating the current state of research in terrorism studies. Ransborg claims, 'Far too few books, chapters, or journal articles actually exist taking stock in a unifying sense of the terrorism studies field to account for what we know; how we know what we know, and what research questions we ought to focus on in terms of individual and collective research efforts' (2009: 14). On the whole, there is a lack of 'evidence-based research' and of primary sources more generally (Ransborg 2009: 17). There is also an excessive focus on al-Qaeda and related issues since 9/11 but also 'a paucity of work on the history of terrorism and theoretical/conceptual aspects' (Ransborg 2009: 23). Furthermore, many scholars do not wish to be associated with 'terrorism studies' because of what they view as a lack of rigorous research standards (Gunning 2007: 380–1).

Recent books on critical terrorism studies have called for an increase in systematic research on terrorism and, especially, a focus on interpretive, critical methods. For instance, while a new book on terrorism comes out roughly every six hours, only three books evaluating the state of the field and its future directions have been published in the last ten years (Dolnik 2011). A brief survey of some of the major catalogues on terrorism studies indicates a lack of scholarship on research methods in general and critical methods in particular. *Conducting Terrorism Field Research: A Guide* (Routledge, 2013) edited by Adam Dolnik is one of the few research methods books on terrorism and, even then, it focuses on fieldwork methods and the challenges and opportunities in doing fieldwork. For anyone contemplating doing fieldwork, it is an excellent source with chapters ranging from discussions on why

fieldwork is needed, how to interview elites, and the challenges and dangers of interviewing 'illicit non-state actors.' This is combined with case-related examples from Argentina, Northern Ireland, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Palestine/Israel. Discussions of interviewing (and being in the presence of someone about whom you are going to write) are illuminating and useful.

And yet there is something missing here. Something unacknowledged. Almost all of the essays in Dolnik's collection are written by scholars from the Global North, who have the institutional and financial (and 'reputational') backing to be able to justify why they are doing what they want to do. They are often written by scholars who are not 'of' the area they are writing about and so can enter and leave more easily than someone who might be working in a local university and thus face a more immediate danger when talking with those considered 'terrorist.' There needs to be a deeper acknowledgement that not everyone has the resources to conduct fieldwork, especially if that person is a student or located in a part of the world in which research overseas is not easy. This calls for a greater recognition that scholars from and located in the Global South are unlikely to find it easy proposing and conducting fieldwork in the Global North.

This is something that our book, by presenting a series of different ways of doing critical, interpretive research, hopes to direct attention towards. This is not to say that we have provided a comprehensive overview of the many ways in which critical scholarship can proceed. No, what we have done here is to provide a range of ways of doing critical research that includes but also goes beyond fieldwork. We hope that the essays here inspire critical terrorism researchers to seek out more research by authors working outside conventional and traditional perspectives, and especially to seek out scholars from both the Global North and Global South as a means of learning from and engaging with alternative perspectives. Someone located in a university in the Global South may not be able to research radicalization in the United Kingdom or 'lone wolf terrorism' in the United States easily. They can, however, look at how such 'terrorism' and the figure of the 'lone wolf terrorist' or the 'radicalized Muslim' is produced in media, official documents, popular texts and everyday conversations (e.g. looking at tweets and social media) of people in the UK or the US. As such, the collection of essays we include here provides resources for scholars who may otherwise be unable to conduct critical scholarship as well as to those who are interested in learning more about the types of research that critical terrorism scholars are doing.

Many of the authors here have made it clear that they pursued critical (broadly defined) methods when they found their research puzzles could not be explored by conventional methods. This indicates that, while there is a proliferation of scholarship on terrorism, there is far less information on how to ask questions about meanings, representations and identities; how to shift focus away from the state to other levels; how to discuss historical connections and disconnections and how to focus attention on the knowledge-producing aspects of terrorism scholarship. One of the goals of this book was to provide readers with a sense of the wide array of pluralistic research methods that exist to study political violence termed 'terrorism' and also to indicate how a diverse range of scholars have used these different critical methods

in their own works. These chapters are illustrations of how a particular research methodology has been adopted by scholars studying terrorism, broadly understood.

Directions for critical terrorism research

Some future directions for utilizing critical research methods in terrorism studies are discussed in the following sections.

Talking to 'terrorists' ... but also counter-terrorists

As examples in this book show, one of the growing areas of research is in ethnographic research of 'terrorists.' Joseba Zulaika and William Douglass's *Terror and Taboo* remains exemplary in this but scholars such as Harmonie Toros, Jerren Gunning, John Horgan, Charlotte Heath-Kelly, Sophie-Anne Henningsen, among others, have also conducted fieldwork among so-called 'terrorists.' Yamuna Sangaravivam and Caitlin Ryan's chapters here are based on fieldwork in areas affected by both 'terrorists' and the 'counter-terrorist' state (Sri Lankan and Israel-Palestine). However, there remains potential for further research not just on 'talking to terrorists' but also 'talking to (counter-)terrorists.' Government officials, policy-makers, and especially security personnel who actually conduct operations in the name of 'terrorism' can be sources for how and why they act in the way(s) they do. Kerry B. Foshier investigated some of these processes, for example. She participated in and observed the construction of homeland security in Boston in the weeks and months following the events on 11 September 2001 in New York City (2009). In the process, the researcher may be able to interrogate the concepts and ideas of the security personnel and policy-makers themselves. The intimacy in interviews and in the fieldwork process might lead to a questioning and self-reflexivity on both sides. At the same time, by asking counter-terrorism officials to justify their actions and to explain them, their worldviews and how they make sense of 'terrorism' can be explicated and perhaps even challenged as part of the fieldwork and interview process.

Another possible avenue for research is to note how 'terrorism' and 'terrorists' have been made sense of outside of the 'usual places,' which tend to be the UK, the US and other English-speaking countries. Toros' work in the Philippines, Sangaravivam's in Sri Lanka and Heath-Kelly's in Italy are a start but there remain avenues for research even within the United States and its allies. States in the Middle East and their labeling of 'terrorism,' militia groups in the United States and their actions against the state, and so on are all avenues for asking how and why 'terrorism' is (and is not) used by the public, by government officials, by the media, etc. to make sense of particular events and actions.

Popular culture and world politics: speaking differently

The chapters by Weber and Debrix discuss the visual aspects of 'terror' and 'terrorism' but in different ways. Debrix focuses on photographs of the aftermath of what has

been labeled 'terrorism' (the Boston bombing) and Weber outlines the challenges and benefits of producing popular culture artefacts as a critical scholar. Critical terrorism scholars have thus not just analyzed fiction and TV shows, films (and other forms of popular culture) but are now beginning to produce popular culture artefacts themselves. Jackson, in his chapter, describes his 2014 book *Confessions of a Terrorist* in which the discussion between a 'terrorist' and his interrogator is the central narrative. By writing the book, Jackson claims he is able to say things and express ideas that would otherwise be difficult to present in an academic journal article or a book manuscript.

Cynthia Weber makes a similar claim when discussing why she makes films – that films give her a way to engage with the audience that would otherwise be difficult, if not impossible. She also explains how films have affective qualities and engage the viewer on an emotional level, thus shifting and perhaps rearranging the self-other relationship from one in which the 'other' – the 'terrorist' – is always a dangerous threat to one where there is empathy between the film-maker, the viewers, and the subject ('terrorist' or otherwise). Future critical research could also produce visuals – films, photographs, perhaps even TV shows, etc. Other outputs could be written documents such as literature or genre fiction. Songs and poetry might be other media for engaging with the question of 'terrorism'.

Both Jackson and Weber direct attention to transdisciplinary research on terrorism, which draws from sociology, film studies, cultural studies, and creative expressions. The question of where such work might 'fit into' traditional international relations or security studies might be raised, but this assumes critical terrorism research has to remain within restrictive boundaries. Instead, the kind of research that Jackson and Weber have done indicates the possibility of going beyond disciplinary boundaries which restrict the type of output that is permissible with regard to research on terrorism. In other words, novels, songs, plays, and films about terrorism and about relations of communities to 'terrorists' are ways in which critical scholars can transverse various disciplines and produce a different form of research product.

Analyzing social networks: connections and ties, not individual entities

The development of new tools has provided a growing resource for critical scholars to use in exploring new and different research questions. Analyzing social networks offers the possibility of investigating, for example, Western citizens who go to fight in the Middle East and North Africa. What are (some of) the social ties that make such outcomes possible (friendship/alliances/religious/etc.)? What social ties have been weakened such that a feeling of belonging in 'the West' is not present (community/friendship/etc.)? Here, the research question is not: how have they been radicalized/turned into a jihadist/etc.? Instead, it is to ask which connections between particular individuals (or events or institutions) are strong or weak such that the outcome of the person leaving a social welfare state that has fairly good civil

rights for its citizens to go to fight in a foreign country where they often have never been before becomes commonsensical?

A social network-based analysis examines relationships and ties rather than individuals. The overall structure of the network thus formed and the positions of 'nodes' (individuals, institutions, etc.) within the network become important rather than the dispositions of particular communities or individuals. For such analysis, open source data, including those from social media, can be used. Another possible data source would be the interviews that are collected in fieldwork or statements by 'terrorists' and others.

Aesthetics of terror(ism)

One of the key areas for the development of research methods in CTS is studying modes and practices of visual representations. For example, visibility is centralized in how 'insurgents' and 'targets' are determined by the United States and its allies and in eliminating them. The change from 'safe' individuals to threats and targets occurs partly due to visualization tools – surveillance technologies, cameras, and individuals viewing movements of other individuals on television screens. Visualization is also key in determining where unarmed aerial vehicles (drones) kill those deemed to be dangerous and in ensuring that death has occurred.

Visualization is not just centralized in determining who is targeted for killing; it also forms a key identity marker for those deemed different (and thus dangerous) within liberal democratic states such as the United States. Recent revelations about the New York Police Department spying on US Muslims (ACLU n.d.) is worth recalling here. Critical research could draw historical continuities with past practices that discriminated against people of color. Another possible avenue for visualization-related research is to study how those who visualize and kill others – e.g. drone operators, engineers who design drones, etc. – feel about and understand their actions. Research on how 'terrorism' and 'terrorists' have been visualized and portrayed in official and popular sites is another possibility. In much of these, the techniques and practices of visualizing – looking – can be studied. How are particular subjects visualized? Who is not visualized? What techniques of visualization operate in the process of looking at others and constituting them as 'dangerous'? What meanings of events and actions are promoted within specific ways of looking? Such questions become centralized when using visual methods.

Aesthetics can also include studying spaces and built environments. For example, critical scholars such as Heath-Kelly have examined memorials to terrorism. Jack Santino, in *Signs of War and Peace*, examines memorializations of violence in Northern Ireland. An awareness of and theorization of space also means discussing which spaces are visible and talked/written about and which are not. Discussing marginality, Brown writes (quoting bell hooks) that marginality is a site of radical possibility. This potential for something different and for creating a different set of relations with those considered 'terrorist' can be further researched.

Emotions and embodiment

Research on emotions and bodily representations is another avenue that is still lacking in CTS. How do people feel horror? Terror? Insecurity? What are the possible effects of emotions on counter-terrorism officials or insurgents or 'jihadists' or the general public? Related to this is the question of how the body of an individual can be theorized as it relates to or is engaged in acts of violence. Debrix writes: 'Bringing the human back into the picture in the form of a body that is shown to be vulnerable to insecurity and terror is no guarantee that humanity is recognized or, at least, sought after in "our" most common representations of terror and "our" responses to it.' In short, the way in which (some) bodies are portrayed and made visible and others ignored and made invisible are aspects of the study of terrorism that can be further pursued. Weber also pays attention to emotions and how film-making and films are used to communicate emotions, both of the people who are on film and of the film-maker herself. She claims: 'These issues of the ethics of looking as well as the creation of an "intimate space" when filming individuals and their stories are issues that become relevant in the production of visual images.' Tied into emotions are thus questions of intimacy and connecting with the research participants, issues that many of our authors foreground.

Worlding terror

The question of 'worlding' also becomes important when considering what the future of terrorism studies might involve. Worlding directs attention to the generative potential of meaning-making practices while reminding us that what is known now may change in the future. Studying the various understandings and historical developments of 'terrorism,' one can critique conventional understandings of terrorism and counter-terrorism but also how these current meanings are raced and gendered. The usefulness of terrorism in maintaining imperial relations of power is one aspect of research that Sangarivam discusses: 'Terrorism is of cultural value to empire. As a place where imperial sentiments of nationalism and patriotism are nurtured and galvanized, terrorism is of cultural value for creating and maintaining a cohesive and unified national identity ...' This is something worth recalling as critical research on terrorism expands.

Future research can examine and outline how 'worlding' occurs differently, depending on one's standpoint for researching 'terrorism.' The process of constructing different worlds is a concern of Spencer who writes, 'Thereby the chapter shows that metaphors do not only describe reality but they actively take part in the construction of the world as we see it, think of it and ultimately react to it.' For him, language and how it is used makes up the world as we know it. Hence, language – written and spoken – becomes important to analyze. Joseph emphasizes how a study of particular texts is not just about those texts but 'the crucial point then is that the question of how to read documents is intimately connected to the question of how to conceptualise the wider social context.' Maher and Thomson

provide a timely reminder that terrorism is not studied in isolation; instead, it is part of a social system in which other aspects of the system are also relevant and interconnected: 'Capitalism should not be understood myopically: it is not simply an economic system, but constitutes a whole way of being and acting. Capitalism is thus a political, economic and social force that shapes and continually interacts with certain outcomes, including terrorism.'

This process of worlding is also a concern for Toros who advocates 'speaking with' research participants and seeing what used to be called 'research subjects' as 'co-participants' in research. She acknowledges there is a power asymmetry between the researcher and the research population but calls for 'acknowledging the micro-level details and being aware of the process of talking, listening, hearing.' This bodily engagement – all the senses are involved in this research – becomes part of how future researchers can centralize a constant awareness of themselves and others in the context of doing research.

The chapters provided here are starting points to conducting research which, previously, would have been difficult to do. The way these chapters are written shows how it is not always possible to speak and write about research. In the words of one of the authors:

Something important had happened which would escape me forever if I didn't sit, relax, and let it return in a verbalised and processed form. I couldn't 'find words' for several hours. Something striking had happened which I couldn't express. Why did language desert me so suddenly? (Heath-Kelly this volume)

In explaining this, Heath-Kelly directs attention not just to a lack of methodological diversity in terrorism studies but also to the continued silences – of issues of race, of analysis of class, of studying the effects of colonialism, of interrogating gendered structures of power, of asking questions about why is there so little primary research on terrorism – that still exist in terrorism studies. This book is a small step in the attempt to open up these conversations and provide some tools for future researchers to continue making critical terrorism studies more pluralist.

The future of critical scholarship can also go 'beyond terrorism' as it studies political violence or non-violence more generally, and goes beyond the state to a study of the everyday experiences of people who live in situations of violence. There is need for further research that examines insecurities and violence and how they are present in the daily lives of peoples, such that the experiences of 'terrorism' and the embodiment of 'terrorism' can be studied. Ryan (this volume) alludes to this:

From my conversations with Palestinian women, and my travels through checkpoints and demonstrations and kitchens and women's groups, I came to understand how violent responses to the occupation are but a small element in the tapestry of women's resistance, and that focusing only on these small elements of violence would only contribute to the association of 'Palestinian' with 'terrorist'.

Let us end by a reminder that 'terrorism' – its meanings and how it is understood – changes over time. Jackson (this volume) makes this clear:

These questions suggested that there was a great deal more to 'terrorism' than simply acts of political violence committed by small groups of dissidents – acts which could be objectively identified, measured and analyzed using empirical methods. Rather, they suggested that terrorism was a much broader and more complex cultural-political discourse made up of a series of narratives, metaphors, predicates, labels, assumptions and discursive formations. Moreover, it was a discourse that changed and shifted over time and place.

The authors in this book claimed space for doing research on terrorism, differently. They have found languages to ask questions that would ordinarily be silenced in terrorism studies and picked up tools that often remain unused in scholarship on terrorism. While carving spaces for change is a praiseworthy aim and we need to keep working at this, it is also essential to remember that there should also be a commitment to interrogating and dismantling existing modes of thinking, writing, representing, and communicating terrorism which mainly privileges a 'Western' masculinized view of the world. The chapters in this book are a start towards that goal.

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