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A Linguistic Turn of Terrorism Studies

Jørgen Staun

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JØRGEN STAUN
PhD, Project Researcher, DIIS
www.diis.dk/jst - jst@diis.dk

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Danish Institute for International Studies, DIIS
Strandgade 56, DK-1401 Copenhagen, Denmark
Ph: +45 32 69 87 87
Fax: +45 32 69 87 00
E-mails: diis@diis.dk
Web: www.diis.dk

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INTRODUCTION

"Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier".[1]

The post-mortem video-statement from the alleged "ring-leader" of the London 7/7 bombers, Mohammad Sidique Khan, which was shown on Al Jazeera on 1 September 2005 leaves no doubt that he believed that he was "a soldier" at "war" with the West. A West, which in his mind was threatening his so-called Muslim brothers and sisters, that is the Ummah– the community of Muslim believers all over the world– and that this threat was so severe that he had to act in defence of it by killing what he saw as supporters of a democratically elected government which was responsible for the so-called war against his fellow Muslims. And there can be little doubt that he thought that being at war made it legitimate to kill and wound people, who accidentally happened to take the wrong car in the London Underground that July morning.

But why did Khan, who is remembered as a "quiet, studious" boy at school who was "never in trouble", commit such a horrible act? A man, who as an adult was employed as a learning mentor at a local primary school and was respected for his commitment to the children[2]. Indeed, why did he and his fellow bombers, Tanweer, Hussain and Lindsay, all second generation British nationals, seemingly well integrated and normal British youths, decide to become, what Khan describes as "soldiers" and give up their own lives and altogether kill 56 and wound over 700 people on that morning in July?

Questions and acts such as these have inspired terrorism researchers to look for cultural- or ideology-related explanations. Cultural theories applied to the study of violent radicalisation and Islamist militancy primarily focus on socio-cultural explanatory factors when explaining why certain European Muslim youths adhere to commit terrorist activities. These factors range from integration problems, feelings of humiliation and their understanding of the world, i.e. their worldviews, perceptions and others.

However, the focus on religion, culture and ideology as explanatory factors for (violent or non-violent) political activism is far from particular to terrorism studies. After the Cold War one of the more remarking features of political science, especially within the realms of international relations theory, was a surge of interest in questions of identity – notably national identity – religion and other cultural spheres. Areas, which for years had been if not neglected, then treated more or less as a minor relevant infringement on otherwise rationally informed policy decisions, all of a sudden came to the forefront of research. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the withering away of the bi-polar ideological opposition between Western market-based democracies and the Soviet state-controlled communism, new explanations on the fault lines

[1] Muhammad Sidique Khan's post-mortem video-statement, referred from Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005, House of Commons, HC 1087, p 19.

[2] Craig Whitlock, "Trail from London to Leeds Yields Portraits of 3 bombers", Washington Post, 15 July, 2005.

in international politics were in demand. Within IR-theory the inspiration from post-structuralist philosophers such as Foucault and Derrida in the late 1980s and early 1990s lead IR-scholars such as Richard Ashley, R.B.J. Walker, Jens Bartelson, James Der Derian, David Campbell and Ole Wæver to study the history of significant concepts (such as the concept of sovereignty, state, nation or security) and ask questions concerning how culture and identity might affect foreign policy. Outside IR-theory an author such as Robert Kaplan argued that the new world order would be characterized by enhanced anarchy, whereas Francis Fukuyama claimed the Western democracy as the End of History. One of the more influential concepts to float in the mid 1990s was Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations", the title of a Foreign Affairs article and a later book[3] in which the author somewhat rigidly argued that conflicts after the Cold War where not so much ideologically or economically driven, or the result of raw power games, but instead increasingly related to culture and civilizations, which he largely defined by the world's major religions. The prominent clash, he contended, would be between the Western world and Islam, since the dominant trend was a revitalization of religion in world affairs. Thus, religion – and thereby culture – had all of a sudden returned to the centre of social science, from where it had been put aside in the general predisposition of secularization, whereby tradition and superstition gave way to science and rationality.[4]

[3] Huntington, 1993, 1997.

[4] Laustsen and Wæver, 2000, p. 706.

CULTURE AND TERRORISM

Culture is a concept used in day-to-day language which contains a long list of different meanings and social practices. Accordingly culture can be defined as including elements as different as: language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, rituals and ceremonies. It also usually holds an aesthetic meaning, such as the supposed 'high culture' of music-forms such as classical. In the context of an international relations debate on how to operationalize security policy culture Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter J. Katzenstein defines culture as: "a set of evaluative standards, such as rules or models defining what entities and actors exist in a system and how they operate and interrelate".[5] If we look at culture from a more philosophical point of view, Michel Foucault defines culture in terms of a social episteme as described by a worldview or a paradigm of thinking that "defines the conditions … of all knowledge".[6] Ludwig Wittgenstein speaks of culture as "a use of language"[7], and the way the concept of culture is used here is very close to his concept of "worldview". Thus, according to Wittgenstein, language is embedded in mythologies, conceptual systems and old lines of thought, which in a way keeps language locked. In his Über Gewissheit from 1969 Wittgenstein writes the following on the concept of worldview: "94.

[5] Jepperson, Ronald L., Alexander Wendt and Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security Policy', in Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.) The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics, 1996, p. 56; here referred from Dalgaard-Nielsen 2006, p. 13.

[6] Michel Foucault's The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences, 1973; referred from (Juergensmeyer, 2000, pp. 12-13)

[7] Wittgenstein 1958, p. 134.

But I do not have my worldview because I have convinced myself of its truthfulness; neither because I am convinced of its truthfulness. On the contrary it is the background handed over (from history, J.S.), upon which, I distinguish between true and false."[8] Cultural studies in this sense thus encompass studies which focus on identity, cultural or ideological explanations for behaviours and action. And one of the defining features of cultural studies is the prominence this leaves to language.

STATE OF ART

Authors working within a social-constructivist or post-structuralist framework are not the most prominent among terrorism-scholars. Mostly it is authors coming from other fields within social science employing a constructivist framework, notably security studies or international relations theory, which renders into the subject of terrorism. James Der Derian is one such international relations scholar who with a constructivist approach focuses on the elusiveness of the concept of terrorism.[9] Another is Cynthia Weber, who studies how the aesthetics of fear are politically mobilised in the case of the London 7/7 bombings and how they fit the prevalent Kantian conception of morality.[10] Ole Wæver, who also stems from IR-theory, has cast light on the securitization-processes, which he believes are in play in the rhetorical 'battles' between George Bush and Osama bin Laden.[11] However, Der Derian, Weber and Wæver are all more focused on overall processes concerning the concept of terrorism. As was for many years the tendency within IR, the post-structuralist or constructivist approach is more often used in overall philosophical considerations than in more practical, down-to-earth studies of for example how discourses from an organisation like the al-Qaeda affect the radicalization of groups and individuals in Europe.

From German sociology we have "risk-society" thinker Ulrich Beck's focus on how traditional state-based concepts such as "war" and "peace", "friend" and "foe", or "war" and "crime" have been challenged by international terrorism[12]. And we have authors such as the French sociologists-philosophers Olivier Roy and Gilles Kepel[13] who have worked on a terror-related issue, namely the spread of radical Islamism. Their strength lies more in studying overall processes of radicalisation of Islamist discourses over time than in answering questions of why a specific individual or an organization moves from moderate Islamism to radical thought to violent action. They have studied how loss of identity among second generation immigrants in Europe (mainly France) leaves large societal groups vulnerable to radical Islamist ideologies. Thus, according to Olivier Roy, within Europe there is a large group of alienated young Muslims, who are split between their parents or grandparents' norms, often

[8] Wittgenstein, *OV*, §94, my translation to English from a Danish translation of Wittgenstein's original German manuscript from 1969.

[9] Der Derian, 2004, 2005.

[10] Weber, 2006.

[11] Wæver, 2006, 2007.

[12] Beck, 2003.

[13] Among the long list of other central authors, which place a similar weight on cultural or ideological factors, are: Khosrokhovar 2005; Juergensmeyer 2000, Leiken 2004, 2005.

stemming from their former home country, and the expectations the second generation European nationals are met with from the countries they are growing up in. These youngsters are hit with high unemployment and often met with racism from their surroundings. Roy argues that the lack of identity – or hybrid identity, as Atef Hamdy puts it[14] – has led to a re-islamisation of European Muslims as part of a process of cultural adjustment for Muslim immigrants to the fact of living in Europe.

One of the reasons for the loss of identity among young Muslim Europeans is, according to Gilles Kepel, that the world since 9/11 has been trapped in a vicious dialectic of "jihad and fitna". Thus, in his eyes the world is trapped in a conflict between jihad – for Kepel, understood as armed struggle against the far enemy – and fitna – understood as the internal strife of Islam – where centrifugal forces threaten the faithful with community fragmentation, disintegration and ruin. Whereas jihad unites Muslims by sublimating internal strife and projects frustrations outwards, towards the land of unbelief, fitna undermines Muslim society from within.[15]

Europe is a central place for this struggle. According to Kepel, more than ten million immigrants from Muslim countries live in Western Europe as a whole. Their children where for the most part born in Europe and hold citizenship in a European country. An optimistic view on this would argue that these young people would become a viable source of growth and modernity, as Western Europe's newest citizens. A more pessimistic view would argue that some of these young Muslims' rigid identity will lead them to reject cultural integration in Europe and draw them towards radical Islamism. A few of these will then move further and pass into violence, whereas a more numerous group will be satisfied in turning inward, becoming pietistic and non-violent adherers to Salafism, living a separate life in closed communities.[16]

Concerning radicalization, Roy, Kepel and Khosrokhovar would argue that there is no one single explanation when it comes to violent radicalization, neither can we talk of a single profile among Europe's Islamist radicals. Instead, they focus on overall explanations such as socioeconomic marginalization, hard-pressed neighbourhoods, lack of employment among the lower social strata as well as lack of education.[17]

One of the central weaknesses of these broad sociological studies focusing on the perils of modernity and westernization for Muslim immigrants and their children is, however, the lack of an adequate answer to why only a very, very limited group of people who live under the above-mentioned circumstances of hybrid-identity formation act out their supposed frustrations and identity-problems by becoming radicals. Why do most European Muslims live perfectly normal lives, if they too are exposed to discrimination, unemployment and hybrid identities? Well, to be fair, Roy, Kepel and Khosrokhovar are not especially interested in that specific question; they look more for the overall tendencies. Instead, one could consult theories such as social movement theory or network theory[18],

[14] Hamdy in Buijs, Demant and Hamdy, 2007.

[15] Kepel, 2004, p. 289.

[16] Kepel, 2004, p. 255.

[17] Khosrokovar, 2005.

[18] See (Wiktorowicz, 2004; Hafez, 2003) and (Sageman, 2004) respectively.

which, among other things, focus on the systemic variables which let some organizations turn out successful and others not. Or one could look at psychoanalytical or cognitive theories [19] which focus on the very processes that, through different stages, turn people into radicals. The weakness here is that if the processes (of radicalization) are at the centre of the explanations, one easily gets the impression that all of us could turn into radicals if we, under the right circumstances, were put through the same processes.

Now, the American declared "war on terror" at least for a period of time renewed the debate within and outside terrorism-studies concerning the effects of language on political action: Do the concepts used affect or even determine perceptions of the adversary and thus consequently public policy? Does language "construct" interests or is it merely reflecting them?[20] Still, linguistic analysis and constructivist positions are not among the most prominent within terrorism-studies. But a few needs to be mentioned. Bruce Lincoln for example has analysed the symmetric dualisms of the Bush and bin Laden speeches, focusing on among other things on the presence of a religious sub-text in Bush's speeches on the war against terror.[21] And among the more thorough works employing a social-constructivist approach to the subject of terror is Cécile Valérie Van de Voorde's dissertation, which focuses on the social construction of suicide terrorism.[22] Not too far from constructivism are authors such as Frank J. Buijs, Froukje Demant and Atef Hamdy, who focus on the identity question for especially second generation nationals in their exemplary study on radical and democratic Muslims in the Netherlands.[23] Exemplary is also Quintan Wiktorowicz's genealogy of radical Islam, where he follows the erosion of central conceptual constraints, which used to limit the legitimacy of warfare and violence within Islamist discourse.[24] Still, the process of radicalization and the question what drives radicals from "talk to action" is under-researched.

RADICALISATION IS A PROCESS OF SECURITIZATION

Instead one should see the process of radicalisation as a process of securitization [25] and employ a late-Wittgensteinian approach [26] to language in order to better study the phenomenon. The argument is that the words "We are at war" and "I am a soldier", which were stated by Mohammad Sidique Khan from the London-bombers in his suicide-video[27], draws upon a discourse of war, which sees dying in war as a patriotic act, thus legitimising that one gives

[19] Ferracuti, 1982; Taylor and Horgan 2001.

[20] Crenshaw, 2005, p. 88.

[21] Lincoln, 2007.

[22] Van de Voorde, 2007.

[23] Buijs, Demant and Hamdy, 2007.

[24] Wiktorowicz, 2005.

[25] The concept of securitization will be elaborated upon in the following.

[26] The philosophical position denoted as "late-Wittgensteinian" is usually defined as outlined in the works *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein, *PU*), *On Certainty* (Wittgenstein, *OV*) and to some extent *Blue and Brown Books* (Wittgenstein 1958). See Staun 2002, p. 39.

[27] See Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005, Intelligence and Security Committee, Cm 6785; Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005, House of Commons, HC 1087.

one's life for one's country. This discourse builds upon the view that the Ummah is under attack and that the Muslim world is at war with the West, which not only legitimises the use of force and violence against Western societies, but also implies that fighting the West is a defence for one's (borderless) Muslim nation, and that this defence is legitimate – as part of the argument of legitimate war. By describing the Ummah as being under attack by Western societies, Khan applies a so-called "securitization speech act", thereby not only legitimising a violent response, but also giving the response a sense of special urgency and necessity. Now, the idea that the Ummah is under attack from the West is not an idea which Khan invented on his own. Rather, it is a belief which is part of a system of discourses which are disseminated from a long list of speech actors from within and outside radical Islamist circles all over the world.[28]

The idea of the Ummah being under attack is resonated in the writings of Mohammed B., the killer of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh: "Know (may Allah lead you) that Islam is standing this very day on the brink of the abyss. The enemies of Islam are planning a final, all-determining strike in order to pull down the banner of Laa ilaha illallah".[29] Mohammed B. also follows Khan's argument, that it is legitimate to kill accidental bystanders among the Dutch, since their government in his eyes for years has supported Israel and because the Netherlands is a part of the coalition forces supporting United States in Afghanistan: "For years now, the Netherlands has been helping the Israeli Zionists and is a coalition partner of America in its battle against the Muslim Ummah. This means that you and your country have become targets for the Mujahideen. Because your government's policy is supported by voting papers, and because they govern on your behalf, your blood and possessions have become *halal* for the Islamic Ummah".[30]

However, before embarking on a study of these discourses, the relationship between language and action – which is central to this discussion – needs to be clarified.

THE PROMINENCE OF LANGUAGE

The argument here is that Wittgenstein's so-called "private language argument"[31] implies a taken-for-given social theory, which sets the rules for a taken-for-given social context. Put simply, language is something learned, socially propagated, something we have 'inherited' from our parents, our upbringing, school, and something we are constantly being fed with from the media, society and our interrelations with other people. The concepts which we use are concepts which we have acquired through a social context. Thus, Nicholas Onuf interprets Wittgenstein's use of Goethe's famous aphorism "Im Anfang war die Tat"[32] (In the beginning was the deed) as supporting the claim that Wittgenstein was a social theore-

[28] As argued by for example Wiktorowicz 2005; Khosrokhovar 2005.

[29] Mohammed B. quoted from Buijs, Demant and Hamdy, 2007, p. 28.

[30] Ibid., p. 29.

[31] Wittgenstein, *PU*, §§ 243-313, pp. 356-379.

[32] Wittgenstein, *OV*, § 402, p. 172)

tician or at least can be used as such.[33] The central point of the aphorism – which gives notice of the coming of the Devil – is that it neither gives first priority to the words nor to the deed. Thus, it implies that human beings and society construct or constitute each other simultaneously. The deed is not understood as 'a deed' until it is put into a socially constructed – and linguistically constituted – context. The deed is therefore a phenomenon in itself and at the same time only possible to understand as 'a deed', that is through concepts of meaning.[34]

Another central notion taken from Wittgenstein is the concept of "language games". The concept of "language games" was never specifically defined by Wittgenstein. Rather – and this is fairly characteristically of Wittgenstein – it is through his use of the concept that we learn how to use it.[35] He used the term for the first time at a lecture at Cambridge in 1932:

"In teaching a child language by pointing and pronouncing the words for them, where does the use of a proposition start? If you teach him to touch certain colours when you say the word 'red', you have evidently not taught him sentences.... What is called understanding a sentence is not very different from what a child does when he points to colours on hearing colour words. Now there are all sorts of language games suggested by the one in which colour words are taught: games or orders and commands, of question and answer, of questions and 'Yes' and 'No.' We might think that in teaching a child such language games we are not teaching him a language but are only preparing him for it. But these games are complete; nothing is lacking".[36]

To this it should be noted that language games are not in any way a genre or a distinct form of speech or discourse. Rather, it should be understood as a paradigm or a number of sentences, which we use in connection with each other. Language games are a lot of different things: When the police man says "do not enter", when a signpost signals "do not enter", a red or a green traffic light. In *The Blue and Brown Books* Wittgenstein argues that language games are "ways of using signs simpler than those in which we use the signs of our highly complicated everyday language. Language games are the forms of language with which a child begins to make use of words. The study of language games is the study of primitive forms of language or primitive languages".[37] Here, "primitive languages" should be understood as kids' earliest use of language. The reason for us to study simple language games is, Wittgenstein argues, that "[w]hen we look at such simple forms of language the mental mist which seems to enshroud our ordinary use of language disappears. We see activities, reactions, which are clear-cut and transparent. On the other hand we recognize in these simple processes forms of language not separated by a break from our more complicated ones".[38]

Thus, for Wittgenstein, language games are a whole which consists of language and the actions in which words are mixed. Here is the classical, so-called Augustine language

[33] Onuf, 1989, p. 35.

[34] Staun, 2002, pp. 46-49.

[35] Marjorie Perloff argues that: "As we make our way through the Investigations [*PU*, J.S.], we begin to see that the text itself is a complex language game, to 'play' which we must practice the easier moves before we learn the more difficult ones." (Perloff, 1996, s. 69).

[36] Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge 1932-1935, University of Chicago Press, 1979; here referred from Perloff, 1996, p. 60.

[37] Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 17

[38] Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 17

game.

"The language is meant to serve for communication between a builder A and an assistant B. A is building with building stones: there are blocks, pillars, slaps and beams. B has to pass the stones, and that in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose they use a language consisting of the words 'block', 'pillar', 'slap', 'beam'. A calls them out;-B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring at such-and-such a call.—Conceive this as a complete primitive language."[39]

Thus, Wittgenstein's concept of language games is rather wide. From the very small, day-today language games – i.e. the name-giving language game – to the large all-encompassing forms of discourse[40], where the language games are so all-embracing that we in reality are speaking of a life-form.

Here, the analogy of language games is used in order to accentuate that language is inextricably bound to or inserted into human activity. So much so, that one cannot separate between language and the actions which it is tied into. For Wittgenstein language is always within a context of action, which is not outside nor independent of language, but constitutive for its use.[41] This has a direct influence on the crucial from-talk-to-action question – from radical thoughts to radical (or terrorist) actions – of this research project. The theoretical answer of this late-Wittgensteinian inspired philosophical position would thus be to argue that there is no such thing as a division between talk and action. The distinction between talk and action is always part of language (understood here as the process of giving meaning to something), as is the concept of action. It is not possible to describe something as "action" without installing an act with a specific sense of meaning, thus implying the use of language. Instead the two concepts should in the context of studying the process of radicalisation be understood as two different parts of the linguistic process, where "talk" (that is "talk" understood as being non-violent action) presumably comes before violent "action".

Now, using language-philosophy and securitization-theory to study processes of radicalization might not be common practice, but it is logical for a number of reasons:

TERROR IS A MODE OF COMMUNICATION

First, if one takes a closer look at the different terror definitions, they – not surprisingly – encompass the notion that terror acts are committed in order to instil terror and fear in an audience, whether that is a group, a government or a population. Indeed, the word terror stems from the Latin terrere (to frighten) and the verb to terrorize means to coerce by threat of violence.[42] When non-state terrorism was invented in its modern form in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was understood as 'propaganda by the deed'.[43] Thus, some sort of violent act is committed or threatened of in order to send a signal to an audience, for example the public in a specific country. Sending a signal is an act of communication and should be studied accordingly. A theory

[39] Wittgenstein, *PU*, § 2.

[40] See for example (Wittgenstein, *PU*, §19, pp. 245-246).

[41] Welsch, 1996, p. 402.

[42] Merriam-Webster's Dictionary.

[43] Schmid, 2004, p. 205.

of communication – or more specifically a theory of how meaning is constructed and constituted within a linguistic process – that is semiotics – should be employed in order better to structure our understanding of how this act of communication, which is such a basic element in terrorism, actually works.

Second, a significant amount of terror acts are committed against symbolic places or buildings (for example the World Trade Centre being a symbol of capitalist and American might), which renders the need for an understanding of how warfare on symbols functions and how it affects – among other things – public opinion, government behaviour and terrorist-supporter's opinion.

Third, the very thing that separates terrorist violence from ordinary criminal violence – and thus makes it terrorism – is that the act is instilled with political or politico-religious meaning.[44] It is the message of communication which makes terrorism.

TERROR IS WHAT IS DEFINED AS BEING TERROR

Fourth, as most theorists and political observers interested in terrorism would agree, denoting a person or an organization as terrorist is not an innocent affair. Terrorism is a pejorative term with intrinsically negative connotations which is generally applied to one's enemies and opponents.[45] The decades of difficult debate within the UN-system on a joint definition of terrorism bears witness to this. Here, agreement on a comprehensive and all-encompassing definition on terrorism has so far been impossible, mainly because a number of Middle Eastern governments have been unwilling to agree on a definition on terror, which would render organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas – which they see as involved in a legitimate armed struggle for freedom against the Israel – as terrorist-organizations. Thus, the old saying that one man's terrorist is the other man's freedom fighter has more or less been the guiding principle of the UN-debate. Instead, agreement has been reached on 12 issue-specific areas which criminalizes specific terror-acts such as hijacking of airplanes.[46]

Even within the U.S. government there is no agreement on what terrorism is. Four different definitions are used by the State Department, the FBI, the Pentagon and the Department of Homeland Security.[47] And even if the European Union after many years of unwillingness to come to terms with the subject of terror in 2001 after the 9/11 attacks agreed on a joint European definition of terrorism, most of the European countries have kept their own specific definitions.[48] The lack of agreement on what terrorism is is no less visible in the academic field. In a study by Alex Schmid on defining terrorism, he used more than a hundred pages in examining more than a hundred different definitions of terrorism.[49]

[44] For a discussion of the differences between crime and terrorism, see Schmid 2004.

[45] Hoffmann, 1998, p. 31.

[46] Staun, 2004, pp. 10-11. See UN-conventions such as Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed On Board Aircraft (Tokyo Convention) from 1963 and the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft (Hague Convention) from 1970, which both deal with hijackings.

[47] Hoffman, 1998, p. 38; Møller, 2007, p. 62.

[48] Transnational Terrorism, Security and the Rule of Law, WP 3.

[49] Alex Schmid, Political Terrorism: A Research Guide, 1984;

The obvious reason for this is that terrorism is a matter of definition: How terror is defined varies over time,[50] and from country to country and within countries. Like all other central political concepts, the concept of terrorism is disputed, and the official definitions are political compromises, and what organization or individual is put on official terror-lists like the EU-terror-list[51] is a result of political power games.

One of the reasons for the theoretical bewilderment around the definition of terrorism within the academic as well as the more down-to-earth counter-terrorism field is presumably a prevailing essentialism. Terrorism is talked about and studied as if it has a fixed and stable content, independent of the observing and defining researcher, a meaning independent of time, place and usage of the concept of terrorism. And as if the field believes that if we just look long enough, we will find the right definition. Wittgenstein has an explanation for this confusing cul-de-sac.

"The questions 'What is length?', 'What is meaning?', 'What is the number one?' etc. produce in us a mental cramp. We feel that we can't point to anything in reply to them and yet ought to point to something. (We are up against one of the great sources of philosophical bewilderment: a substantive makes us look for a thing that corresponds to it.)" [52]

My point is that terrorism-studies are in need of anti-essentialist studies, which avoid the inscription of a fixed meaning in the concept of terrorism, and start treating terrorism as an inherently instable concept, whose meaning shifts and varies over time and according to the usages of the concept. Now, this is by no means a new and unheard of position. One of the more classical authors within terrorism following a constructivist approach is H.C. Greisman. Thus, Greisman employs what is called a social meanings approach in line with Berger and Luckmann,[53] which view society as "a process, people are continually making society, and this society produces 'social' human beings".[54] Also James Farr,[55] following the conceptual history approach, argues that there cannot be ahistorical concepts in political science: "A historical concept is either one whose scope is temporally restricted to a specific historical period or one whose meaning is mutable and changes along with the changing practices and beliefs of political agents".[56] Therefore, terrorism, like the concept he studies, revolution, is bound to time and context. However, Greisman argues that terrorism, like any other series of acts with the potential for exciting negative sanctions, is "susceptible to the relativism of situations and actors". Thus, the "variable modalities of meaning that attend terrorism are the products of socially constructed realities. Some groups have greater ability to construct reality for less influential groups, and the former tend to control the process by which social

here referred from Hoffmann, 1998, p. 39.

[50] See for example Rapoport's study of the four waves of terror. (Rapoport 2001).

[51] An updated version of the EU-terror list is available on www.um.dk/nr/rdonly-res/1a9654d0-dd23-4669-8626-6374bb7e42eb/0/310506terrorlisteeu.pdf.

[52] Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 1, underlining by J.S.

[53] Berger and Luckmann, 1966.

[54] Greisman, 1977.

[55] Farr, 1982.

[56] Ibid, p. 689.

meanings are assigned".[57] This implies that for terrorism the audience becomes more important than the target: "Terrorist acts require an audience, the target is only of secondary importance, i.e. those that see the target attacked will become terrorized and this is the real goal of terrorism".[58] This, however, could perhaps be re-phrased in order to stress that the target still has importance, but mainly as a consequence of the symbolic (or political) value of hitting a certain target, which depends on how the attack is represented in the media and how it affects the audience. However, by leaving out the role of institutions – and the concept of speech actors – Greisman's position becomes susceptible to relativism. Thus, he argues that when "people identify with the victim of a terrorist act, the act becomes terrorist. If they identify with the perpetrator, it becomes something more justified, plausible, or praiseworthy".[59] This view, however, *does* not take into account the fact that it does make a difference who it is – or more correctly, what institution and power-base it is – which denotes someone as terrorist. Here, the language-philosopher J.L. Austin can help us along the way.

SPEECH ACTS – AN INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO LANGUAGE-GAMES

The process of denoting an act, a person or a group as "terrorist" should be understood as a special language game (Wittgenstein) or as a speech act (J. L. Austin), which has specific, and server, consequences.[60] The argument is that it is the utterance itself which is the speech act. By saying the words, something is done (like giving a promise, betting, naming a ship). When a security actor denotes something as a (terrorist) threat, it is a performative sentence, not just a constantive sentence. It is the act whereby a violent act is labelled terrorist which 'lifts' the act out of the normal criminal sphere (an normal jurisprudence) and into the sphere of terrorism, thereby implying the possibility of using other, more server means in battling and punishing the organisation or person behind the act. Terrorism, defined this way, follows the line of argument of securitization as presented by the so-called Copenhagen School in security studies. Securitization is here seen as the process in which security issues are being produced by actors, who argue that something (a referent object) is being existentially threatened and therefore has the right to use extraordinary measures to defend it. Thus, what is viewed as a security threat is not a matter of objectivity (threats defined by themselves), nor of subjectivity (a matter of individual perception), but rather inter-subjective and something inherently political.[61] This means that defining something or someone "terrorist" is not a reflection of an objective status, but neither is it something subjective, which can be

[57] Greisman, 1977, p. 303.

[58] Ibid, p. 305. The same argument can be found in Horowitz, 1973. Here, Horowitz argues, that terrorism is "a form of advertising discontent", where the "effects on the victims themselves are secondary to the intended effects on attentive audiences". (Horowitz quoted from Crenshaw 1994, p. 147).

[59] Ibid, p. 311.

[60] Austin 1962. The reason for using Austin is to put focus on the institutional side of the speech-actor, thus enhancing the focus on the power-relations behind the speech-act. A somewhat similar, but perhaps more enhanced understanding of the power-relations behind speech-acts, can be found in Derrida, 1988.

[61] Laustsen and Wæver, 2000, p. 708. For more on securitization, see (Wæver, 1993, 1994; Hansen and Wæver, 2001).

done by everybody. Instead, it is the utterance of the words "terrorist" by some security actor – for example the ministry of interior – which defines what or who is terrorist and what or who is not. By defining something or someone as terrorist a claim to use extraordinary measures (security measures) against that person or organisation and to do it with special urgency or necessity is posted. Thus, terrorism is neither something objective (terrorist in itself) nor something subjective (a matter of perception), but something inter-subjective and inherently political and institutionalized.

COMMUNICATION-LINKS

Fifth, and more practically, it might give input on how to study how more autonomous terror groups – the so-called "self-starter"[62] or "home-grown" terrorist groups being behind terror-acts such as the London 7/7 bombings – radicalize. Thus, the argument is that the "autonomous", "self-starter" or "home-grown" terrorists to a large extent are self-radicalized and self-activated groups, which radicalize before (if ever) getting in contact with the al-Qaeda or other terrorist network. If this is true it would mean that there is not necessarily any formal top-down approval from al-Qaeda or other terrorist networks of a "self-starter" group. They have not necessarily received training or combat experience on the ground in Afghanistan, Iraq or elsewhere before initiating or planning a terrorist action. The process of radicalization has thus moved into its final stages before they get in contact with outside forces, i.e. al-Qaeda, which can help them complete their planned actions. Thus, the autonomous groups should be seen as inspired rather than directed by the al-Qaeda. Instead, the self-starter groups should be seen as essentially autonomous groups "whose motivations, cohesiveness, and ideological grooming occurred in the absence of any organized network or formal entry into the Jihad", as Aidan Kirby expresses it concerning the London 7/7 bombers.[63]

Since the autonomous groups essentially are self-initiated and self-radicalized, presumably driven by ideological inspiration from al-Qaeda, which is disseminated to them via the internet, TV, as well as via illicit DVDs and CDs, and since the crucial link between al-Qaeda and the presumed self-starter groups is one of (mainly) one-way-communication, a thorough theory of terrorism would need to include do a structured analysis of this communication and how it varies with the different media.

Furthermore, one of the more popular ways of communication from terrorists to target audiences is through the use of so-called suicide videos (or martyrdom operations, as the Hamas calls them with their flair for military vocabulary) or videos showing beheadings or executions. Here, a theory of communication is also well placed, if we want a structured and thorough analysis of how these messages affect a target audience and subsequently how these videos affect the process of radicalisation. Another popular way of communicating from terrorist organizations is through self-proclaimed fatwas – that is filmed spoken words or (mostly) written texts filled with religious or pseudo-religious meta-

[62] The term "self-starter groups" was first used by Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon (Benjamin & Simon, 2005). The phenomenon is explored among others by Aidan Kirby in (Kirby, 2007).

[63] Kirby, 2007, p. 416. For a critique of this, see for example (Nesser, 2008)

phors, complete with references to former political or religious acts and events, moral words on the right or wrong behaviour, usually followed by direct threats – often towards the United States and Israel. And within the field of terrorism studies some of the more substantiated studies have used interviews with former or present terrorists (people, who have been convicted in court of a terrorist act). In an interview situation, the person interviewed speaks (more or less willingly) and the spoken words are written down, thus becoming text. In interpreting spoken words, texts, fatwas, videos – that is, communication – linguists would argue that one is well advised to consult a theory of how meaning is generated, and how the different means of communication affects the content and the effect of the communicated.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEXT

Sixth, most Islamists, and neo-fundamentalist in particular, have one thing in common: the belief in what could be called "the truth of the final text". Thus, the Islamist reformers of the nineteenth century argued that returning to the texts of early Islam would help Muslims re-establish their former might and dignity. They claimed that the decline of Islam was brought about by a tradition which over the years had been influenced by Western thought and had triumphed over the original wisdom of the Prophet Muhammad's teachings. This attitude spread across Muslim societies and challenged the "myriad of different traditions and patterns that had developed over centuries".[64] The belief in the authenticity of the early texts and the belief that the early texts should be valued higher than hundreds of years of teachings and traditions gives the neo-fundamentalists what can be labelled as "a fidelity to texts"[65], which renders it necessary that a thorough discussion of militant Islamism takes the centrality of texts into account.

[64] Tayob, 2006, p. 19.

[65] Ibid.

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