

Critical approaches to studying terrorism, counter terrorism and counter extremism in the Middle East

Thursday, 22 June 2023 10:45 (1h 30m)

As we mark twenty years since the onset of the 'War on Terror', critical approaches to counter terrorism and extremism in the MENA region remain marginal. The well-established field of critical terrorism studies remains eurocentric in its empirical and theoretical focus, and Arab states are often cast as exceptional in their implementation of countering terrorism and extremism laws and policies. Yet, many Middle Eastern states are promulgating anti-terror laws and Countering/Preventing Violent Extremism (C/PVE) frameworks similar to those implemented by other states globally, whilst international donor funding is being increasingly channelled to civil society organisations in the Middle East in order to implement such programmes.

This panel brings together a multi-disciplinary range of scholars in order to explore new approaches to studying terrorism and extremism in the context of the Middle East and North Africa. Following Edward Said's concerns around the discursive and material production of an essential 'Middle East', we ask whether and how it is possible to study terrorism in the Arab world without reproducing stereotypes of 'the terrorist'. We ask to what extent is it possible to 'decolonize' and 'gender' scholarship on terrorism and counter-terrorism through the use of decolonial and feminist approaches and what are the theoretical and ethical issues involved in such a move? Furthermore, and taking specific issue with the recent development of 'soft' C/PVE approaches, we ask about the role played by local actors in the production of such frameworks, and whether they end up reproducing the same epistemological, methodological and normative problems associated with 'terrorism'.

Membership

Track Classification: Critical Studies on Terrorism Working Group