

## Rethinking (Post)Conflict Societies and Subjectivities through Embodiment: Bodies of Terror and Counter-Terror (Panel 4)

*Friday 23 June 2023 15:00 (1h 30m)*

The body and its affective potential are central to the images of terrorism which permeate global media. The suicide bomber, public executions, and stabbings all rely on production of the body within an affective regime, and in which the body - both of the terrorists and the terrorised - exerts agency beyond the subjective goals of the actors. Such forms of violence demonstrate, beyond their attributed political messages, a radical approach to the human body - or, more specifically, to bodily and embodied practices which function to disrupt the body politic at its core. Similarly, counter-terrorism measures produce and deploy bodies in a variety of ways to produce a certain form of 'security'. This requires that bodies of both 'potential terrorists' and 'potential victims' materialise in particular ways and embodying certain characteristics within 'at-risk' social contexts. These bodies are again reproduced and redeployed in new ways in post-terrorism environments, where bodies of victims, attackers, survivors, and the public at large are all remade according to political logics of security. However, our bodies are not passive within these regimes, and exert affective agency both with and beyond the subject.

In this fourth panel, we focus on different embodied practices around terrorism, counter-terrorism, and the social and political responses to the former. Particularly, we investigate how these political phenomena produce discourses and regimes in which the body itself functions both as agent and representation, and comes to embody certain competing narratives, emotions, and subjects. This is done through papers on the Manchester Bombing in 2017, (in)security practices in Kenya, and agonism in Israel/Palestine.

### **Thematic Introduction to the Panel Series:**

As Elaine Scarry famously argued, the primary mechanism of war is bodily violence. Our bodies themselves are integral in how we create typologies of violence, from 'war' to 'protest' to 'terrorism'. The effects of conflict go beyond the immediate violation of bodies, which post-violence continues to be politically productive within affective and materialist economies operating in radically restructured social spheres. These panels explore possibilities for rethinking war and conflict by considering the ways in which they are embodied experiences. Firstly, they consider how individual experiences of being embodied in and post-conflict relates to social identity, and how embodiment and identity are unstable and change over time. Secondly, the panels reflect on the social characteristics and production of bodies in relation to traumatic experiences. Thirdly, while human bodies are central to the practice of war, they exist within constellations of non-human bodies which play a significant role in producing understanding of conflict and society.

**Track Classification:** Critical Studies on Terrorism Working Group