

Controversies, Failed Scandals, and Contestation in the fields of Security and Counterterrorism

Wednesday, 5 June 2024 15:00 (1h 30m)

This panel brings together scholarship on the ‘politics of exposure,’ scandal, contestation, and the role of public opinion in the fields of security and counterterrorism. It explores how social groups set the boundaries of what is violence and terrorism; how information on human rights violations may be “exposed” or suppressed; how controversies come about as a collective process; which actors can voice their narratives and which actors remain subaltern in public contestation; and which practices are socially legitimised and how. Charlotte Heath Kelly’s paper examines the failure to scandalise a harmful UK counterterrorism programme; Frank Foley analyses how ‘reverse shaming’ was used to suppress public contestation of torture in Spain; Lisa Stampnitzky assesses the interplay of denial and acknowledgement in US government discourse on torture; Laura Fernández examines the social organization of contestation in Spain regarding the meaning and limits of ‘acceptable’ violence; and Michael Lister analyses how security professionals help to shape the politics of public opinion around security issues. By comparing failed scandals and suppression with active contestation, the panel will shed light on the mechanisms through which security controversies may be constructed or curtailed.

Track Classification: Critical Studies on Terrorism Working Group