

ESRC-BISA Seminar

Is it Time for a Critical Terrorism Studies?

Report on a two day conference

jointly organised by

The British International Studies
Association Working Group on
Critical Studies on Terrorism
(CST)

and

The Centre for the Study of
Radicalisation & Contemporary
Political Violence (*CSR/V*),
University of Wales,
Aberystwyth

Friday 27 – Saturday 28 October, 2006

VENUE: University of Manchester

Sponsored by the ESRC and BISA

Conference Aims

Since the terrorist attacks of 2001, hundreds of books and papers have been published on terrorism-related subjects. In the process, terrorism studies has undergone a rapid transformation from minor sub-field of security studies to a significant stand-alone field of teaching and research, with terrorism studies degree programmes, an ever-increasing cohort of terrorism studies PhD students, major terrorism-related research projects, and the establishment of terrorism studies academic posts and specialised terrorism-related research institutions. However, past and more recent review exercises have generated a number of serious epistemological, methodological, and political-normative criticisms of the terrorism studies field as it currently stands. In order to explore the possibilities of establishing a new 'critical studies on terrorism' field, map out a future research agenda and launch the new international network of critical terrorism studies scholars, the conference aimed to explore the case for an explicitly 'critical' terrorism studies.

The conference was designed to engage participants in genuine consultation and interaction in mapping a way forward for the field. Some of the key questions explored during the two days included: What are the main weaknesses and limitations of orthodox terrorism studies research? What would a 'critical terrorism studies' look like in terms of its underlying assumptions, approaches, methodologies, ethical responsibilities, and future research priorities? What are the weaknesses of 'critical' approaches, and what are the main dangers and pitfalls that need to be avoided? What can a critical terrorism studies offer policy-makers?

Programme

Friday 27 October 2006

Session 1: Terrorism Studies: Trends, Achievements, Limitations

Speakers: Dr Andrew Silke, University of East London
Dr Richard Jackson, University of Manchester
Dr David Miller, University of Strathclyde

Small Group Discussions

Report Back and Plenary

Keynote Address: Speaker: Prof Joseba Zulaika, Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, Reno
Respondent: Prof Paddy Hillyard, The Queen's University of Belfast

Saturday 28 October 2006

Session 2: Challenges and Opportunities for the development of Critical Studies on Terrorism

Speakers: Dr Jeroen Gunning, Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Contemporary Political Violence (CSRV), University of Wales, Aberystwyth
Dr Matt McDonald, University Birmingham
Dr Brendan O'Duffy, Queen Mary, University of London

Small Group Discussions

Report Back and Plenary

Session 3: Forging a Critical, Policy Relevant Research Agenda: the Way Forward (panel)

Panelists: Dr John Horgan, Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, University of St Andrews
Robert Lambert, Metropolitan Police Muslim Contact Unit
Dr Marie Breen Smyth, CSRV, University of Wales, Aberystwyth

Final Session: Conclusions

Launch BISA Working Group on Critical Studies on Terrorism

Introduction

A conference jointly organised by the Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Contemporary Political Violence (CSRV) at the Department of International Politics, University of Wales, Aberystwyth and the British International Studies Association Working Group on "terrorism" took place in Conference Centre at the University of Manchester on October 27th and 28th, 2006. Dr Marie Breen Smyth, Director of CSRV, opened the conference by thanking the organisers, speakers, and sponsors. In particular, she drew attention to the attendance of several policy-makers, and hoped that dialogue between all attendees would be constructive, even at those times where different positions were evident.

Marie also drew attention to forthcoming activities of the BISA working group, including the launch of a new, peer-reviewed journal in 2008 (*Critical Studies on Terrorism*), panels at the upcoming BISA and ISA conferences, and plans for an edited book to pull together the best papers from this conference and three others that will be organised by CSRV with the help of an ESRC Seminar Grant.

Panel One: 'Terrorism' Studies – Trends, Achievements, Limitations

Andrew Silke

Prof Andrew Silke's paper examined the state of recent 'terrorism' research, as evidenced by the output of the two core journals in the field: *Terrorism and Political Violence*, and *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. He argued that 'old' 'terrorism' experts don't necessarily see themselves as 'terrorism' experts, but rather as students of political violence and low-intensity conflict. However, a new generation of scholars, emerging since 11 September 2001, are happier to describe their activities as focused on the study of 'terrorism', and are clearer that "'terrorism' studies' is a viable field.

Data collected from a study of articles published by the two core journals, both before 9/11 and afterwards, show the following trends:

There has been an increase in the use of inferential statistics, potentially showing a move to a more quantitative treatment of 'terrorism'. Only 3% of articles before 9/11 used statistics in this way, rising to 10% since 9/11. Comparatively speaking, however, this figure is rather low: one-third of criminology articles makes use of inferential statistics.

There has been an increase in collaborative work. Pre-9/11, only 9% of articles was authored by two or more scholars. In the period since 9/11, this figure has risen to 21%. This may be a consequence of a greater access by the research community to large grants since 9/11. Such pots of money allow for the creation of research teams and the employment of research assistants.

Schmid and Jongman's observation in the late 1980s that work within the field consisted mostly of secondary literature reviews appears to have remained valid, both pre- and post-9/11. Around two-thirds of all articles published, on both sides of the 9/11 attacks, are fairly described as reviews of the secondary literature. It could be argued that these represent the rehashing of old knowledge, rather than the creation of new. To the extent that this observation is true, such a trend is worrying.

Examining the output from the two core journals reveals a preoccupation with several 'fads', which may be a cause for concern. Articles focusing substantially on al Qaeda have risen from virtually 0% before 9/11, to 10% since 9/11. Likewise, across the same period, articles focusing on violent Islamist groups in general rose dramatically from 23% to 63%. The numbers of articles focusing on the confluence between 'terrorism' and weapons of mass destruction have multiplied to a similar extent.

The main victim of this preoccupation appears to be all truly historical work: there have been no recent articles addressing 'terrorism' before the 1990s. Not only is this unfortunate in its own right, but our understanding of contemporary events will be hampered by an inability to draw lessons from the past. As an example, there are many parallels between the US experience in the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century, and the US experience in Iraq today.

Richard Jackson

Dr Richard Jackson's paper examined some of the problems with 'orthodox 'terrorism' studies'. Rather than focus on the methodological flaws of the field, as have both Schmid and Jongman, and Silke, the paper provided a 'critical discourse analysis' critique of the field. Five main criticisms of the field emerge from such an inquiry.

Firstly, 'terrorism' studies employs the label "terrorism" uncritically. Using the term in such an unreflective manner ensures that its use is political, and privileges a state-centric framework. The choice of which groups to study is political: during the Cold War, the field looked at the ANC and PLO, but not the Contras or UNITA. Today, in Colombia, it looks at the FARC, but not at the AUC (which is labelled a paramilitary group instead).

Secondly, the literature represents several core narratives as knowledge, despite their highly contestable nature. Thus, 'terrorism' is presented as the premier threat faced, and as directed specifically against democracies; al Qaeda is represented as a massive threat; terrorists are presented as inherently willing and eager to use WMD; it is taken as read that a 'new terrorism' has emerged, religiously motivated and unconstrained in its use of violence and that this threat requires force-based strategies to counter it. Throughout, 'terrorism' is conceived as nonstate, and non-Western. These narratives are open to a first-order critique (on empirical grounds), as well as a second-order critique (regarding the political function of the narratives).

Thirdly, the literature is unreflective with regards to the power/knowledge nexus, and relies upon an objectivist, positivist methodology. Fourthly, there is a representation of Western foreign policy as wholly benign. A preoccupation with national security, as opposed to human security, ensures that 'terrorism' studies appears to be a vanguard for power.

Lastly, there is a silence regarding the existence of state 'terrorism'. If 'terrorism' is defined according to the nature of the act, rather than the actor, then states clearly are, and historically have been, among the premier terrorist actors. Even with a narrow definition of 'terrorism', restricted to nonstate actors, the existence of Western sponsorship of nonstate 'terrorism' is silenced.

These critiques represent a potential starting place for a critical 'terrorism' studies, which should be driven by a profound dissatisfaction of the current field.

David Miller

Dr David Miller's paper questioned what a critical 'terrorism' studies might look like. In many ways, the term is problematic. Firstly, there is an assumption that orthodox 'terrorism' studies is uncritical, which is untrue: it is just critical of a different sort of 'terrorism' (what we might call 'retail' 'terrorism'). Secondly, it's worth asking whether a critical 'terrorism' studies would be a coherent field. Are all attendees to this conference, for example, united in their approach to the subject? Thirdly, there are problems with the term 'critical', as it allows those who appropriate the label to be dismissed as mad. Indeed, isn't it the case that we are engaged in 'proper and truthful 'terrorism' studies', as opposed to a 'propagandistic 'terrorism' studies'?

The fact that much of 'orthodox' 'terrorism' studies is overtly propagandistic reduces the extent to which there can be dialogue between this and a critical approach. The aim of a critical 'terrorism' studies, as perceived by Dr Miller, would be to reveal the lies deliberately peddled by terrorologists, rather than attempt to modify the standard analysis through a process of dialogue between communities.

As an example of the shoddy scholarship which would need to be confronted by a critical 'terrorism' studies, one can look at the report authored by Anthony Glees and Chris Pope, *When Students Turn to Terror*. This described universities as hotbeds of 'terrorism', which urgently needed to be confronted. However, a close examination of the report shows that there is no substantial evidence to back up the claims. Instead, it relies on a series of insinuations, half-truths, and anecdotal evidence. This type of research is what a critical 'terrorism' studies would be tasked with overcoming, particularly given the media's proclivity to accept the 'knowledge' produced by 'distinguished experts'.

Breakout Discussion: Session One

Blue Group

The blue group used the session to explore several issues around the use of the term "terrorism": what are the problems associated with the term?; should it be maintained as the central organisational concept or abandoned as hopelessly political?; do continuing disagreements in this regard represent a substantial obstacle to research? The group agreed that the term "terrorism" has been used for many political purposes in the past, and that, given the exceptionalism of the term, many emotions and agendas were unavoidably bound up with it. All were clear that it was vital for a critical 'terrorism' studies to interrogate the uses of the term: who is calling who a terrorist, what are the political agendas which benefit from such a rhetorical move, and what are the very real, political, consequences of such uses (for both the labeller and the labelled)?

However, with this as a basis of consensus, the group was divided over the possibility of critical scholars establishing their own, 'objective' definition of 'terrorism', against which to measure the uses of the term by others. Some within the group wanted to devise a set of 'objective' criteria, in order to identify a subset of the universe of political violence as 'terrorist'. The 'real' world could then be investigated with these criteria in mind, and the lies or misrepresentations advanced by politicians and certain orthodox 'terrorism' scholars could be revealed in the light of this 'truth'. This approach would not deny that consensus over the exact criteria would be difficult or impossible to achieve, but neither would it consider this to be a serious obstacle to a more 'objective' research.

Others within the group (possibly the majority of members) felt that this approach was nothing more than a self-lie, as the politics of the subject could not be escaped in this fashion. Presuming otherwise will simply ensure that critical work falls into the same positivist traps of traditional 'terrorism' studies. Moreover, setting objective criteria may impede the project to reveal the political uses of the term by others, as researchers become distracted by the question of what 'terrorism' really is, as opposed to how those in power use the term rhetorically. Instead, critical scholars should judge governments and others with reference to their own standards, and abandon a search for any underlying 'reality of terrorism'. A final thought was given to whether the term 'terrorism' should be retained, given the fundamental problems associated with the term. The point was made that, given that 'terrorism' is the central organising concept for the US-led 'war on terror', we must also make it the central concept of our critiques.

Red Group

The red group's discussion was dominated by the question of the usefulness of the term "terrorism", and the many problems associated with its use (including its pejorative associations and its overwhelming application to non-state actors, thereby ignoring state actors). In particular, it was argued that the lack of an accurate definition impinges upon the concept's usefulness, and undermines any attempt to further our understanding of the phenomenon. Indeed, this weakness in the field reinforces the tendency to apply the term uncritically.

The issue was raised that the *'ism'* in "terrorism" was misplaced: it implies that it is an end in itself (such as liberalism or communism), and there are no wider objectives sought through its employment. There are, however, few movements that use terror for its own sake. Others stressed the benefits of retaining the term: it is the one word whose use is widely understood, and it encompasses the action which many are studying. The problems highlighted should therefore be accepted.

Green Group

The green group reflected on the following questions: what are the normative problems inherent in the use of the term 'terrorism'?; how do these problems or challenges affect our research?; and what prospects exist for responding to these challenges? Many participants argued that the main problem with the term 'terrorism' stems from the propagandist and state-friendly deployment of the term by mainstream 'terrorism' scholars, policymakers and the media. It was suggested that this corruption was so extensive that the term should completely be avoided by CTS (critical terrorism studies) scholars. This view was reinforced by the argument that use of the term made it difficult to gain the confidence of interviewees during fieldwork with 'suspect communities'.

Contrary to this opinion, it was acknowledged that “terrorism” was a ‘buzz-word’, which has political value for scholars, particularly around the issue of attracting funding. With this in mind, it was suggested that CTS should focus on rehabilitating the term, and ensuring that its use is strictly applied to those employing a very particular form of political violence. What this form of violence should be, however, was unclear. Traditional attempts at defining ‘terrorism’ as acts which violate the laws of war (and in particular the targeting of noncombatants) are problematic. This is the case given both the wide set of actors who would fall into this category, and the fact that the laws of war themselves can be seen to reflect an attempt by states to legitimate certain forms of killing, and should therefore be subjected to critical reflections by CTS scholars.

In discussing valid areas of research for CTS scholars, the group suggested the following: power relations (focusing particularly on the totalising narratives, rhetoric of power, and the parasitic relationship between nonstate “terrorism” and state ‘counterterrorism’); radical fundamentalism (with emphasis on risk societies and the causes and means of radicalization); challenges of terrorist ethnographic research (with emphasis on secrecy, with regards to the ‘suspect communities’ and the government, and how this secrecy affects research); ‘terrorism’ and the rule of law; causation.

Keynote Address

Joseba Zulaika

In his keynote address, Prof Joseba Zulaika argued that empirical facts are not consistent with the theory of ‘terrorism’ projected by the orthodox ‘terrorism’ studies approach. In his judgment, political ‘taboo-isation’ of ‘terrorism’ inhibits ‘terrorism’ studies and is the primary reason behind the production of poor research. He therefore urged CTS scholars to reflect on the categories, allegories and rhetoric that characterise the study of ‘terrorism’. He also reflected upon the relationship between our understanding of ‘terrorism’ as an apparently independent phenomenon, and the particular historical evolution of statistics on ‘terrorism’. Here, decisions by data-collectors (such as the CIA) to redefine “terrorism” to capture a wider set of acts have a profound effect on our understanding of the severity of the phenomenon, even absent any change in the world of political violence.

Zulaika further argued that the discourse of ‘terrorism’ has created the reality of ‘terrorism’, rather than the other way round. He gave the example of the recent arrest of a cell suspected of carrying out multiple skyjackings from Heathrow, and how the initial media presentation of this event was not consistent with subsequent briefings of those investigating the case in which they acknowledged that the cell was far from realising its plans. He urged CTS scholars to address this flaw, and also to reflect upon the use of the ‘state of exception’: torture, preventive law as legitimate responses to ‘terrorism’, the (presumed) relationship between ‘terrorism’ and weapons of mass destruction and the interrelationship between ‘terrorism’ and counterterrorism’.

Paddy Hillyard

In his response, Prof Paddy Hillyard criticised the notion of the ‘state of exception’ as justifying the practices of the ‘war on terror’. He characterised such arguments as ahistorical and posited that, by contrast, it is the rule of law that has been the exception. Rather, we should ask what it is about 9/11 that has made it possible to privilege 9/11, and make it exceptional? To what extent do we contribute to this exceptionalisation by accepting its privileged depiction? Terrorism did not start with 9/11 nor is it so fundamentally ‘new’ that there is nothing to learn from ‘old terrorist conflicts’. There is much to learn from the Northern Ireland conflict about how *not* to do things, and in particular about how ‘terrorism’ is the product of a symbiotic relationship between the state and the ‘terrorists’, and not a stand-alone phenomenon that can be eradicated without changing state practices.

There is also much to learn from developments in cognate disciplines. ‘Crime’, like ‘terrorism’, has no ontological basis. It is a construct. Some of us in criminology felt ‘crime’ to be too state-centric and serving state-centric purposes. So we proposed to focus on ‘social harm’, moving from a criminology that aims to eradicate crime to a zymiology that aims to eradicate harm (zymia = harm). Perhaps the discourse analysis proposed by Zulaika does not go far enough and should move beyond questioning the term ‘terrorism’ to create an alternative term which calls into being a different constellation of power-knowledge structures.

Panel Two: Challenges and Opportunities for the Development of Critical Studies on 'terrorism'

Jeroen Gunning

Dr Jeroen Gunning's paper focused upon the questions of whether and why CTS might be necessary, and what a CTS would look like. Many of the observed deficiencies in the field of 'terrorism studies' – from its state-centricness, its focus on military security, its neglect of context, and its aversion to talk directly with 'terrorists' – can be traced back to the predominance of what Robert Cox called a 'problem-solving approach'.

A 'critical turn' would address many of these deficiencies by urging researchers to question their assumptions and methodologies, and go beyond a state-centric, military security paradigm to one focusing on human security more broadly (including among 'suspect communities'). It would encourage research to move beyond a focus on 'terroristic' violence to consider both 'non-terroristic' violence and non-violent behaviour, and to place both within its wider social, political and historical context. It would also help in creating a space for those from cognate disciplines who already apply a broadly 'critical approach' but who do not identify with either the assumptions or the research output of the current orthodoxy.

Alongside this wider remit, there would remain a need (and even a duty) to engage both with traditional 'terrorism' studies and with the policymaking community. CTS will therefore need to tread a fine line between being policy relevant and maintaining a critical perspective. As for the term "terrorism", despite its drawbacks, it continues to be both a discursive 'reality' (in terms of a research 'field', policy-making and funding opportunities) and to provide an umbrella for researchers from cognate disciplines, who need to be brought to the CTS table.

Matt McDonald

Dr Matt McDonald's paper explored various potential benefits to be gained by an emerging CTS by examining the more established field of Critical Security Studies. In particular, the centrality of the concept of 'emancipation' in the latter could greatly inform CTS.

Although notoriously difficult to both define and realise, the concept and practice of emancipation must be central to CTS, where it represents the ethical commitment to the most powerless. Clearly, such an understanding of emancipation demands that researchers 'take sides'; there can be no claims to detached objectivity. Emancipation is necessarily aimed at particular groups, and CTS must reflect that concern. In practice, the centrality of emancipation would lead to a focus on both the victims of all varieties of terror, the 'suspect communities' and those caught up with the current 'War on Terror.'



As well as establishing an explicit political position, this focus on the most vulnerable can also help the study of terror: it will offer a different perspective (that of the powerless), and will therefore avoid becoming hostage to the dictates of power and the agenda-setting that ensues.

Brendan O'Duffy

Dr Brendan O'Duffy's paper was concerned with the effect of 'terrorism's terminology, as well as with contradictory frameworks for considering the legitimacy of terroristic violence.

There is a fundamental problem with the 'ism' of "terrorism". Words that include the suffix *-ism* indicate a philosophical position, ideology or worldview. Terror, on the other hand, is a tactic. Very few movements or organisations are based on the use of violence as desirable in and of itself. Rather it is a means, through which another 'ism' is sought (be it Islamism, liberalism, fascism, etc.).

There are two oppositional positions that exist with regard to the validity and legitimacy of the use of political violence. The first, *relativist* position argues that political violence, under some circumstances, can be legitimate. Whether or not that is the case would depend upon an assessment of factors including the rightfulness of the cause, the likelihood of achieving the desired goals, what other avenues have been explored and the extent of the violence employed and the likely victims. The second, *universalist* position is much less 'apologetic'. It argues that there are no times when a resort to terror is acceptable. Violent terror is never justifiable.



Breakout Discussion: Session Two

Blue Group

The blue group used this session to explore several issues associated with the 'critical' in critical 'terrorism' studies: what approaches does it include?; what problems does it present?; what sort of project are we committed to?

The group quickly arrived at the tension between needing to engage meaningfully with the question of what 'critical' means (necessary to ensure that we really are critical, as opposed to a different kind of oppressive), and needing to avoid descending into a self-referential discussion of abstract issues, at the expense of a real engagement with orthodox 'terrorism' studies and its associated political project. In this context, the view was raised that, to be truly critical, we must be able to engage with the policymaking community.

In exploring what critical must include, the group addressed the vital need to weave in a focus on gender: not as an appendage to the main critical project (a separate, 'feminist' perspective), but in a far more fundamental sense. Moreover, this was the task of all critical scholars, and not just female academics. Likewise, the necessity of including the many 'Southern' security discourses at the heart of a critical 'terrorism' studies was discussed.

Various problems associated with the term 'critical' were explored. In particular, the consequences of such a word on the ability of the field to engage seriously with government were discussed, although the policymaker in the group felt that it would present no formidable obstacle. The group spent a little time considering whether such a relationship with government might compromise the standing of the field, particularly in terms of ethnographies within 'suspect communities'.

In a discussion over the extent to which critical 'terrorism' studies should be normative, the group was divided. Points raised included the question of whether non-normative social science was indeed possible, whether we can determine a set of underlying normative principles to which we can all subscribe, and whether a conception of 'emancipation' might represent this unity (although this introduces its own set of normative problems).

In conclusion, it was agreed that to be 'critical' in the broadest sense means simply to be reflexive, and to demand reflexivity from others. A critical 'terrorism' studies can be a broad church, and should aim to widen dialogue – both amongst critical scholars, and between critical and traditional approaches – rather than attempt to close down discursive space.

Red Group

The red group discussed the use of 'critical' in CTS: what it meant, what it should mean, and how it might be usefully advanced.

It was suggested that 'critical' tends to imply an arrogant distancing from whatever may constitute the mainstream at a particular point. Should that be the case, it would not be an academically defensible position. Indeed, there is a duty to engage with whatever may constitute the literature on terror, and to develop a deeper level of understanding about terror in all its manifestations.

A key issue emerged over the desirability of establishing a normative approach: do such discursive efforts simply mask an attempt to gain or maintain power?; will it unite people under the banner of a critical approach, or divide them amongst the various possible normative projects?

In response to these concerns, the interpretation of CTS as a place of dialogue, reflection, greater awareness, and multidisciplinary perspectives gained considerable support from the group. 'Terrorism' has been studied for some time, and the lack of development within the field could perhaps be attributed to the dominance by one discipline. CTS should attempt to broaden the scope, and to bring in the knowledge from elsewhere (including anthropology, ethnography and international sociology).

There was some disagreement over which methodologies should be considered valid by CTS. Some felt that the field should reject empiricist, positivist approaches, and focus on alternative methodologies; others felt that it

was necessary to engage with the existing mainstream literature on its own terms, and that to dismiss positivism was both short-sighted and self-defeating.

Green Group

The green group reflected upon some of the constraints and challenges facing CTS scholarship. In particular, the lack of a normative and ethical framework to guide research was identified as one of the fundamental challenges facing CTS. Some advocated 'balance' as a guiding principle for CTS research, although this raised a debate as to the distinction between balance (construed as compromise) and truth, and the implication that this may have for research that is supposed to be critical. Alternative understandings of balance, as research that reflects arguments from more than just one particular perspective, were introduced.

Other challenges identified by the group included funding issues, university policies and legal constraints, as well as the lack of trust for CTS scholars by mainstream 'terrorism' studies. It was noted that there are often fundamental security challenges for doing CTS research, and that this needed further reflection.

Panel Three: Forging a Critical, Policy Relevant Research Agenda – The Way Forward

Robert Lambert

Mr Robert Lambert's paper focused on the indispensable role of 'community support' in dealing with the problem of 'terrorism': the engagement with 'suspect communities', as well as victim communities, is key. In particular, this engagement should focus upon 'moderate but influential voices' in communities from which extremism emerges (be it the Irish community in the 1980s, or the Muslim community in Britain today). Indeed, a key weakness of traditional 'terrorism' studies is its almost complete lack of understanding of the complexities and diversity of the Muslim community. This has led to both deep dissatisfaction within the Muslim community itself, and misunderstandings of the reality of extremism which emerges from this community: many moderate figures are construed as threats to security, and much 'terrorist discourse' is wrongly identified as predominantly religious (whereas it is in fact *political* propaganda).

The potential for victimising 'suspect communities' is a real danger, but the threat from 'terrorism' is real; alongside 'critical reflections', therefore, one must maintain a commitment to counter-'terrorism'.

John Horgan

Dr John Horgan began by observing that it was an exciting time to be engaged in terrorism research. Due to the massive increase in interest, the field is no longer as theoretically barren as it was 20 years ago. However, with this growth come a number of pitfalls. With increased specialisation, researchers run the risk of becoming entrenched in their views and methodologies. At the same time, there is an intense pressure to converge prematurely, driven by the desire to establish a separate discipline. Rather, Horgan argued, inter-disciplinarity and debate between diverging methodologies and approaches is what is needed to drive the field forwards, as well as more intense engagement with the insights from the pre-9/11 literature.

Horgan also identified some conceptual and methodological problems. Too many researchers still approach 'terrorism' from within state-centric definitions and treat it as somehow exceptional. This is exacerbated by funding issues and the rise of the 'embedded expert'. Instead, researchers should move beyond state-centric definitions, beyond a focus on 'root causes', to a focus on process, on how 'terrorists' become what they are through involvement in a process of social practices. This should include a critical reflection on the role of the state in this process, and in particular its counter-terrorist practices (and whether these have at times been intended to be counter-productive for political reasons, rather than simply being the unintended consequences of an ill-informed policy). Horgan ended by endorsing the call for a critical terrorism studies but warned against privileging one approach over another, and so fore-closing debate, or creating a separate discipline (as opposed to a multi-disciplinary field).

Marie Breen Smyth

Dr Marie Breen Smyth's paper acknowledged the author's growing agnosticism regarding the question of whether we are engaged in a *critical* or a *traditional* study of 'terrorism'. However, it also provided a tentative roadmap for the project and offered some principles that should guide CTS research.

Such research needs to take account of the rhetoric of 'terrorism', as generated overwhelmingly by state actors, but also by others. In this regard, it must include the context of power relations, and must allocate power in a non-totalising way. Research should also avoid ahistoricity and the exceptionalisation of events such as 9/11, and is urgently required to contribute to the *de-amplification* of the scale of the threat, and guard against the danger of inadvertent amplification.

Subjectivity needs to be foregrounded: as researchers, we need to be explicit about our own positions, so that readers are clear about our identity, and our relationship to the subject. This foregrounding will make explicit several ethical commitments: to be progressive; to ensure that research works towards the eradication of all uses of terror; and to refuse to live behind walls of any kind, but rather to engage with the Other (be that the counterterror state, traditional 'terrorism' studies, or terrorists).

There also needs to be further consideration of the impact of secrecy in CTS research, the legal consequences of recent legislation (such as that which criminalises the 'glorification of 'terrorism''), and how to properly incorporate considerations of gender.

These principles and considerations should lead CTS to focus on a particular set of issues. Specifically, research should be conducted which supports the following suppositions: there exists a symbiosis between 'terrorism' and counter-'terrorism'; there is no physical-force solution to 'terrorism', as any ultimate solution includes a political element; the transformation of 'terrorism' into non-violent forms of expression is a more important focus than the eradication of 'terrorism'; the current state-centric focus should be widened to include (amongst others) a 'suspect community'-centric focus; core concepts require detailed interrogation; and as ethical practitioners, we are required to monitor our collective work, and correct any silences as they appear (for example through the establishment of a special 'task force').

This research focus would benefit from an explicit code of ethics to guide research, which should be established in conjunction with suspect communities.

Final Session: Launch of the Critical Studies on Terrorism Working Group

The final session of the conference involved the launching of the BISA Critical Studies on Terrorism Working Group and a discussion about the aims and activities of the network. It was widely agreed that the working group was useful and important and should be widened to include scholars from disciplines outside of BISA and international relations. It was also agreed that funding from BISA should continue to be used for seminars and conferences, means should be explored to fund PhD attendance at such events and links with other groups, such as NASPIR's terrorology consortium, should be strengthened. Lastly, it was agreed that plans to construct a central website, perhaps with an online discussion forum, should be taken forward.

Preliminary Announcement

CSRV are organising a second conference in late June 2006 on the issue of how trust can be built between alienated factions in the wake of political violence and terror. Details will be posted on CSRV's website at <http://www.aber.ac.uk/interpol/research/CI.html>.