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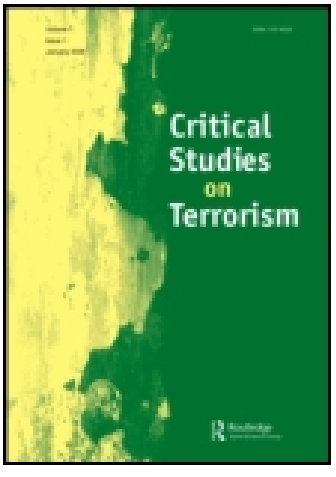


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# Editor's introduction: Terrorism and peace and conflict studies: investigating the crossroad

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## EDITORIAL

# Editor's introduction: Terrorism and peace and conflict studies: investigating the crossroad

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The articles in this special issue are drawn from papers presented at a conference titled *Terrorism and Peace and Conflict Studies: Investigating the Crossroad*. The conference was organised by the Conflict Analysis Research Centre at the University of Kent and the Critical Studies on Terrorism Working Group of the British International Studies Association and was held at the University of Kent from 10 to 11 September 2012. The conference aimed to highlight and explore the empirical, methodological, ontological and epistemological points of interjection of the two fields through the engagement of scholars, postgraduate students, national and international policy and civil society actors. The articles in this issue reflect those aims.

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## Introduction

In an era when virtually every academic institution offers undergraduate and postgraduate modules on terrorism studies and on peace and conflict studies, few have investigated how the two fields are related and how they may interact. Indeed, crucial issues remain largely unexplored. How can peace and conflict studies help us further our understanding of terrorism and, crucially, engage in conflicts marked by terrorist violence? Conversely, can terrorism studies inform peace studies by strengthening, for example, its understanding of asymmetric violence? How can terrorism and peace and conflict scholars come together to investigate key epistemological and ontological questions on terrorism and political violence – including root causes, intervention and engagement, how and when negotiations may occur and how a subsequent political process may emerge which is sufficiently inclusive but also maintains and contributes to acceptable standards and norms (local and international)? Eleven years after the September 11 attacks, the need for such a collaborative, sustained and rigorous analysis is more pressing than ever.

The aim of this special issue is to open this debate by offering theoretical and empirical contributions from both scholars and practitioners on how these two fields can inform each other with the aim of strengthening research and praxis. Three key areas appear particularly promising. The first emerges from the observation that terrorism continues overall to be understood not as a particular form of conflict but as an aberration that cannot be investigated using conflict analysis frames. As we will examine in this Introduction

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and throughout this special issue, this broad (but importantly not universal) refusal to engage with terrorism as conflict has considerable nefarious repercussions on scholarship and, more worryingly, on policymaking and on the lives of millions across the world. Second and closely related is the still-engrained policy and scholarly refusal to draw on conflict management, resolution or transformation frameworks to investigate responses to terrorist violence. This includes not only the rejection of negotiation and dialogue in contexts of terrorism but also the ignoring of important research in peacebuilding. We argue that addressing these two points would make an important contribution to increasing our understanding of terrorist violence and how it can be engaged with.

This is not a one-way street, however. Despite the fact that many peace and conflict scholars and critical terrorism scholars – many of whom were originally trained in peace and conflict studies – believe it is primarily terrorism scholarship that would benefit from cross-pollination, peace and conflict studies could also benefit from greater engagement with frameworks developed in terrorism studies, both traditional and critical. Many conflict resolution frameworks indeed suffer from assumptions of symmetry, assumptions that are effectively invalidated when confronted with cases of non-state terrorist violence. Peace and conflict studies has also tended to adopt an essentially problem-solving approach (in Horkheimer's or Cox's understanding of the term) primarily at the expense of a greater investigation of power inequalities both within conflicts and within conflict management/resolution/transformation responses. The recent turn in terrorism studies towards a more critical engagement with power and power disparities that can be often found at the heart of terrorist violence may offer an avenue for adding much-needed complexity to mainstream peace and conflict studies. Clearly, this Introduction cannot thoroughly address these three central themes. It aims, rather, to identify and offer preliminary insights into these points of intersection that seem most pressing today.

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## Terrorism as conflict

Terrorism studies has been famous for its tendency to exceptionalise its object of inquiry, resulting in a broad belief that terrorism, unlike other objects of social phenomenon, is particularly difficult to study. Thus, terrorism scholarship often focuses on its difficulty in establishing a commonly accepted definition – leaving us to (problematically) assume that other complex social phenomena are easily defined;[1] its confusion with other forms of political violence, for example, insurrection and/or rebellion, which tends to produce inflated statistics (Thackrah 1989); or its conflation with concepts such as "atrocity", "terrorisation" and "moral condemnation", hindering attempts to understand the phenomenon and deal with it effectively (Malik 2000). Such an exceptionalisation has come hand in hand with what Breen Smyth (2008) calls an exoticising of terrorist violence, one in which scholars focus on the spectacular nature of the violence. Indeed, as Goodin (2006, 3) points out, "the worst thing about mass-murdering terrorists, is that they are mass murderers, not that they are terrorists".

Most importantly, this has disassociated the study of terrorism from the study of conflict. Overall treated ahistorically, terrorism studies suffers from what Wyn Jones (1999, 22) has characterised as a "fetishization of parts", resulting in its separation from conflict theory, international relations (IR) theory and social and political theory more broadly (see Toros and Gunning 2009). The poor qualitative products of these studies have been highlighted by many an author (Crelinsten 1987; George 1991; Wieviorka 1995; Brannan, Esler, and Strindberg 2001; Silke 2004; Ranstorp 2006; Jackson 2007), but despite such critique and the 40-year-old wealth of academic findings that suggest that terrorism is a

method (Walter 1969; Leach 1977; Groom 1978; Laqueur 1986; Wilkinson and Stewart 1987), and as such its analysis is heavily dependent on a particular sociopolitical context (Leach 1977; Crenshaw 1995; della Porta 1995; Zulaika and Douglass 1996; Irvin 1999; Gunning 2009; Sluka 2009; Toros and Gunning 2009), terrorism studies overall sticks to its steadfast refusal to analyse and comprehend terrorism as a form of conflict (Richmond 2003). This intrinsically problem-solving approach has led scholarship to focus on how to end the violence principally of non-state terrorism without a thorough engagement with the social and political processes that created the conditions of possibility for such violence. As a result, most traditional studies have tended to adopt a statist approach in their analysis which adopts the state as the ultimate referent object to be secured from the dangerous terrorist enemy (see Booth 2007; Toros and Gunning 2009).

Re-embedding the study of terrorism into peace and conflict studies offers a potentially powerful means to counter this underlying statism. Whether adopting Burton's (1979) or Azar's (1990) human needs-based approach or drawing on conflict transformation frameworks such as those of Diana Francis (2002) or John Paul Lederach (1997), a peace and conflict approach forces scholars to engage in the "construction of a larger picture of the whole of which the initially contemplated part is just one component, and [seek] to understand the processes of change in which both parts and whole are involved" (Cox 1986, 209). The conditions of the violence, surrounding the violence and changed by the violence are indeed at the heart of the peace and conflict approach which crucially aims at addressing not only the direct violence (the spectacular terrorist attack) but also the structural and cultural violence in which the former is embedded (see Galtung 1969). Thus, understanding terrorism as *a form of conflict* can have profound implications on its study and can help to overcome key pitfalls still undermining the field. Importantly, such a change in focus also has a central implication in terms of the potential responses to terrorism envisaged.

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**Responses to terrorism**

The exceptionalisation and underlying statism of terrorism studies have led scholars and policymakers to exclude conflict management/resolution/transformation approaches from the list of possible responses to terrorism. This encompasses a whole slew of potential avenues for analysis and responses from investigating whether the conflicting parties have reached a mutually hurting stalemate (MHS) to setting up John Burton-style problem-solving workshops to supporting dialogical initiatives amongst and between divided communities. It would be impossible to engage with all such potential frameworks of analysis and responses and thus we will focus here on two that seem particularly important and that are addressed by several articles in this special issue (see the contributions by Haspeslagh and Large in particular): the potential for negotiation and dialogue in contexts of terrorist violence and the need for scholars and policymakers to draw on recent work in peacebuilding.

Indeed, it has been observed elsewhere that the reification of state security in much terrorism scholarship comes at the expense of communication and negotiation addressing actual or perceived grievances (Tellidis 2010; Toros 2012). As Turk (2004, 280) has argued, "efforts to understand terrorism have been incidental or secondary to efforts to control it". Combined with the perception that any negotiation with terrorist actors will ascribe them legitimacy, this risks provoking an escalation of terrorist violence and also reduces the opportunity of transforming the conflict dynamics (Toros 2008). The focus that peace and conflict studies places on negotiations and communication between conflictive parties contradicts both academic approaches that warn of the danger of such undertakings (Wardlaw

1989; Clutterback 1993; Neumann 2007) and the policy approach of non-negotiation with terrorists. Indeed, in this issue Sophie Haspeslagh examines how state policy has not only rejected (at least publicly) direct dialogue with non-state armed groups, but through proscription regimes is also hindering access to third parties attempting to further understand non-state armed groups, to alter their strategic calculations or to train them in conflict resolution. Furthermore, the political commitment to not negotiate with terrorists does not hold true as manifested by the cases of Northern Ireland, Colombia, Philippines, Spain and others. More importantly, it is arguably one of the very few approaches that holds the key to a more sustainable, self-sustained, inclusive and positive peace (Galtung and Jacobsen 2000).

Linked to this is the problematic peacebuilding model that is implicitly or explicitly adopted by scholars and policymakers engaging with terrorist violence. During the last two decades, the literature on the theory of peacebuilding has been steadily exploring the role that the grassroots levels of society can play in the building(s) of peace (Lederach 1997; Bleiker 2000; Clark 2001; Duffield 2001; Paris 2004; Jabri 2007; Pugh, Cooper, and Turner 2008; Richmond 2011). A number of instances have been identified where peacebuilding seems to contradict its own discourses and work outside and beyond the "everyday" and "local" (Richmond 2010; Viktorova Milne 2010) social strata it claims to empower, integrate and involve. Indeed, peacebuilding praxis seems to ignore or even sideline the contextual particularities of conflicts and is applied like an IKEA product (Mac Ginty 2008, 145), made from standardised components, whereby policies are executed top-down and operate inside exclusionary normative frameworks.

Particularly in cases where terrorist violence has been or is utilised, liberal peacebuilding seems to operate in tandem with frameworks and discourses of security – especially orthodox terrorism theories (Hocking 1984; Franks 2006) – that favour the supremacy of political liberalism, the dominance of neo-liberal ideologies, the promotion of national and institutional interests and seek to establish a liberal consensus before any negotiation even begins to take place (Richmond and Franks 2009). In other words, the liberal peace seems to be quite dysfunctional when it is resisted (Richmond 2010; Mac Ginty 2012), thus failing to become inclusionary and/or integrative (Newman, Paris, and Richmond 2010) because it imposes conditionalities (majoritarian politics, state-controlled security and a rule of law) that tend to limit civil society's reaction(s) and resistance.

The end result is often the opposite of these approaches' agenda: the reinforcement of the state's security response that provokes or causes an even greater resistance by non-state armed actors and their circles of support, which in turn leads to the undermining of institutional and national interests (Richmond and Tellidis 2012). What is more, political liberalism seems to be misinterpreted in order to reinvigorate the security agenda and thus lead to states that are only virtually liberal. Its misrepresentation is based on the attempts to generate a non-pluralist, monolithic way of political behaviour (Berlin 1969) instead of defending and engaging with difference, thus failing to understand the "other" dispassionately and blocking the potential of harmonious coexistence (Gray 2000, 25). In the case of ethnoterrorist conflicts, for example, there is little attempt to genuinely negotiate claims of/for secession and independence and aim for a compromise with the resisting actors (Tellidis 2011), even when such claims are made by moderate, non-violent groupings and/or platforms and through constitutionally and institutionally accepted means. Rather, the established practice – even by liberal democratic states such as the United Kingdom or Spain in their dealings with terrorism in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country, respectively – focuses instead on subverting, co-opting or suppressing said claims. As a result, the conditions of conflict are replicated and the achievement of security is distanced even further, as is, consequently, the establishment of an inclusionary peace.

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Negotiations and peacebuilding are just two areas in which peace and conflict studies could potentially offer avenues to further our understanding of and engagement with terrorist violence. For example, Michael Loadenthal in this special issue examines how the Insight approach to conflict mediation can help explain the state's threat perception, narrative construction and finally, policies towards "eco-terrorism" in the United States. As such, it falls under one of this special issue's central themes, which is to offer a small example of the wealth of possibilities that peace and conflict frameworks and responses can offer the study of and engagement with terrorism.

**Learning from terrorism studies?**

Peace and conflict studies may also have important lessons to learn from terrorism studies, both traditional and critical. As alluded to earlier, the inherent power asymmetry that characterises terrorism confronts many conflict management/resolution/transformation frameworks with a serious challenge (see Philipson 2005 for an initial examination of this question). What happens to negotiation and mediation frameworks that require a "certain degree of symmetry"? Is an MHS ever possible in contexts of terrorism? And if so, how should it be conceptualised taking the often-extreme power asymmetry into account? Other questions are raised by the illegality of representatives of non-state armed groups involved in terrorist violence and the often near-complete secrecy surrounding actors involved in state terrorism. How does one access such actors? How does one know how much support these actors garner in crucial constituencies? Engaging with traditional terrorism studies can help peace and conflict studies ask difficult and important questions about power.

Critical approaches to terrorism can push peace and conflict studies even further down this path. Indeed, if terrorism studies has suffered from an inherently problem-solving approach, so has peace and conflict studies (see the excellent critique in Fetherston and Nordstrom 1995). Aside from some interesting work being carried out in the conflict transformation field (see Miall 2004; Vayrynen 1991, for example), much work in conflict management and resolution continues to ignore important problems raised when confronted with broader questions of social and political theory. For example, how do negotiations or facilitation exercises work and impact on the broader context? That is, on what understanding of the relationship between agency and structure are they based? What is the role of discursive practices in sustaining conflict or peace? What kind of power imbalances are sustained by the proliferation of often western-educated conflict resolution "experts"? What models are they proselytising and at whose expense? All these are important questions that critical terrorism scholarship has already begun to engage with while peace and conflict studies overall lags behind.

Thus, the objective of this special issue is not to dig deeper trenches between the two academic fields, nor is it to claim the higher ground on behalf of peace and conflict studies vis-à-vis terrorism studies. Indeed, some of the most constructive criticisms addressing the conduct of terrorism research have come from terrorism scholars: Silke's (2001, 12) parallelism with the fast-food industry, Crelinsten's (1987) remark of the skewed focus of a great deal of terrorism research, Crenshaw's (1990, 17) observation that the state cannot fight against terrorist discourses in a solely punitive manner and Wilkinson's (2001, 19) note that "historically, states have conducted terror on a far more massive and lethal scale than groups" are indicative. Rather than indulge in playground-like fights over who is more "right" over the problem-solving dimensions of terrorism research, this special issue seeks to identify the points where the two debates can meet and interact productively and effectively. Negotiating with terrorists may be politically detrimental to a particular

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political party or government's prestige, but, as peace and conflict studies frameworks indicate, it is often indispensable if violence is to be eliminated in the long term. Similarly, terrorism studies on group dynamics and intergroup competition have shown that negotiations with state actors can lead to terrorist factions suffering the same prestige damage, thus leading to an escalation of violence.

Bearing in mind the high significance of context and the difficulties of transferring lessons from one case to the next, we believe that peace and conflict studies has much to gain from the insights, methodologies and epistemologies employed by terrorism studies. Understanding, and even improving, peace and conflict studies frameworks that seek to engage with actors in terrorist conflicts can benefit by terrorism studies' analyses on the constant evolution of the dynamics of terrorism and terrorists. Similarly, the critical lenses with which peace and conflict studies approach the phenomenon of terrorism and their problematisation of concepts such as legitimacy and security may prove beneficial to terrorism studies and the development of more nuanced frameworks of understanding, explaining and resolving terrorist conflicts. The jury may still be out on whether the recent negotiations between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia will lead to a more sustainable and self-sustained peace. But it is indicative of the change of attitude(s) that is necessary if conflict dynamics, attitudes and behaviours are to be transformed and offer pathways that are less costly than repression, terror and even all-out war. The problematisation of the two fields by each other can only lead to epistemological, methodological and policy benefits not only for both fields but also for the broader field of IR and its preoccupation with peace and conflict.

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**The articles in this special issue**

This issue begins with Paul Rogers' article offering a powerful counter-narrative of the war on terror. Rogers, one of the first to approach terrorism studies from a peace and conflict perspective, begins by re-examining the history of al-Qaeda's development and its journey towards the 9/11 attacks, before focusing on the rationale behind the US vigorous response and its implications on the changes in attitudes towards military force, in particular the increased reliance on the "remote control" of security threats through the use of armed drones, Special Forces and privatised military companies. Rogers concludes by looking at these changes in relation to trends in international security in the context of socio-economic divisions, marginalisation and environmental constraints and questions whether we are likely to face a continued reliance on military force responses or witness a move towards approaches based in the concept of sustainable security.

Feargal Cochrane focuses on continuity and change and argues that recent developments in UK's counterinsurgency and counterterror legislation are in essence an extension of policies first implemented during the late stages of the colonial period. Incarceration without trial, psychological humiliation, waterboarding and extrajudicial killings are all forms of abuse that were first used in Kenya, Cyprus, Malaya and particularly in Northern Ireland. Thus, the UK government policies in the post-9/11 and post-7/7 reality do not represent a radical break with the past, but rather principally a transfer from the periphery to the centre of counterterrorism/counterinsurgency policies long practised elsewhere. Cochrane goes on to argue that this is succession of failure: Indeed, as with the "Ulsterisation" of Northern Ireland in the 1970s and the "Vietnamisation" of US-led war, the contemporary strategy of "Afghanisation" has not managed to win hearts and minds primarily because of its preoccupation with security-through-order rather than with

security-through-justice. As such, Cochrane argues, states reinforce the conflict rather than contain it.

In a similar vein, Kathryn Fisher explores the narratives of time and their role in normalising exceptional security practices, especially when they are presented in an atemporal manner in order to justify future securitisation. Counterterrorist legislation and its implementation as policy, in particular, seem to have a profound effect on terrorism's securitisation, which they tend to present as a constant threat in the long term, thus negating the role that context can play in its analysis, explanation, understanding and, ultimately, resolution. Fisher's examination of how British counterterrorism law is formed and implemented unearths instances whereby it exacerbates insecurity. This is done by repositioning terrorism as a phenomenon that is new and different from past experiences. The adoption of extraordinary measures that must become ordinary and permanent is inextricably linked with the novelty and difference of the phenomenon, because it is due to these that security discourses fail to produce a timeline of when terrorism may be defeated and law, policy and society may return to normality. Fisher's work is of particular importance to terrorism studies because it shows how peace and conflict frameworks can lead to the adoption of lenses that problematise the "terrorists", the "counterterrorists" and the general public's attitudes towards securitisation discourses.

Harmonie Toros and Luca Mavelli investigate how scholars have thus far understood terrorism's political nature. To this end, they explore the widely accepted distinction between terrorism as *political* violence and organised crime as *profit-driven* violence. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, they argue that such a dichotomy is based on a narrow understanding of politics which deems *political* only that violence carried out by groups seeking to establish a contending political order. This perspective overlooks the biopolitics of violence of those non-state actors, such as criminal organisations, whose goal of economic aggrandisement is part of a broader governmental logic which participates in the constitution of subjectivities and sociopolitical orders through the institutionalisation of disciplinary and regulatory norms. In order to advance this argument, Toros and Mavelli analyse the case of the Neapolitan Camorra and argue that its governmental capacity to establish frames of meaning, identity and action contributes to a distinctive political order and imagination. This analysis not only challenges the broadly upheld distinction between terrorism and organised crime, but more importantly calls for a deeper understanding of the biopolitical nature of terrorist violence and the need to engage with the biopolitical practices of non-state armed groups. Toros and Mavelli conclude by arguing that such a change in approach could have important implications for conflict transformation responses to terrorist violence.

This special issue then turns to examine specific case studies that illustrate the potential of cross-pollination between terrorism and peace and conflict studies. The first case is offered by Michael Loadenthal's article that examines the state's framings of animal rights activists as terrorists in the United States and argues that in order to understand policies that seek to counter dissent, one must first understand the state's perception(s) of threat and construction of narratives that depict dissent as threat. Acts of sabotage and vandalism by animal welfare activists have been construed as terrorism by the upper federal echelons of power and in certain cases they have been presented as more significant a threat than al-Qaeda itself. This is the context that has allowed the state's juridical mechanisms to prosecute as criminal offender anyone who witnesses or records animal abuse by agricultural production businesses. This is also the narrative that seeks to situate the general public against acts of dissidence by presenting the latter as violence whose severity and significance are substantial in disrupting the social fabric and normality of everyday

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life. Loadenthal's analysis verifies the short-sighted view of the state when it comes to its monopoly of violence being disputed. While it is certain that animal welfare activism is a matter of political substance, it is also debatable whether the violence it generates is enough to terrorise the general public – at least to the same extent as violence emanating from al-Qaeda or white supremacists. Loadenthal's analysis on how the state perceives and situates threats in order to counter them with force is particularly useful for the transformation of conflicts. More concretely, it addresses attitudes that are themselves fuelling conflict rather than addressing the grievances and problems that emerge from confrontations between states and non-state actors.

In a similar framework, Juan Carlos Antúnez and Ioannis Tellidis' study critically examines the terminology used by Western policymakers and media representatives to refer to extremist groups that use Islam as their marker. Despite the wealth of knowledge gathered from research on de-radicalisation, and despite the numerous governmental reports that have been drawn up after consultation with Islamic scholars and community leaders, there has been very little effort by policymakers and the media to engage culturally with Muslim communities in order to design more inclusionary, liberal and cosmopolitan counter-narratives. On the one hand, these would help limit Islamophobia amongst non-Muslim constituencies by raising their awareness of Islam's cultural marks and values, and, on the other hand, they would help bridge the intercultural gap by avoiding alienation (and targeting) of Muslim communities. To that effect, the authors suggest that the term "neo-Kharijism" is more appropriate to describe the narratives and actions used by al-Qaeda and other similar groups than the terms "jihadi", "Islamic", "fundamentalist" and other uncritically regurgitated terminology that risks escalating, rather than diffusing, the conflict dynamics.

Witold Mucha explores the interconnection between terrorism and peace and conflict studies by studying the effects of counterinsurgency operations in Syria and Peru. Based on a most-different-systems design, his article argues that in its effort to win back lost legitimacy, power and control, the state intensifies internal armed conflict by neglecting, ignoring or even denying popular discourses that express needs and grievances. What transforms such discourses in both cases from an initially peaceful expression and manifestation is the state's reaction and rush to delegitimise them. Using Ohlson's Triple R theory, Mucha explains that the opposition movements develop reasons, resources and resolve to resist and counter the state's escalation of violence. Yet, the process of rising levels of violence by both actors opens up spaces and creates opportunities for the opposition movements to find refuge in terrorist tactics and foment and be driven by increasingly radical agendas. This is of particular significance to scholars of terrorism studies because, as observed in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country, for example, a generally suppressive strategy of counterinsurgency may generate adverse effects and blowbacks. It is also significant for peace and conflict studies because of the contextual sensitivities inherent in such studies.

Ibrahim Can Sezgin's article examines the conflict between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Turkish state from a processual perspective. Sezgin argues that mainstream analyses which focus on the causes of conflict at its onset are missing a significant narrative that emerges as the conflict develops in time. Examining the formulation and implementation of Turkish foreign policy from 1984 to 1992 allows for an explanation of the reasons that led to PKK's escalation of violence. This is done by considering Turkey's foreign policy as an independent variable that affects not only interstate or intrastate relations, but also trans-state causalities. Kurdish populations in Syria, Iraq and Iran have been affected by the power politics exhibited by Turkey's foreign policy towards these

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states in the beginning of the 1990s. With regard to Syria and Iran, Turkish foreign policy led to power politics frictions that strengthened the PKK's organisation and presence in the region. More importantly, however, it was Turkish foreign policy decisions towards Iraq – particularly after the creation of safe heavens in the northern part of the country – that generated a perception in PKK circles that an opportune moment had arrived for the movement to capitalise its objectives. Said moment could only materialise with the escalation of violence towards Turkey. Sezgin's study is significant for both terrorism and peace and conflict studies because it keeps abreast with the unravelling of a conflict rather than focusing predominantly on the narratives and grievances expressed at its onset.

The final section of this issue hosts the views and experiences of two practitioners, who offer significant insights for terrorism and peace and conflict studies. In the first article, Sophie Haspeslagh looks at regimes of proscription and how the broad and generalised legal frameworks under which they are implemented have undermined and impeded third-party engagement with armed groups that were classified as "terrorist". Haspeslagh describes instances where mediating efforts have been left incomplete because of proscription being implemented in the middle of peace talks or cases whereby states had to resort to "covert" conflict resolution tactics so as not to appear violating international law. Although there have been instances where proscription appears to have contributed to the abandonment of violence, in most cases, it has made the work of mediators even more dangerous than it already is.

Conversations in Critical Studies on Terrorism features an interview with Noel Large, a community worker engaged in peacebuilding between republican and loyalist communities in West Belfast. A former loyalist gunman who spent more than a decade in the H Blocks of the Maze Prison, Large speaks of his personal journey from terrorist violence to conflict transformation work, highlighting the importance of reflexivity. Suspicious of politicians who play the "blame game" at the expense of interface communities, he strongly advocates for dialogue among the communities and argues that loyalist and republicans must be brought together if underlying sectarianism is to recede.

This issue concludes with Roger Mac Ginty's review article on Terrorism, Dialogue and Conflict Transformation, in which he highlights that the latter two are usually presented by policy circles as incompatible with the former. Despite the fact that governments are dismissive of any sort of negotiations with terrorists, Mac Ginty points to the occasions where dialogue has broken the stalemate(s) and has led to a range of positive results, from cessation and elimination of violence to the signing of comprehensive peace accords. Mac Ginty takes issue with the very use of the term "terrorism" because it foments the already omnipresent lack of essence in political dialogue. Both orthodox and critical theories on terrorism have contributed to the politicisation of the research and have therefore impeded the communication to policymakers of the potential of conflict transformation frameworks – as opposed to conflict resolution and/or conflict management – when it comes to more sustainable ends to violence and the realisation that quick fixes can indeed have undesirable consequences.

## Note

1. Other forms of political violence suffer from definitional problems such as civil wars (see Sambanis 2004), ethnic conflict (Varshney 2001) or even non-violent forms of protest such as civil disobedience (see Bedau 1961).

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The authors contributed equally to this article.

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