SPECIAL ISSUE

Introduction: 10 Years of *Critical Studies on Terrorism*
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When the editors of *Critical Studies on Terrorism* wrote their introduction to the inaugural issue in April 2008, they noted that "terrorism" was a "growth industry" which generated a huge amount of social and political activity, and affected an extensive list of areas of social and cultural life (Breen Smyth et al, 2008: 1). They also noted that there was a yawning gap between the actual material threat posed by terrorists, and the level of investment and activity devoted to responding to it. They suggested that a central analytical task facing critical scholars of terrorism was therefore to explain "how such a small set of behaviours by such small numbers of individuals generates such a pervasive, intrusive and complex series of effects across the world" (Ibid). Lastly, they noted that the political, legal, cultural and academic context in which the journal was being launched was characterised by a very violent global war on terror, frequent moral panics and the political manipulation of terrorism fears, increasingly draconian anti-terrorism legislation, and the mass proliferation of academic and cultural terrorism-related texts.

It is clear that little has changed in this regard in the ten years since *Critical Studies on Terrorism* (CST) was launched; the context in which the journal first began its work remains largely unchanged. In fact, it could be argued that, if anything, the editors underestimated how transformative the terrorism discourse would be of society and culture in the following decade – at least in the global North, and the extent to which the transformations engendered would stretch and sometimes exceed our theoretical and conceptual capacities to understand, explain and in most cases, resist the transformations. The aim of this Introduction is to briefly reflect on the first ten years of the journal's successes and failures, particularly in relation to some of the key aspirations and hopes that were laid out by the founding editors and the context in which they have since played out. However, more importantly, we aim to take the opportunity afforded by the ten year anniversary to reflect on the future of the journal and its erstwhile contributors, and to express our hopes and aspirations for the broader field of critical terrorism studies (CTS) as we go forward into the second decade of this journal.

Looking back, the first point to note is that the journal remains committed to its original self-identification as a "research orientation that is willing to challenge dominant knowledge and understandings of terrorism, is sensitive to the politics of labelling in the terrorism field, is transparent about its own values and political standpoints, adheres to a set of responsible research ethics, and is committed to a broadly defined notion of emancipation" (Ibid: 2). Even the most cursory survey of the journal's ten volumes provides ample evidence that the editors and contributors have remained loyal to these important commitments, even when they have been criticised for doing so (see Jones and Smith 2009, 2011; Michel and Richards 2009).

More specifically, a survey of the journal supports the assessment that it has been successful in its goal of provoking and encouraging open and rigorous debate on a wide array of important issues, not least on the question of the intrinsic value of critical terrorism studies itself (see Horgan and Boyle 2008; Michel and Richards 2009), and the way in which the CTS field has evolved and developed over the years. In addition to many examples from previous volumes, in this special issue, two of the contributing articles raise questions about the way in which CTS has developed over the past decade that perhaps does not live up to some of its stated aims (see Toros 2017; Van Milders 2017). In our assessment, this speaks to

the growing maturity and confidence of a field (and the journal) which can question its most fundamental and treasured assumptions, theories, approaches and values, including questions about emancipation, narrow versus wide conceptions of criticality, the reification of the "terrorism" discourse, and the like. Going forward, we remain committed to fostering rather than flattening out or resolving such creative tensions, as it is in the process of grappling with such tensions and conflicts that new ideas and questions emerge. We also remain committed to encouraging further debate and criticism of CTS itself, as we view this as a necessary part of reflexivity and continuing intellectual development.

Related to this, the journal has continued to encourage greater reflexivity among scholars of terrorism about the ethics and consequences of the research process, the ways in which knowledge is used by different actors, and the role of the scholar in relation to their research subjects and to existing power structures in society. A recent issue, for example, includes a debate between two of the current editors about whether CTS scholars ought to engage with policymakers or instead reject policy relevance and make common cause with resistance groups (see Jackson 2016; Toros 2016). Despite such disagreements on with whom one should engage, CTS has remained committed to an engagement with the world, whether by standing quite literally side by side with protest movements across the world (as advocated by Jackson 2016 and in this issue) or through listening empathetically to Israeli women combatants (as argued in Daphna-Tekoah and Harel-Shalev also in this issue).

More broadly, the journal aimed to draw in new and existing researchers from outside the terrorism studies field, encourage and publish early career scholars, pluralise the theoretical, methodological and disciplinary basis of terrorism-related research, and encourage research on a range of subjects that tended to be ignored in much orthodox terrorism research. Although these aims remain live and ongoing, the journal has done much to realise them to date, not least in the special issue we present here which consists of a collection of articles which employ and engage with queer theory, critical realism, gender studies, memory studies, and political philosophy, among others, and which discuss topics as wide-ranging as the cultural-political construction of 9/11, causality in terrorism research, state terrorism, counter-radicalisation, the queering of IR, state repression, counterterrorism, the history of ETA, and gender and violence. Once again, this plurality and diversity speaks to the maturing of the field and the success of its aim to provide a broad 'home' for the "critical" study of terrorism and counterterrorism.

However, at the same time, an honest appraisal of the past ten years shows that a number of the editors' original aims are yet to be fully realised. For example, it remains the case that the majority of contributors to the journal originate from and/or work in the global north, and the perspectives and concerns of the global south are still rarely heard. And, if we look at the variety of "critical" approaches employed in the journal's articles, it is noticeable that post-colonialism is rarely employed as a framework of analysis. Although there have been concerted efforts to begin to address this – the Critical Studies on Terrorism Working Group's annual conference of 2016 was titled *Intersecting Critical Terrorism Studies and (Post)Colonialism: Standards, Subjects And Spectacle* - there is, clearly, a continuing need to take further steps to decolonise CTS and to draw in the voices of the global south through assisting global south scholars to publish in the journal.

In relation to one of the most publicised calls by CTS and the original journal editors, there continues to be a dearth of research on the many aspects of state terrorism. While research on state counterterrorism has surged in the past ten years, including research on violent forms of counterterrorism such as torture and war on terror, the total number of articles which examine aspects of state terrorism is disappointingly low – although articles which have been published have made an important contribution (see for example, Furtado 2015; Jarvis and Lister 2014). Within this broader failure, two questions stand out. First is the

need to investigate the overlap between state terrorism and counterterrorism and the difficulty of distinguishing the two both conceptually and empirically. CTS needs to question whether one can use the term "counterterrorism" in the same way it has questioned the use of "terrorism." This, in turn, raises questions about the compatibility of different research agendas within critical terrorism studies, including, for instance, between historical materialist analyses of state terrorism and discursive explorations of the ways in which '(state) terrorism' is constructed. Second, in a research field with its fair share of taboos, the specific taboo on speaking about particular examples or campaigns of state terrorism remains particularly noticeable. In late 2008, for instance, the journal editors debated among themselves whether it was the right time to publish a special issue on the nature, causes and consequences of Israeli state terrorism, but ultimately decided that the professional risks for the journal and the contributors to such an issue would be too high, given the kind of response public discussions of Israeli state terrorism and repression tends to generate.

It could be argued that this decision and a broader failure to interrogate Western state terrorisms in particular speaks to a common characteristic of many "critical" projects: namely, an unconscious desire for acceptance and legitimacy within and beyond the academy, and therefore, a certain hesitation or timidity towards speaking out too loudly on controversial or polarising issues. If this is the case here, going forward, it calls for critical self-examination and a conscious acceptance that remaining "critical" necessarily involves courage, risk, and the willingness to go against the grain – with all that this might entail in relation to academic credibility and legitimacy. This, of course, may be far easier for certain types of researcher, with certain demographic or professional attributes (seniority, employment status, nationality, ethnicity, gender, and so on), working in certain types of academic role or institution than for others.

Lastly, looking back, it is clear that the so-called Atlantic divide between terrorism scholars doing 'orthodox' research mostly located in North America, and CTS scholars mostly located in Europe and elsewhere remains as wide as ever. Although there may now be name recognition for the journal and the CTS field, the level of dialogue and engagement remains as low as ever. In fact, after an initial, somewhat tentative dialogue in which a number of critiques of CTS from orthodox scholars were published in the journal, too little subsequent dialogue has occurred. Although there are exceptions, scholars working on orthodox research questions or paradigms tend to confine their discussions to forums and venues sympathetic to this work, while CTS scholars tend do the same. It may be the case that the original editors and CTS as a whole were overly optimistic about the possibility that the profound ontological, epistemological and praxealogical differences between the two orientations could be sufficiently bridged for real dialogue to occur. Nonetheless, the current editors remain optimistic and hopeful that such a dialogue might one day occur, and might go beyond adversarial positioning towards a more creative, generative discussion.

In a related reflection, we also note that the CTS field remains tangentially linked to – rather than integrated within - European Critical Security Studies research. These Critical Security Studies research agendas often take counterterrorism practice as their field of exploration, focusing on the deployment of risk calculus, critical infrastructure protection, surveillance of financial transactions and the materiality of counterterrorist technologies (Aradau 2010; Bellanova & Duez 2012; De Goede 2012), but the CTS project has remained somewhat distinct from these wider projects. Why are these topics of critical research on counterterrorism published elsewhere? Does the CTS project appear somehow unwelcoming to these traditions of thought, given its origination in more Anglo-American traditions of research into terrorism? There are both advantages and disadvantages to this parallel positioning alongside European IR. CTS retains a distinct identity as a research brand catering to questions of gender, memory, epistemology and cultural discourse in the field of

terrorism studies; however the alienation of the CTS project from broader research on security praxis and calculation creates a puzzling disconnect from the European IR field. Questions of materiality and technology in counterterrorism practice are of great relevance to to the CTS project, but remain under-represented (with the exception of Hoijtink 2015).

In short, ten years after the first issue of *Critical Studies on Terrorism* was published, we celebrate its substantive achievements, reflect on its continuing failures and weaknesses, and look to the future with a renewed sense of purpose, courage and optimism. We offer this issue as a kind of exemplar of what rigorous, theoretically pluralistic, creative, "critical" approaches to the study of terrorism and counterterrorism can offer. We hope that it will provoke debate, critical reflection, inspiration and the courage to confront some of the most pressing issues facing our world in an intellectually rigorous, and practically emancipatory manner.

Finally, we take this opportunity to thank a great many people who have contributed to the growth and success of the journal over the years. Without the tireless work of all the editors, editorial assistants, and editorial board members who do the day-to-day work, the journal would have failed at the first hurdle. In addition, we are most grateful to all the researchers and scholars who have contributed their work to be published, and to the legion of reviewers who have rigorously assessed the quality of each publication. Journals cannot exist without all the unpaid intellectual labour and expertise of their contributors and reviewers. We are also grateful to the team at Routledge who took a chance on launching a new journal, and have since then, professionally supported and sustained its smooth running. Lastly, we want to thank all of the supporters of the journal and the wider community of CTS scholars, including the BISA Critical Studies on Terrorism Working Group (CSTWG), who have encouraged and promoted the journal and contributed articles, special issues, ideas and general enthusiasm. We hope that this relationship between the journal and the wider community of CTS can continue to grow over the next ten years.

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