Gender, terrorism and political violence

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Course description and approach
Terror and counter-terror continue to dominate global security agendas. Recent elections in the UK, US and France have all been in part characterised by global fears on the threat of terrorist violence. Yet arguably understandings of and responses to the use of terrorist violence have done little to ameliorate the threat over the preceding 15 years. As such, this unit critically examines terrorism and counter-terror strategies through the lens of gender and feminist IR and security perspectives. It suggests that gender is a fundamental category of analysis in understanding the discourse on terrorism as a security threat and responses to it. The course explores questions such as: how do gendered assumptions imbue who is labelled terrorist and who is not?; how does gender shape the impact of terrorist violence?; what constitutes terrorist violence and why?; what role do women and gender play in violent extremist groups?; and how are counter-terror and countering extremist programs inherently shaped by gendered assumptions? These questions are explored through the lens of feminist security studies theory and the extensive contributions of gender IR perspectives. These frameworks are applied to discourses on and representations of terrorism, extremism and political violence; as well as national and international policy responses.

Learning outcomes

1. Understand feminist security perspectives and what they bring to the study of terrorism, extremism and political violence.
2. Understand how gender norms and identities shapes and is shaped by security narratives pertaining to terrorist violence.
3. Critically reflect on how feminist and gender perspectives challenge traditional understandings of ‘security’, and in particular relation to terrorism and political violence.
4. An ability to apply a gender lens to both dominant narratives on terrorism as a global security threat, and to the policy responses that are adopted in response.
5. Ability to apply gender international frameworks to key concepts in studying terrorism – such as gender perspectives on the state, sovereignty and security.

Course delivery
1 x 100 minute seminar per week; first 30 minutes of which will be delivered lecture style. The remainder will be conducted as a seminar with students leading discussion.
Reading list:

Feminist lenses on security and violence


Understanding terrorism and political violence


Power, race and gender – intersectional lenses on terror


Women as agents of political violence


**Violence against women and terrorism**


**State terrorism and gender violence**


**Gender and representations of terrorist/political violence**


**Gender and the ‘war on terror’**


**Counter-terror and policy**


