Babies and Bathwaters: Reflecting on the Pitfalls of Critical Studies on Terrorism

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This paper considers four challenges a critical terrorism studies will have to face. Starting from the premise that a critical turn must both challenge traditional approaches to 'terrorism' and provide an umbrella under which traditional and critical perspectives from 'terrorism studies' and cognate fields can converge, it reflects on the tensions this will introduce. It then considers what problems adoption/rejection of the term 'terrorism' will pose, before going on to reflect on the need for policy-relevance and the tensions between striving to influence policy and avoiding co-optation. The paper ends with a reflection on the challenge of being sensitive to cultural and contextual differences while remaining true to one's emancipatory agenda.

As Jackson and Gunning have noted elsewhere, there is a growing body of critically constituted studies of what traditional scholars call 'terrorism'.[1] Though as yet amorphous and dispersed across different disciplines, a shared assumption of this body of research (though not necessarily explicitly stated) is that traditional terrorism research is dominated by state-centric, problem-solving approaches that by and large accept the state's definition of the terrorism problem, and that research into 'terrorism' needs a more critical engagement with the problem. Beyond that, opinions are divided over what exactly constitutes a critical field, what its core organising principles should be, or who should be considered part of this field.

In this paper, rather than discussing the contours of a critical turn, I will reflect on the pitfalls facing critical terrorism studies (CTS). I will look at four different aspects: the boundaries of a critically constituted field and the importance of inclusivity; problems with adopting the term 'terrorism' as a central organising principle; the need for policy-relevance and what this means for funding and cooperation with state actors; and tensions between a (universalist) emancipatory agenda and cultural and contextual sensitivity.

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[1] Gunning, Jeroen (2007a (forthcoming)) 'A Case for Critical Terrorism Studies?' *Government and Opposition,* 42; Jackson, Richard (2007) 'Terrorism Studies and the Politics of State Power', paper given at ISA Annual Conference, Chicago, 28 February. accessed . The 'scare marks' are intended to signal that 'terrorism' is a deeply contested term, the analytical value of which has been undermined by the political use of the term, and to remind readers that the need to problematise the term and its political usages is central to any 'critical turn'.

Boundaries and the Importance of Inclusivity

Elsewhere, I have identified two reasons for why a critical turn is necessary.[2] One, which Jackson has covered in his paper,[3] concerns the dominance of state-centric, problem-solving approaches within terrorism studies, and the close ideological-organisational association of key researchers with state institutions (or what Burnett and Whyte call 'embedded expertise').[4] The result is often a largely ahistorical, de-politicised state-centric account of 'terrorism' which relies heavily on secondary sources, and replicates knowledge that by and large reinforces the *status quo*.

The second, equally important reason concerns the disparate nature of existing critical research. Much critical research is already being carried out by anthropologists, social movement theorists, area studies specialists, peace studies theorists and psychologists, among others.[5] Yet, whether because of a suspicion of the agenda of 'terrorism studies', unease with the term 'terrorism' itself, or simply disciplinary fragmentation, much of this research is published outside the field of terrorism studies, thus preventing cross-fertilisation.[6] A critically constituted field may help to facilitate this much-needed cross-fertilisation and provide a 'space' within which scholars of cognate or marginalised perspectives can converge.

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[2] Gunning, Jeroen (2007a (forthcoming)) 'A Case for Critical Terrorism Studies?' *Government and Opposition,* 42.

[3] Jackson, Richard (2007) 'Terrorism Studies and the Politics of State Power', paper given at ISA Annual Conference, Chicago, 28 February. accessed .

[4] Burnett, Jonny and Whyte, Dave (2005) 'Embedded Expertise and the New Terrorism', *Journal for Crime, Conflict and the Media,* 1(4): 1-18.

[5] Cf. John Paul Lederach, Paul Rogers and William Zartman in conflict resolution/transformation studies; Allen Feldman, Marianne Heiberg, Carolyn Nordstrom, John Sidel and Jonathan Spencer in social anthropology; social movement scholars in della Porta, Donatella (ed.), (1992) *Social Movements and Violence: Participation in Underground Organizations*, International Social Movement Research, 4, London: JAI Press; area studies scholars in Heiberg, Marianne , Tirman, John, and O'Leary, Brendan (eds.) (2007) *Terror, Insurgency and the State: Ending Protracted Conflicts* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; psychologists and criminologists in Silke, Andrew (2003) *Terrorists, victims and society: psychological perspectives on terrorism and its consequences*; Chichester: Wiley.

[6] Cf. Avishag Gordon's finding that between 1988-2001 nearly 80 percent of articles on 'terrorism' were published outside the core 'terrorism studies' journals (out of a total of 3648 articles, 2864 or 79% were published outside against 784 or 21% inside the field; Gordon, Avishag (2004) 'Terrorism and Knowledge Growth: A Databases and Internet Analysis', in Andrew Silke (ed.), *Research on Terrorism: Trends, Achievements and Failures*; London: Frank Cass, pp. 104-18). These statistics can only be taken as indicative since they are dependent on how one defines what constitutes core 'terrorism studies' journals, and whether one includes articles that do not use the term 'terrorism' at all. But, that much is published on the phenomenon of 'terrorism' outside 'terrorism studies' is clear, as is the fact that many of those who publish elsewhere do not wish to be identified with 'terrorism studies'. It is, for instance, no coincidence that only one of the eight area specialists approached by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) to produce a collection of case studies on long-standing conflicts involving 'terrorism', had published in the two journals Silke regards as the core of 'terrorism studies' (see Marianne Heiberg *et al.* (eds.), *Terror, Insurgency and the State* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming 2007; for details see Gunning, Jeroen (2007a (forthcoming)) 'A Case for Critical Terrorism Studies?' *Government and Opposition,* 42). It is similarly no coincidence that many of those working on the Middle East, whether as area studies specialists, anthropologists or international relations theorists, typically do not publish in these core journals.

However, this introduces a fundamental tension. To be critical in the first sense, a critical field must explicitly challenge state-centric, problem-solving perspectives, and call into question existing definitions, assumptions and power structures. To be critical in the second sense, it must attempt to be inclusive, to enable the convergence of not only explicitly critical perspectives but also the more rigorous traditional, problem-solving perspectives of both cognate and 'terrorism studies'. Much of interest has been written by, for instance, those traditional conflict resolution scholars who have moved beyond a narrow military understanding of security and placed violence in its wider social context.[7] Similarly, traditional scholars within terrorism studies have produced significant research that we ignore at our peril.[8] Or, as Ariel Merari observed, studies from outside 'terrorism studies', however strong in other aspects, are often marred by a lack of familiarity with core insights from the traditional 'terrorism' literature.[9] Conversely, traditional scholars would benefit greatly from exposure to cognate or critical perspectives.

Further complicating this dynamic is that the term 'critical' is itself highly contested. Post-structuralists and Critical Theorists have a very different understanding of what constitutes 'critical' – or indeed of what the chief aims of a critical field ought to be (e.g. whether it should be policy-relevant, focus solely on power-knowledge issues, etc.).

Important lessons can be learned from the critical turn in cognate fields. Critical security studies is of particular interest, since terrorism studies emerged from security and strategic studies. Within CSS, there are widely different trends. Krause and Williams, for instance, propose an inclusive approach to bring together those perspectives 'outside of the mainstream of the discipline'.[10] Booth, conversely, advocates a more normative Critical Theory approach which demands not just critical self-reflexivity but a full-blown theory of critical security studies.[11] Booth holds that a field without a coherent organising theory is too eclectic to withstand internal contradictions. Krause and Williams argue that too normative a straightjacket will prevent the creation of a critical mass.

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[7] Cf. William Zartman, Stephen Stedman, John Darby, to name but a few. Harmonie Toros makes this same point (Toros, Harmonie (2006) 'Joining Forces: Bringing Peace Research into Terrorism Studies', paper given at BISA Annual Conference, Cork, 18-20 December. accessed). See also my use of Stedman's spoiler model in helping to explain Hamas (Gunning, Jeroen (2004) 'Peace with Hamas? The transforming potential of political participation', *International Affairs,* 80(2): 233-55; Gunning, Jeroen (2007b) *Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence*; London: Hurst).

[8] Examples of such research are Robert Pape, Marc Sageman, Adrian Guelke, Lawrence Freedman, Magnus Ranstorp, and depending on where one draws the line between critical and traditional, Martha Crenshaw, Leonard Weinberg and Ami Pedahzur (who I have elsewhere identified as 'critical' in the broadest sense but whom Jackson has labelled consistently critical traditional scholars; Gunning, Jeroen (2007a (forthcoming)) 'A Case for Critical Terrorism Studies?' *Government and Opposition,* 42; Jackson, Richard (2007) 'Terrorism Studies and the Politics of State Power', paper given at ISA Annual Conference, Chicago, 28 February. accessed).

[9] Quoted and paraphrased in Silke, Andrew (2004c) 'The Road Less Travelled: Recent Trends in Terrorism Research', in Andrew Silke (ed.), *Research on Terrorism: Trends, Achievements and Failures*; London: Frank Cass, pp. 186-213.

[10] Williams, Michael and Krause, Keith (1997) 'Preface', in Keith Krause and Michael Williams (eds.), *Critical Security Studies*; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. vii-xxi.

[11] Booth, Ken (2004a) 'Introduction to Part 3 (Emancipation)', in Ken Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*; Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, pp. 181-88.

Even though these internal divisions have triggered rich and insightful debates, the impact of CSS has arguably been muted by such divisions. CSS has furthermore only partially succeeded in making security studies as a whole more self-reflexive. Though the creation of a separate field highlighted the main field's shortcomings and created space for critical approaches, it also helped to create a ghetto which left the rest of the field to its traditional tendencies.

A CTS has to reflect how to proceed in light of this experience – how to create sufficient space for critical studies without ghettoising itself and leaving the 'mainstream' to its traditional tendencies; how to ensure inclusion of both critically-minded traditionalists and the wide variety of critical perspectives; and how to prevent itself from imploding under the burden of either internal divisions, or too much eclecticism.[12]

Problems with adopting the term 'terrorism'

Adopting 'terrorism' as the central organising concept creates a further set of problems. CTS rightly critiques the way 'terrorism' knowledge is constructed. But by creating a critical sub-field of 'terrorism studies', one risks reproducing knowledge that privileges violence over other types of behaviour. This is particularly pertinent for those who study phenomena that include 'terrorist' aspects from cognate disciplines. My own research illustrates this. I first became interested in Hamas as a Palestinian social movement. My primary interest was not why Hamas had adopted political terror tactics but in how Hamas interacted with its domestic constituency. I, and many others studying Hamas at that time, did not consider myself part of a 'terrorism studies' field.[13]

Within such a perspective, violence is only one aspect among many. Yet, by publishing in a field defined by 'terrorism', even if critically conceived, one risks reproducing the discursive link between Hamas and 'terrorism', reinforcing the notion

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[12] I believe a broad commitment to self-reflexivity is more likely to achieve this than demanding allegiance to a more expanded set of ontological, epistemological and methodological commitments. This does not mean the absence of certain shared normative commitments, with ontological, epistemological and methodological commitments – such as a sensitivity to the political use of the term 'terrorism', awareness of the wider historical context, and of the role of both state actors and those designated as 'terrorists' in creating the problem. But I do not believe it necessary, or helpful, to demand that all within this critical field need to concern themselves primarily with knowledge production, or adopt a post-positivist or social constructionist perspective. Realists such as John Mearsheimer have much to add to a critical field, as do those, such as Pape or Sageman, who are closer to a positivist than a constructionist perspective.

[13] Those studying Hamas from, for instance, an area studies or a social movement theory perspective would not have necessarily consulted the 'terrorism' literature, at least prior to 9/11. Moreover, much of the literature on Hamas pre-2001 does not engage with 'terrorism studies' (e.g. Abu-Amr, Ziad (1994a) *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, Indiana series in Arab and Islamic studies; Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press; Milton-Edwards, Beverley (1996) *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, Library of modern Middle East studies, 10; London: Tauris Academic Studies; Nüsse, Andrea (1998) *Muslim Palestine: The Ideology of Hamas*; Amsterdam: Harwood Academic; Hroub, Khaled (2000) *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*; Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies; Mishal, Shaul and Sela, Avraham (2000) *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*; New York: Columbia University Press).

that terroristic violence is what defines Hamas and differentiates it from other phenomena.

Outside the power structures that facilitated the emergence of a dedicated 'terrorism studies', 'terrorism' does not constitute an obvious central organising concept on which to build a field. Organisations and states move in and out of 'terrorism' and often share little else. There is little that the Unabomber, anti-abortionists, US officers training Nicaraguan Contras and Hamas have in common beyond their use of a similar tactic.[14] Yesterday's 'terrorists' can become today's politicians or even statesmen (Mandela is a case in point), begging the question when a 'terrorist' phenomenon ceases to be a proper subject for 'terrorism studies'.[15]

Adoption of the term 'terrorism' also risks reproducing the very state-centric perspective that a critical approach seeks to challenge. Since 'terrorism' is discursively linked to the notion of targeting non-combatants, adopting the term risks uncritically reproducing the notion of non-combatant immunity, with its concomitant assumption that the state is the sole legitimate security-provider. While I personally strongly believe in non-combatant immunity, I recognise that the notion is historically, and to an extent normatively, intimately intertwined with a Westphalian conception of the state. To argue that non-combatants are fundamentally different from combatants, and that violence against the former is illegitimate is to risk replicating this dominant understanding of the state. This is not to say that it is conceptually impossible to argue for non-combatant immunity at the same time as critiquing the centrality of the state. It is simply to make explicit the genealogical link between the two concepts, and highlight that even a critical engagement with the term may serve to reproduce the very structures that one is trying to critique.

Usage of the term 'terrorism' also poses serious security problems for those conducting fieldwork among 'terrorists' and the communities they belong to.[16] A colleague whose publisher insisted on including 'terrorism' in her book title found that her relationship with her research subjects had come under serious strain as a result. If one of the aims of CTS is to engage both those considered 'terrorist' and their communities, converging under the term 'terrorism' may have considerable drawbacks.

Yet, if we do not converge under a central concept such as 'terrorism', however problematic, much of this critical research will remain fragmented,[17] preventing cross-

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[14] Cf. also Ranstorp, Magnus (2006) 'Mapping Terrorism Research: Challenges and Priorities', in Magnus Ranstorp (ed.), *Mapping Terrorism Research: State of the Art, Gaps and Future Direction*; London: Routledge, pp. 2-24;

[15] In my own work on Hamas and Hizballah, most of what I want to understand or explain can be said without reference to the term 'terrorism' – unless it concerns the way 'terrorism' discourse is used to demonise or marginalise Hamas and Hizballah (this is not to say that certain practices of Hamas and Hizballah are morally unjustifiable, especially within a critical perspective which is concerned with the human security of all concerned, whether Israeli or Palestinian; I am simply referring to the political usage of the term). The decision of these organisations to target civilians can be explained without the term 'terrorism', and this is only one aspect of a much larger picture.

[16] Or what Paddy Hillyard aptly termed 'suspect communities' Hillyard, Paddy (1993) *Suspect Community: People's Experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in Britain*; London: Pluto Press.

[17] Without 'terrorism' as a conceptual umbrella, it is unlikely that I would have been aware of the model Ross and Gurr developed to explain the demise of political violence in North America, or of the similarities between the dynamics between mass movement, violent organisation and state forces in

fertilisation between critical cognate perspectives but also leaving traditional approaches and policy-makers relatively unchallenged.[18]

There are two further reasons for retaining 'terrorism'. One of the key tasks of CTS is to investigate the political usage of this term. For that reason alone, it should be retained as a central marker. The term 'terrorism' is furthermore currently so dominant that CTS cannot afford to abandon it. Academia does not exist outside the power structures of its day. However problematic the term, it dominates public discourse and as such needs to be engaged with, deconstructed and challenged, rather than abandoned and left to less critical scholars. Funds earmarked for studying 'terrorism' should similarly not be left simply to others.

Policy-Relevance, Funding and Co-optation

At the heart of the critical project lies the notion of 'emancipation'. Different critical schools approach this concept differently. Some denounce it as too implicated in grand meta-narratives and normative projects, including past, and not so past, (neo)-colonial projects.[19] Yet, an increasing number of voices have observed that all critical projects derive from an underlying conception of a different order.[20] Even some of those most critical of the term, notably Derrida, have (re)-embraced the notion.[21] To be 'critical', it seems, one has to have some normative notion of what is wrong and how things should be different. This need not involve a predetermined blueprint of utopia. In fact, such a blueprint is anathema to contemporary conceptions of 'critical'. For, quoting Wyn Jones, it is 'inherent in a dialectical approach that [it] regards each order or condition as the bearer of its own negation.'[22] Or, with Hutchings, because 'the notion of emancipation … is itself authoritative and exclusionary', critical scholars must always 'acknowledge that no normative position is nonexclusive or

1970s Italy and 1990s Israel/Palestine (Ross, Jeffrey and Gurr, Ted (1989) 'Why terrorism subsides', *Comparative Politics,* 21(4); della Porta, Donatella (1995) 'Left-Wing Terrorism in Italy', in Martha Crenshaw (ed.), *Terrorism in Context*; University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 105-59).

[18] Cf. also Linklater's argument that critical scholars are as relevant as 'realists' and that the claim of 'realists' to be more representative of 'reality' is false (Linklater, Andrew (2004) 'Political community and human society', in Ken Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*; Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, pp. 113-32).

[19] Alker, Hayward (2004) 'Emancipation in the critical security studies project', in Ken Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*; Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, pp. 189-214.

[20] Wyn Jones, Richard (2004) 'On emancipation: necessity, capacity, and concrete utopias', in Ken Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*; Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, pp. 215-36; Alker, Hayward (2004) 'Emancipation in the critical security studies project', in Ken Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*; Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, pp. 189-214 This is also my position (Gunning, Jeroen (2007a (forthcoming)) 'A Case for Critical Terrorism Studies?' *Government and Opposition,* 42).

[21] Alker, Hayward (2004) 'Emancipation in the critical security studies project', in Ken Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*; Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, pp. 189-214; Wyn Jones, Richard (2004) 'On emancipation: necessity, capacity, and concrete utopias', in Ken Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*; Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, pp. 215-36).

[22] Wyn Jones, Richard (2004) 'On emancipation: necessity, capacity, and concrete utopias', in Ken Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*; Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, pp. 215-36.

unchallengeable.' In other words, 'what cannot be revised is the assumption of the revisability of conditions itself'.[23]

If emancipation is central to the critical project, CTS cannot remain policy-irrelevant without belying its emancipatory commitment. It has to move beyond critique and deconstruction to reconstruction and policy-relevance.[24] The challenge of CTS is to engage policy-makers – as well as 'terrorists' and their communities – and work towards the realisation of new paradigms, new practices, and a transformation of political structures. That, after all, is the original meaning of the notion of 'immanent critique'.[25]

Striving to be policy-relevant does not mean that one has to accept the validity of the term 'terrorism' or stop investigating the political interests behind it. Nor does it mean that all research must have policy-relevance or that one has to limit one's research to what is relevant for the state, since the critical turn implies a move beyond state-centric perspectives. End-users could, and should, include both state and non-state actors, both the Foreign Office and the Muslim Council of Britain and Hizb ut-Tahrir; both the Northern Island Office and the IRA and the Ulster Unionists; both the Israeli government and Hamas and Fatah – as long as the goal is to combat both political terror and political structures encouraging terror.

However, engaging policy-makers raises the issue of co-optation. One of the fears of critical scholars is that by engaging policy-makers, either they or their research become co-opted. Many of us have sat on panels as the 'token' radical whose presence legitimised otherwise traditional projects. A more intractable problem is the one highlighted by Rengger that 'the demand that theory must have a praxial dimension itself runs the risk of collapsing critical theory back into traditional theory by making it dependent on instrumental conceptions of rationality.' Rengger hints at the possibility of an alternative 'critical' route which is 'not so hostile to instrumental rationality per se and therefore more able to put together strategy and tactics in both intellectually and politically fertile ways'.[26] A related problem is that by becoming embedded in existing power structures, one risks reproducing existing knowledge structures or inadvertently contributing to counter-terrorism policy that uncritically

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[23] Hutchings, Kimberly (2001) 'The Nature of Critique in Critical International Relations Theory', in Richard Wyn Jones (ed.), *Critical Theory and World Politics*; London: Lynne Rienner, pp. 79-90.
[24] Cf. Booth, Ken (2004b) 'Beyond critical security studies', in Ken Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*; Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, pp. 259-89 [check], Williams, Michael and Krause, Keith (1997) 'Preface', in Keith Krause and Michael Williams (eds.), *Critical Security Studies*; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. vii-xxi.
[25] In Booth's words, this involves 'the discovery of the latent potentials in situations on which to build political and social progress' and means 'building with one's feet firmly on the ground, not constructing castles in the air' (Booth, Ken (2004b) 'Beyond critical security studies', in Ken Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*; Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, pp. 259-89 [check]). Booth similarly argues that any critical project (a critical security theory, in his case) should be policy-relevant: 'it is essential to ask what it means for real people in real places. What, for example, does one's theorizing mean for the people(s) of the Balkans, women in east Africa, the prospects for the poorest classes in some region…?' (Booth, Ken (2004b) 'Beyond critical security studies', in Ken Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*; Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, pp. 259-89 [check]. See also Cox, Robert (1981) 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies,* 10(2): 126-55.
[26] Rengger, N.J. (2001) 'Negative Dialectic? The Two Modes of Critical Theory in World Politics', in Richard Wyn Jones (ed.), *Critical Theory and World Politics*; London: Lynne Rienner, pp. 91-109.

strengthens the *status quo*. Such dilemmas have to be confronted and debated. But non-engagement is not an option.

Engagement is facilitated by the fact that, as counter-terrorism projects flounder, advisors to policy-makers are increasingly eager for advice, even critical. The problem is not access *per se*, but the level of access and how advice is acted upon. Whenever I have addressed foreign affairs personnel, the response to my research has been positive. However, according to those present, the advice they produce seldom influences official policy, as other more pressing concerns affect actual policy-making. Because of this distance between critical academics and policy-makers, the advice becomes too diluted.

For obvious reasons, embedded scholars and traditional think-tanks have enjoyed a much closer relationship with policy-makers, allowing them both more institutionalised and more direct access.[27] This is partly structural since critical studies are inherently critical of existing power structures, partly a function of the reluctance displayed by 'critical' scholars. 'Critical' scholars have also at times unnecessarily burned bridges by issuing blanket condemnations of all things statist.[28] It is important that 'critical' scholars do not indulge in demonising state actors, just as they argue against demonising 'terrorists'.[29] Just as Halliday critiqued those who privileged voices from 'the South' as somehow more authentic, critical scholars must guard against either privileging 'terrorist' voices or uncritically critiquing state or state-related actors.[30]

Critical scholars have to think carefully how to increase access without losing critical distance. The establishment of dedicated critical journals, seminars and conferences which actively seek to engage policy-makers is one way forward, as are collaborative efforts with traditional conferences already habitually attended by policy-makers.[31] The creation of dedicated research centres and think-tanks may similarly be necessary.

But engaging policy-makers is not the only way forward. Engaging 'terrorists' and 'suspect communities', and civil society actors more generally, is equally important. In the age of the blog, alternative news websites and transnational grassroots activism, CTS must be at the forefront of creating counter-hegemonic discourses. It can do this at universities – over the past four and a half years, over 600 students have been

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[27] A good example is the recent row in British politics about the influence of the conservative think-tank Policy Exchange which has direct access to the leaders of the Conservative Party, and is funded by it and others supportive of the Conservative Party. Cf. Marie Breen Smyth & Jeroen Gunning, 'The Abuse of Research', he Guardian, 13 February 2007; Steven King, 'Muscular liberalism and Muslim identity', The Guardian, 16/17 February 2007.

[28] David Miller's diatribe against St Andrews' John Horgan is a case in point, particularly as Horgan is one of the trailblazers of a more critical approach within the historically traditionalist bastion of St Andrews ('Terrorism Studies' And The War On Dissent', *Spinwatch*, 7 November 2006, http://www.spinwatch.org/content/view/3625/8/).

[29] This also extends to think-tanks with close links to power. Just because a piece of research comes from RAND does not automatically invalidate it. A critical study is similarly not inherently good.

[30] Halliday, Fred (1996) *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: religion and politics in the Middle East*; London: Tauris.

[31] St Andrews' terrorism conferences are a case in point, as are NATO workshops. USIP also offers interesting opportunities by being more willing to take risks.

exposed to critical perspectives on 'terrorism' in Aberystwyth alone.[32] But it can also do this through partnerships with 'suspect communities', or publicly challenging new laws or directives, as many have already begun to do.

There are also issues surrounding funding. In the UK, a row recently erupted when funding, made available through the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), was found to have come directly from government which had also designed the funding's research brief. Accepting such funding has serious implications for the researchers' perceived independence.[33]

Significantly, though, public funding is available for critical projects. Jackson and McDonald, for instance, received funding from the ESRC for a critical project. The ESRC's New Security Challenges fund, directed by Croft, similarly awarded funding to critical projects.[34] Judging by the complaints of Jones and Ungerer, vociferous opponents of CTS, much of Australian research funding has gone similarly to critical projects.[35] As long as funding is not directly allocated by governments, and governments do not interfere with research design, critical scholars can accept such funding without becoming compromised. But, more has to be done to raise funding from other sources, for example by convincing big business or billionaire philanthropists that CTS is in their long-term interest.

Emancipation, Universalism and Cultural Sensitivity

Although a critical commitment implies awareness of one's own role in norm and knowledge production, commitment to the particular understanding of human security that underpins much critical thinking risks reproducing the very structures that have contributed to the emergence of terrorist conflicts. The notion of human security is deeply embedded in the secular individualist perspective prevalent among Western (and Westernised) scholars. It is moreover often linked to a principled aversion to conflict, and a privileging of non-violent methods. Precisely because a critically conceived field has an 'emancipatory' agenda, it can end up imposing its particular normative agenda, and so become just another (neo)-colonial project.

While I personally endorse the secular, non-violent, individualistic perspectives alluded to above, it is important, from a critical point of view, to recognise their historical and cultural specificity – particularly when studying societies which place a greater value on community and religion, or which regard violence as less problematic, or even integral to the maintenance of order. In the normative struggle between human security and state security perspectives, critical scholars must not lose sight of their own cultural-historical biases, and wrestle with how to remain sensitive to alternative voices while staying true to their own principles.[36] This is particularly pertinent when studying or engaging with 'the global South'.[37]

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[32] For details of programme, see http://www.aberystwyth/interpol/home.html.

[33] Phil Baty, '£1.3m 'spies' project ditched', Times Higher Education Supplement, 27 October 2006.

[34] http://www.polsis.bham.ac.uk/department/staff/profiles/mcdonald.htm; http://www.newsecurity.bham.ac.uk/projects/index.htm (accessed 3 April 2007).

[35] David Jones & Carl Ungerer, 'In an idealist world', *The Australian*, 21 October 2006.

[36] Two possible approaches to the tension between universalism and cultural particularity can be found in Butler's notion of a 'not-yet arrived universality' and Walzer's reiterative universalism (Butler,

The cultural bias against violence becomes particularly problematic in situations where political methods of affecting change are believed to be ineffectual because of a severe asymmetry in the existing power balance. De-legitimising violence, even if accompanied by a simultaneous condemnation of violent state responses, may in such instances make the individuals and communities one seeks to secure less secure, particularly if the state in question is predominantly engaged in less 'visible' violence, such as structural violence, or violence that can be legally 'justified' in the context of war as 'collateral damage'. Or, as a Lebanese friend of mine argued, towards the end of the Lebanese civil war, 'sometimes it is better not to have peace than to have an unjust peace'. I may not agree with him. But it is a tension we have to address.

Conclusion

Whether CTS will succeed in circumnavigating these various pitfalls remains an open question. Other fields have been more or less successful in managing their critical turn, and some tensions are inherently unavoidable. But, given the present opportunities, with state actors actively looking for alternative perspectives, and interest from cognate fields at an all time high, as well as the present dangers of (some) counter-terrorist policies contributing to the erosion of civil liberties and risky foreign policy debacles, we have no option but to try.

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[37] Cf. also Alker, Hayward (2004) 'Emancipation in the critical security studies project', in Ken Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*; Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, pp. 189-214; Ayoob's critique of Booth, quoted in Smith, Steve (2004) 'The contested concept of security', in Ken Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*; Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, pp. 27-62.

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