IR Theory in Practice Case Study: Gender and Terrorism

Overview of the topic 'Gender and terrorism'

Terrorism, a politically driven act of violence meant to create fear and send an ideologically driven message to a targeted audience, is seen as a central concern in global, regional, and local affairs today (see Schmid and Jongman 2006, chapter 1).

Box 0.1: Terrorism is Contentious

'On one point, at least, everyone agrees: 'Terrorism' is a pejorative term. It is a word with intrinsically negative connotations that is generally applied to one's enemies and opponents, or to those with whom one disagrees and would otherwise prefer to ignore'

Bruce Hoffman (2006), *Inside Terrorism*, (New York: Columbia University Press), 23

Aside from the definition and the violence of the act, approaching the matter from academic and policy-making stances can be controversial and this is captured in one of the many clichés that exist in Terrorism Studies: one person's freedom fighter is another's terrorist. Because the definition and identification of terrorism and terrorist is so subjective, it makes the study of terrorism and political violence difficult (see Silke 2009). Adding gender into the mix only muddies the murky waters further.

We should not conflate women with gender. Instead, the starting point of this case-study is to clarify that gender is understood as the socially constructed expectations and idealizations that individuals and society place on persons based on their perceived biological sex. For centuries, society has constructed men to be rational, assertive, autonomous, and therefore the people best suited for public sphere roles in government, business, and war making. On the opposite side of the gender binary, women are constructed to be emotional, passive, dependent, and therefore better suited for a private sphere role in the home.

Box 0.2: Jean Bethke Elshtain on the Public/Private Divide

'Images of public and private are necessarily, if implicitly, tied to views of moral agency; evaluations of human capacities and activities, virtues, and excellence; assessments for the purposes and aims of alternative modes of social organization. Readers will quickly discover that the way in which determinations about the public and the private and the role and worth of each is evaluated will gear a thinker's attitudes toward women. This is one way to put it. Another might be: a thinker's views on women serve as a foundation that helps to give rise to the subsequent determinations he makes of the public and the private and what he implicates and values in each'

Jean Bethke Elshtain (1981), *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 4-5.

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Gender impacts more than just individuals, but instead it impacts how we see different activities and actors. Gender is used to build and maintain power hierarchies. These gendered constructions have influenced how we think about war, but also how we think about terrorism. Arguably, the terrorist organization itself and terrorism is a gendered activity.

In the Westphalian system (see Chapter 1), states are presumed to be the legitimate actors within international affairs. As such, they are constructed to be rational, sovereign (autonomous), and the only ones with the legitimate use of violence (the monopoly on violence). J. Ann Tickner (1992, 13) argues that this is a transposition of masculine ideals onto the state itself. Simply put, states are masculine actors. As gender operates within a binary, there must be an opposite: an entity that is illegitimate, irrational, lacking in sovereignty, and has no right to the use of violence. Such an entity is the terrorist organization. Terrorists are 'femininized' or, in the words of V. Spike Peterson and Ann Sisson Runyan (2009), 'devalorized.' Such devalorizations indicate that a power binary exists between the state and terrorist organizations.

This is witnessed in the Russian-Chechen struggle. Chechnya was colonized by Russia in the 1700s and for the next 300 years the Chechens resisted Russian rule. Incorporated into the Soviet Union officially after World War II, Chechnya fought a war for independence after the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991. Chechnya won the war and existed as an independent state for a few years. After several violent incidences in the late 1990s, Russia reinvaded Chechnya and fought a very brutal war. Atrocious violence took place on both sides. Russia razed villages, committed genocide and torture, and engaged in gender-based sexual violence. The Chechens employed a suicide bombing campaign in Moscow and along the Chechen border, and committed several large hostage takings, including one in an elementary school. Both sides clearly engaged in extra-normative violence. However, Russia continues to operate as a legitimate state without sanctions against it (even if it is known for its problematic human rights policies) and the Chechens are considered to be an illegitimate actor. Thus, the Russian state is constructed as a credible masculinized actor and the Chechens are devalorized (see Gentry and Whitworth 2011).

Discussion question

As we look at the theories in more depth, you might want to ask yourself: how does gender reveal the operations of power within terrorism studies?

Section 1: Realism and Gender and Terrorism

From reading Chapter 6 of The Globalization of World Politics (7e.), *you should now be familiar with the basic tenets of Realist and neo-Realist IR theory. You are advised to consult these crucial chapters if you have not done so already as the contents will not be repeated here. The case study also references material covered in Chapter 12 and 17 on Feminist IR theory.*

Introduction

Terrorism is most often considered to be a sub-state activity, meaning that those who chose this method of violence are often sub-state actors operating against the state in which they reside or another state with which they have a grievance. For example, the Red Army Faction was a Marxist-Leninist group that operated in West Germany from the late 1960s to the late 1980s. They opposed the West German government as well as the United States, but most of their activity targeted the West German government and capitalist businesses within that state. Al Qaeda, on the other hand, used Afghanistan (primarily) as a base from which to operate, targeting Western states, like the United States. The focus of Realism, particularly neo-Realism, on states as the primary and most important actor in international relations has often led to a perceived disinterest in terrorism.

1) Why Realism Isn't That Interested in Terrorism

One of the great Realist theories, John Mearsheimer, stated this in an interview when he was asked about the events of 9/11:

Box 1.1: Mearsheimer on Terrorism

'[W]hat does a Realist theory of international politics have to say about terrorists? The answer is not a whole heck of a lot. Realism, as I said before, is really all about the relations among states, especially among great powers. …My theory [of offensive Realism] and virtually all Realist theories don't have much to say about transnational actors. However, there is no question that terrorism is a phenomenon that will play itself out in the context of the international system. So it will be played out in the state arena, and, therefore, all of the Realist logic about state behavior will have a significant effect on how the war on terrorism is fought. So Realism and terrorism are inextricably linked, although I do think that Realism does not have much to say about the causes of terrorism.'

(see http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people2/Mearsheimer/mearsheimer-con5.html)

From Mearsheimer's response, we could take away the view that Realists care very little. This is not entirely the case. Realists care very much about the balance of power, which is used to preserve the interests of the state, including the safety of the people and territory. Terrorism disrupts that balance of power in ways that confront the theory's normal position. Still from this perspective, Realism hasn't spent much 'time' on terrorism. However, from the perspective of strategy and power balancing, terrorism has been considered within the Rational Actor Model.

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

In the U.S., the Rational Actor Model has been used extensively to consider both terrorism and counter-terrorism. Robert Pape is one of the foremost authorities on rationality, strategy, and suicide terrorism. Pape argues that:

Box 1.2: The Strategy of Suicide Terrorism

'[S]uicide terrorism follows a strategic logic. Even if many suicide attackers are irrational or fanatical, the leadership groups that recruit and direct them are not. Viewed from the perspective of the terrorist organization, suicide attacks are designed to achieve specific political purposes: to coerce a target government to change policy, to mobilize additional recruits and financial support, or both.'

Robert A. Pape (2003), 'The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism,' *American Political Science Review*, 97(3), pp. 343-361, p. 344.

Thus, employing suicide attacks serves the interest of the sub-state terrorist group, gaining them group in the political realm.

2) Why Realism's Interest in Terrorism is Gendered

Realism has already been criticized by feminists for 'abstracting' the field of International Relations. Tickner's argument that masculine attributes have been transposed upon the state is an example of one abstraction. Another criticism Tickner (2005) has made is that the dominant theories within IR, such as realism and liberalism, insist upon making generalizable hypotheses to test different theoretical claims. Tickner, amongst others, find this to be problematic, arguing instead that a focus on the individual provides scholars with richer and deeper insight into a problem. The reason that Mearsheimer's realism is less than interested in terrorism is because of Realism's focus on the abstracted and generalizable third-level of analysis. Neo-realism is less than interested in both sub-state actors such as terrorists and the activity of individuals in international affairs.

Robert Pape's study on suicide terrorism does interrupt some of these generalizable tendencies. His study is helpful in that it considers sub-state activity and looks at the circumstances that surround an individual. For instance, when looking at suicide terrorists in regions across the globe, he considered education level, employment, income-level, religiosity, etc. Pape even considered gender (at least gender as it means man or woman) as a variable in his analysis, determining that being a man or woman did not predict involvement in terrorism. However, there are some problems with his approach to the study of suicide terrorism. Rationality is a masculine characteristic and is therefore not a gender-neutral way to study suicide terrorism (or anything else) as Pape purports to be doing. Thus, there is an underlying gender bias built into his study.

Box 1.3: The Gendered Logic in Suicide Terrorism Studies

'In spite of Pape's insistence that men and women suicide terrorists act for the same rational/ masculine reasons, *Dying to Win* reifies several gendered assumptions about women's motivations for self-martyrdom. Pape links female suicide bombers' motivations

---

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

to trauma, such as death or rape, or a lack of mental capability. His descriptions of women suicide terrorists center around gendered interpretations of their emotions and instincts. For example, as he asserts, the "hypothesis" that aging women have fewer marriage prospects and thus become martyrs "bears further research" [Pape 2005, 209].'

Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry (2008) **"Profiling Terror: Gendering the *Strategic Logic of Suicide Terror* and Other Narratives,"** *Austrian Journal of Political Science*, Issue 2, pp. 181-196, p. 187.

In conclusion, Pape's gendered starting point results in some gendered conclusions. The absence of a nuance approach to the concept of gender creates decontextualized conclusions that may obscure the 'reality' of the situation.

Section 2: Liberalism and Gender and Terrorism

From reading Chapter 7 of The Globalization of World Politics (7e), *you should now be familiar with the basic tenets of Liberal and neo-Liberal IR theory. You are advised to consult this crucial chapter if you have not done so already as its contents will not be repeated here. The case study also references material covered in Chapter 12 and 17 on Feminist IR theory.*

Introduction

With liberalism's, particularly neo-liberalism's, focus on international institutions, there is a historical legacy in its approach to terrorism. Considering that self-determination was one of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points of Light (the speech that led to the establishment of the League of Nations), international institutions have always shown some reserved respect for sub-state groups that are hoping to achieve national independence. In the United Nations this has led to some tensions, as encapsulated in the cliché: one person's freedom fighter is another person's terrorist. Additionally, liberalism's approach has tended to emphasize multilateral efforts to counter-terrorism as well as consideration for the rationale behind an actor's use of political violence.

1) A Multilateral Approach

Until 9/11, the UN had difficulty finding a universally accepted definition of terrorism. Most of the tension stems from the tension that has existed in the UN since at least decolonization, where the Global South controls the UNGA through their numbers and the Global North the UNSC. Traditionally, as a production of colonization, the Global South has tended to support self-determination by sub-state actors. The Global North has seen this political violence as illegitimate. Until 9/11, the UNGA tended to be the body that dealt with issues surrounding terrorism, seeing it as a localized problem. After 9/11, the UNSC 'took over' terrorism, creating different counter-terrorism requirements of member states (see Foot 2007).

In their edited volume on non-military approaches to counter-terrorism, David Cortright and George Lopez emphasize a multilateral approach, particularly through the UN. They argue:

Box 2.1: The Value of Multilateral Counter-terrorism

'[T]he battle against terrorism is not really a war at all, at least not in any recognizable traditional military sense, but rather a new kind of international campaign encompassing a wide array of policy tools…. Our analysis assumes the primacy of cooperative international law enforcement efforts and gives large weight to the role of the United Nations as both legitimizing agency and central hub around which the struggle against terrorism must be organized. …Our goal is to identify steps that the United States and other states can take to enhance the effectiveness of global counter-terrorism efforts and thereby achieve a shared goal of ending the scourge of terrorism as an expression of political grievance, hatred, or national or religious expression.'

David Cortright and George Lopez (2007), 'Strategic Counter-terrorism,' in David Cortright and George A. Lopez (eds.) *United Against Terror: Cooperative Nonmilitary Responses to the Global Terrorist Threat*. (Cambridge: MIT Press), p. 19

Clearly, their emphasis is on elements most closely related to liberalism: cooperation and rule of law achieved through an international institution. In this way, more violence can be avoided and an emphasis on peace and order maintained. However, the contributors to Cortright and Lopez's volume highlight power games are still played.

2) Where the Power Is

Even though the liberal approach is a multilateral one, this is not without some problematic power dynamics. The UN has adopted resolutions that require certain politics and procedures of all member states, whether they are dealing with terrorism or not, that are expensive and time-consuming to comply with. Since 9/11, these directives have come from the UNSC and some believe that states in the Perm-5, like the US, Russia, and China, continue to violate international norms in their counter-terrorism activities. From a feminist and gender studies perspective, this reifies existing power binary structures in the world: between the Global North, with its disproportionate share of the wealth, and the Global South and between powerful states and less powerful ones.

Box 2.2: Secretary General Kofi Annan's 'A Global Strategy for Fighting Terrorists'

'[T]he United Nations must continue to insist that, in the fight against terrorism, we cannot compromise [our] core values … In particular, human rights and the rule of law must always be respected. As I see it, terrorism is in itself a direct attack on human rights and the rule of law. If we sacrifice them in our response, we will be handing victory to the terrorists. …

…This seems to me a fitting occasion to set out the main elements of that strategy, and the role of the United Nations in it.

--first, to dissuade disaffected groups from choosing terrorism as a tactic to achieve their goals;

--second, to deny terrorists the means to carry out their attacks;

--third, to deter states from supporting terrorists;

--fourth, to develop state capacity to prevent terrorism;

--and fifth, to defend human rights in the struggle against terrorism.'

http://www.un.org/sg/statements/?nid=1345

In the address above and in his continued statements about multilateral counter-terrorism efforts, Secretary General Annan was clear that the UN's focus needed to remain upon the preservation of human rights, not on forced compliance with UN counter-terrorism policies that created hardships on certain, less-developed member states at the expense of true development opportunities. As noted by Peter Romaniuk, these mandates created a power imbalance:

Box 2.3: Problems with Multilateralism

'[M]ultilateral counter-terrorism since 9/11 conforms to the traditional realist insight that institutions 'tend to promote the interests of the powerful at the expense of the weak'

Peter Romaniuk (2010), 'Institutions as Sword and Shields: Multilateral Counter-Terrorism Since 9/11,' *Review of International Studies*, 36(3), pp. 591-613, p. 612.

Feminism works to expose power structures wherever they exist. While this situation may not be explicitly about masculinity and femininity, it is about operational binaries between the Global North and Global South—a binary that needs to be dismantled.

Section 3: Social Constructivist Theory and Gender and Terrorism

From reading Chapter 9 of The Globalization of World Politics (7e.), *you should now be familiar with the basic tenets of Constructivist IR theory. You are advised to consult this crucial chapter if you have not done so already as its contents will not be repeated here. The case study also references material covered in Chapter 12 and 17 on Feminist IR theory.*

Introduction

In Chapter 10 of your textbook, Barnett argues that knowledge shapes how we construct and interpret the world around us. In this way, social constructivism can help us make sense of why there is no agreed upon definition of terrorism. If knowledge is 'historically produced and culturally bound' (Baylis et al., p. 158) then different societies are going to view political violence differently. For instance, a former colonized state might view political violence more favourably—just as the American colonists support the Revolutionary War or some of the Irish Catholic population has historically supported the IRA. From the opposing perspective, a society that is confronted with the threat of political violence may construct it as an ahistorical and all-consuming threat, thus requiring an exceptional response to it. This is how the US has approached al Qaeda and the Russians the Chechen quest for independence. Thus, different agents' and actors' constructions of terrorism shape policy.

1) Richard Jackson and *Writing the War on Terrorism*

Richard Jackson is one of the leading Critical Terrorism Studies scholars and his seminal text is *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics, and Counterterrorism* (2005). In this text he studies the discourse that the U.S. and the Bush administration used to build the threat of terrorism and thus the case to fight the 'War on Terror.'

Box 3.1: Jackson's Purpose in *Writing the War*

'I wanted to understand how societies such as America and Britain, which pride themselves on their liberal democratic cultures, could in the space of less than two years actively support or at least acquiesce to a massive campaign of counterterrorist violence involving destructive military assaults on two of the world's poorest countries, political assassinations, aid and support to dictators, the torture of prisoners and the systematic violation and erosion of deeply cherished civic rights. What could induce ordinary citizens to participate—at least tacitly—in such sustained and pervasive violence which has by now killed tens of thousands of other ordinary people in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere?'

Richard Jackson (2005), *Writing the War on Terrorism:* Language, Politics, and Counter-Terrorism (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 180

Jackson goes on to argue that the discursive practices of the US administration and media produced the threat of terrorism in a way that made these human rights violations seemingly acceptable to its population. The language of the War on Terror dehumanized

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

the enemy and made the threat so overwhelming that any means necessary was found to be the best approach to counterterrorism.

2) 'Female Terrorists' as a Social Construction

Some feminist work on terrorism, particularly relating to women's participation, takes a similar approach to Social Constructivism. In *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics*, Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry complicate the ways academics, governments, and the media have all constructed women's participation in proscribed violence. In particular, they looked at how women's involvement in political violence was narrated within three different long-standing tropes of mother, monster, or whore, which serve to delegitimize and deny women's political agency. They argue it is important to recognize these narratives because those who use them:

Box 3.4: The Problems with Narratives

'…reproduce gender and race stereotypes without conscious intent through the othering and/or sexualisation of violent women. In order to embrace women's agency and move towards a more gender-equal international society, we, as scholars and political actors, must be willing to embrace and study the agency of not only the best of women but also the worst of women. In order to do so, scholars must come to terms with our own implicitly racialized and sexualized discourse in order to transform the (increasingly subtle) discursive structures of gender subordination.'

Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry (2007), *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (London: Zed Books), p. 223.

Thus, social constructivism and feminism often have a common approach: both theoretical approaches examine the ways in which power is reproduced and how this affects both our understanding of a subject and then how we choose to respond it. In these two works on terrorism, both see that social constructions, such as legitimacy, race, and gender, have negatively impacted counter-terrorism practices.

Section 4: Post-Colonial Theory and Gender and Terrorism

From reading Chapter 11 of The Globalization of World Politics (7e.), *you should now be familiar with the basic tenets of Post-Colonial IR theory. You are advised to consult this crucial chapter if you have not done so already as its contents will not be repeated here. The case study also references material covered in Chapter 12 and 17 on Feminist IR theory.*

Introduction

Many academic texts, government literature, and media reports condemn terrorism as completely illegitimate and without good cause. Post-colonialism, however, offers a very different perspective. Instead of taking a state-centric approach or even a Rational Choice approach, post-colonial theory, similarly to feminism, asks the reader to engage with IR from a social and individual level. In addition to this perspective, Post-Colonialism's relationship with the Global South means that terrorism must be viewed from outside of the box.

1) Frantz Fanon and the Algerian Revolution

The Algerian Revolution is one of the better-known 'terrorist' led revolutions of the post-colonial era. As post-colonial theory accepts the use of creative sources for information, *The Battle of Algiers* is an excellent illustration of the impetus behind the revolution. Additionally, the film shows the National Liberation Front's (FLN), a Marxist-Leninist politically violent group, strategy to overthrow the French colonial forces. Where the French always told the Algerians that they considered Algeria to be an integral part of France, the FLN used violence to force the French to overreact. When the French employed punitive measures against the Algerians it demonstrated that the French did not fully respect the Algerians. The overreaction led to a mass Algerian uprising, resulting in an independent Algerian state.

Frantz Fanon was a psychiatrist and revolutionary who worked in Algeria, giving him the opportunity to observe colonial conditions. His experiences led him to write several key post-colonial texts, including *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963). In the latter text, he is clear that the dehumanizing conditions of colonial imperialism led to revolutionary and anti-colonial violence. In fact, to Fanon, the violence was almost to be expected.

Box 4.1: Frantz Fanon on Political Violence

'And it is clear that in the colonial countries the peasants alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The starving peasant, outside the class system is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays. For him there is no compromise, no possible coming to terms; colonization and decolonization is simply a question of relative strength.'

Frantz Fanon (1963), *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press), p. 61.

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

From this perspective, post-colonialism flips the traditional Western- and state-centrism of IR on its head, requiring the scholar to engage with the perspective of the Global South and to understand the power differentials which have led to political violence.

2) Post-Colonialism, Gender, and Terrorism

Gender and post-colonialism have much in common. In particular a focus on the individual and social levels, which seeks to reveal the operations of power. One excellent chapter stands out in the study of post-colonialism, gender, and terrorism. In their contribution to *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda* (2009), Christine Sylvester and Swati Parashar use 'South Asian mythological literature: the battleground "Kurukshetra," from the great Indian Sanskrit Epic, Mahabharata' (2009, p. 179). In this myth, two sides meet in battle 'over territorial claims and other entitlements—ideology, women, throne, and state' (Sylvester and Parashar 2009, p. 179). One side of the struggle, the Kauravas, accepts its given right to legitimacy similarly to a sovereign state; the other side, the Pandavas operate as an identity group, similarl to terrorist organizations. Both believe they have 'dharma' on their side—or 'righteousness.' Thus, in the Mahabharata, Sylvester and Parashar point out a post-colonial metaphor which relates to the feminist criticism of the Westphalian system given in the overview.

But the story for Sylvester and Parashar does not end here; the struggle is deeply dependent upon gender, which 'operate[s] in ways that showcase the cruelties of war, terrorism, and men, and that challenge dominant masculinities; even emasculation is common' (2009, 180). Women and one woman in particular, Draupadi, becomes a pawn between the sides, revealing a cruel and deeply individualized battle for sovereignty and masculinity.

Box 4.2: Women and the War on Terror

'How different is Draupadi today in the multifarious realm of terror and the wars on "it?" Again, the fate of terror women can seem to be in hands other than their own. We know of state veiling and unveilings of women. We hear daily of honor killings of women to preserve the good names of their families. We heard Laura Bush, wife of George W. Bush, speak out early in the post-September 11 lead-up to war about the importance of liberating Afghan women from the Taliban government. Women are taken hostage by insurgent groups in Columbia [sic], the Philippines, Iraq, and elsewhere, and sometimes are rescued by state forces. …Today, women can be fought over, humiliated, or protected by states and terrorists alike.'

Christine Sylvester and Swati Parashar (2009), 'The Contemporary "Mahabharata" and the Many "Draupadis,"' in Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth, and Jeroen Gunning (eds), *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda*. (London: Routledge), p. 181.

Again, Post-Colonialism and Feminism operate to expose power in all its settings. In this case, power is revealed in a way that is out-of-sync for some readers, which forces one to ask different questions and see the topic of terrorism in a different light.

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Section 5: Poststructuralist Theory and Gender and Terrorism

From reading Chapter 10 of The Globalization of World Politics (7e.), *you should now be familiar with the basic tenets of Poststructuralist IR theory. You are advised to consult this crucial chapter if you have not done so already as its contents will not be repeated here. The case study also references material covered in Chapter 12 and 17 on Feminist IR theory.*

Introduction

As Lene Hansen points out at the start of her chapter on Post-Structuralism, the theory shares a starting point with constructivism. Post-Structuralism is unabashedly critical and uses discourse analysis to deconstruct power structures, one of which is the production of knowledge as it is both a normative and political matter (see Devetak 2013, 185). The argument that foundational ontology is problematic is especially apt to terrorism studies, where much of the research coming out of the US is committed to a neo-positivist methodology. This creates a power dynamic, where the assumed rationality of the West is pitted against the irrationality of the non-West, reflecting foundationalist presumptions.

1) Ghosts and Monsters in the War on Terror

For Post-Structuralism, discourse is the mode of interpretation. 'Discourse…does not employ "an epistemic realism, whereby the world comprises material objects…"' instead it examines the political impact of 'adopting one mode of representation over another…' (Milliken 1999, 225-6). Similarly to Constructivism, Richard Devetak's (2005) exploration of discourse in the War on Terror reveals the operation of power, particularly in deconstructing foundationalist commitments. Devetak explores the use of gothic imagery, (i.e. ghosts and monsters) to generate anxiety during the War on Terror. Devetak argues that the Bush administration manufactured bin Laden as a ghost and Saddam Hussein as a monster to 'reinforce boundaries between self and other, civilization and barbarism, good and evil' (2005, 642). Instead this backfires on Bush in a very post-structural hermeneutic.

Box 5.1: Ghosts and Monsters in the War on Terror

'Monsters demonstrate what Bush fails to see: that the gothic scene is "the symbolic site of a culture's discursive struggle to define and claim possession of the civilized…" [Punter and Byron 2004, p. 5]. Monsters, as Edgar Allen Poe and [Mary] Shelley reveal, are a sign of the impossibility of once and for all eliminating contestation over the meaning of civilization, good and evil, freedom and tyranny, and so on.'

Richard Devetak (2005), "The Gothic Scene of International Relations: Ghosts, Monsters, Terror and the Sublime After September 11," *Review of International Studies*, 31(4), pp. 621-643, p. 642.

---

2) Post-Structuralism, Gender and Agency

Devetak's argument implicitly holds that by labelling bin Laden and Hussein as ghosts and monsters, which denies them credibility and rationality, this then denies them political

agency. Feminists, particularly Judith Butler, have sought to deconstruct notions of political agency, particularly within post-structuralism.

Box 5.2: Butler on Agency

'My suggestion is that agency belongs to a way of thinking about persons as instrumental actors who confront an external political field. But if we agree that politics and power exist already at the level at which the subject and its agency are articulated and made possible, then agency can be *presumed* only at the cost of refusing to inquire into its construction.'

Judith Butler (1992), 'Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of "Postmodernism,"' in Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (eds), *Feminists Theorize the Political* (London: Routledge), p. 13.

Within terrorism scholarship, Linda Åhäll studies how discussions of agency tend to be dependent on action, particularly around women's involvement in political violence. Åhäll (2012, 107) follows Butler's understanding of agency and 'look[s] at how agency is represented through discourses that produce subjects, not individuals.' Thus, Åhäll's Post-Structural feminism moves away from some classical feminists as she study's females as 'subject's' and not necessarily as individuals.

This is particularly important as Butler, Devetak, and Åhäll all demonstrate that it is impossible to study individuals without understanding the context in which they are approached. Thus, while foundationalism may hold that due to conditions within the material world generalizations can be made. Post-Structuralism would say that conditions, the material world, and the assumptions upon which generalizations are made are all constructed and as such reveal the operations of power. Thus, terrorism, the approach one chooses to take on terrorism, how we perceive different actors agency within terrorism, are all constructions within which power resides.

Weblinks

http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/ The Global Terrorism Database is an open-sourced, searchable database that covers terrorism events from 1970 to 2012, with annual updates planned.

http://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/terrorism-incidents.html The RAND Datatbase of Worldwide Terrorist Incidents covering events from 1968 to 2009. RAND, an American thinktank, is one of the leading research institutes on terrorism and counter-terrorism.

http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people2/Mearsheimer/mearsheimer-con5.html, This is the hyperlink to the cited interview with John Mearsheimer on the events of 9/11 (amongst other issues).

http://polis.osce.org/library/f/4061/3772/OSCE-AUT-RPT-4061-EN-3772 OSCE report on women, radicalization and terrorism. This is an example of an international institution's approach to women and radicalization.

http://www.un.org/sg/statements/?nid=1345, Secretary General Kofi Annan's closing plenary to the International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security in which he articulates the 5 'D's' and urges better respect for human rights in counter-terrorism policies.

http://thebaluch.com/documents/0802150837%20-%20FRANTZ%20FANON%20-%20The%20Wretched%20of%20the%20Earth.pdf This is the entire text of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, which may be of interest to learn more about a post-colonial perspective on revolution and political violence.

References

Åhäll, Linda (2012), 'Motherhood, Myth and Gendered Agency in Political Violence,' *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 14(1), pp. 103-120.

Devetak, Richard (2013), 'Post-Structuralism,' in Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnelly, Terri Nardin, Michael Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit, and Jacqui True (eds), *Theories of International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).

Foot, Rosemary (2007), 'The United Nations, counter terrorism and human rights: institutional adaptation and embedded ideas,' *Human Rights Quarterly*, 29(2), pp. 489-514.

Gentry, Caron E. and Kathryn Whitworth (2011) 'The Discourse of Desperation: The Intersections of neo-Orientalism, Gender, and Islam in the Chechen Struggle,' *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 4(2)

Milliken, Jennifer (1999), 'The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods,' *European Journal of International Relations*, 5(2), pp. 225-254.

Pape, Robert (2005), *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House).

Peterson, V. Spike, and Anne Sisson Runyan (2009), *Global Gender Issues in the New Millennium*. (Boulder: Westview Press).

Punter, David and Glennis Byron (2004), *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell).

Silke, Andrew (2009), 'Contemporary Terrorism Studies: Issues in Research,' in Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth, and Jeroen Gunning (eds), *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda*. (London: Routledge)

Tickner, J. Ann (2005), 'What Is Your Research Program? Some Feminist Answers to International Relations Methodological Questions,' *International Studies Quarterly*, 49(1), pp. 1-22.

Tickner, J. Ann (1992), *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives in Achieving Global Security* (New York: Columbia University Press).

Author details

This case study has been provided by Caron E. Gentry, Lecturer in the School of International Relations, University of St Andrews.

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS