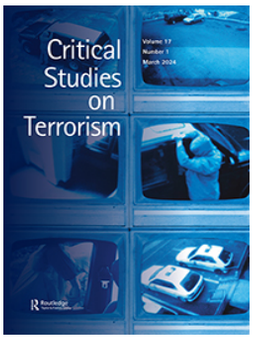

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A case for the abolition of "terrorism" and its industry

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ABSTRACT

Amidst a decolonial turn, the question of how to study "terrorism", a concept deeply entrenched in racial, gendered, and colonial structures, becomes increasingly imperative. Whilst calls for developing a "Decolonial Terrorism Studies" have already been made, I argue that a truly decolonial approach towards the study of terrorism needs to reject such a call and instead acknowledge the irredeemability of "terrorism" as a legitimate category of political violence. As I argue here, Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) needs to engage with decolonial approaches if it wants to continue constituting the counter hegemonic challenge to Terrorism Studies it set out to provide upon its inception. However, calling for a "decolonisation" of the discipline is contradicting such an approach and, as I argue, rooted in the assumption that the category "terrorism" can be reclaimed. I call instead for its abolition. "Terrorism" needs to be acknowledged as a construct that carries racial, gendered, and colonial implications and assumptions whose utterance alone constitutes a form of violence which always perpetuates those implications. Thus, the purpose of CTS, especially if it is to adopt decolonial approaches, should be to interrogate in what ways the concept "terrorism" functions to work for the project of Western colonial-modernity. It should not be how (Critical) Terrorism Studies can rebrand as "decolonial". Following from this, the ultimate goal for CTS scholars should be to contribute to the abolition of "terrorism" as a term and Terrorism Studies and its industry as a whole.

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Introduction

In a recent article of this journal, Mohammed (2022, 420) points out that the only journal, explicitly dedicated to the critical study of terrorism, has to date all but engaged with a decolonial approach in one previous article.[1] This, as he rightly notes, showcases the lack of engagement with decoloniality in this sub-discipline. Following on from this observation, Mohammed calls for a Decolonial Terrorism Studies, arguing that a) Terrorism Studies can be decolonised by de-linking from Global North productions of "terrorism" and instead adopting Global South knowledge of and about "terrorism" and "counter-terrorism" and b) those rejecting or resisting such a Decolonial Terrorism Studies are likely personally invested in coloniality. Contrary to this view, in this article I propose that

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rejecting a Decolonial Terrorism Studies, instead of signifying an investment in coloniality, can constitute an investment into *dismantling* coloniality/modernity and preventing the co-optation of decolonial thought and practice. I further show that a Decolonial Terrorism Studies would constitute a project that is unattainable, undesirable, and contrary to a decolonial ethos. Thus, whilst Mohammed (2022) and I agree upon the need for decoloniality, entailing the need for epistemic disobedience when approaching Terrorism Studies, critical or not, we disagree on how this is to be achieved and exactly what such a decolonial approach would entail.

As I argue here, "terrorism" as a concept cannot be redeemed or reclaimed as a neutral or objective classification of a certain form of political violence. Even if the meaning of the term "terrorism" has changed over time and shifted from mainly state to non-state actors today, it cannot be denied that it has a long history, since its first use in the French Revolution, of describing violence that is considered *illegitimate* and at the same time legitimating violence that is supposedly necessary in response to it (see also Erlenbusch-Anderson 2018; Husain 2021a, 209; Jackson 2007, 247; Stampnitzky 2013, 4). It therefore has never functioned as an objective or neutral descriptor of political violence, no matter who it has been used by. More importantly, terrorism today carries colonial, racial, and gendered assumptions, connotations, and implications which means that "terrorism" cannot just be reimagined or reinvented in a less biased and more just or inclusive way. In other words, it cannot be redeemed and stripped of the many racialised and gendered imaginations that have become "sticky" with it and will continue to stick to it (Khan 2021). Indeed, if there is one thing that all terrorism scholars, critical or not, agree upon, it is that terrorism has discursive power and a pejorative connotation (see also English 2009; Jackson 2007; Richardson 2006). What a decolonial approach to CTS would contribute here, is to expose how this pejorative connotation is tied to a racialised, colonial, gendered genealogy of terrorism (see also Husain 2021a; McQuade 2020). In other words, it acknowledges that "terrorism" is a pejorative rather than analytical term *because* of its racial underpinnings and connotations.

Since one of the most essential elements of decolonial approaches is the project of "de-linking", Mohammed (2022, 434), calling for the decolonisation of Terrorism Studies, suggests that CTS scholars should seek to de-link from the Global North-centric Terrorism Studies and instead develop a new Terrorism Studies. This new Terrorism Studies would be led by Global South scholars and based on Global South epistemes, which make use of Global South cultural traditions and indigenous terminology, to develop an independent Decolonial Terrorism Studies. This is a suggestion which is stemming from the assumption that "terrorism" can, under certain circumstances, be reclaimed as an objective or legitimate classification of political violence. It is also a suggestion, which I consider to be contrary to decolonial thought and in a broader sense also contrary to the ethos of Critical Terrorism Studies more generally. As I would further argue, it is, implicitly, a call for "reforming" Terrorism Studies and the Terrorism Industry. Instead, and as I argue here, the ultimate goal of critical scholars of the study of terrorism should be to abolish rather than to reform (or "decolonise") both.

Encouraging or pushing for more criticality in Critical Terrorism Studies, which is increasingly being critiqued for not being "critical" enough anymore,[2] is a call which needs to be taken seriously by the CTS research community if it wants to continue to provide the radical challenge to Terrorism Studies it set out to provide upon its inception.

However, as I argue here, whilst this should include decolonial and postcolonial approaches within CTS, it should not be confused with calls for "decolonisation" (see also Khan 2021, 2024). Not only have such calls become increasingly performative (as Mohammed (2022, 428) also points out), co-optive and mainstreamed, they are also misplaced when it comes to the study of terrorism.

A decolonisation of (Critical) Terrorism Studies is neither attainable nor desirable. Instead, following the ethos of decolonial scholars who have studied institutions which perpetuate global hierarchies and racial violence, indicates that a call for abolishing those institutions is much more appropriate and in line with decolonial thought. I argue that calls by abolitionist scholars and activists for abolishing the police, prisons, and other institutions which have continued racial-colonial rule in one form or another and are based on modern-colonial ideas (Davis 2003, 2005; Gilmore 2018, see also Shwaikh 2022; Rodríguez 2020), should be engaged with and their bearing on Terrorism Studies investigated more closely. Thus, calling for the abolition of the Terrorism Industry,[3] which Terrorism Studies is a part of, rather than a reform of it, would be a much more appropriate project for CTS to pursue.

As the founders of CTS have envisioned upon its inception, CTS should, at its heart, have the mission of studying the "constructions and productions" of terrorism (Jarvis 2009). It was also envisioned as an emancipatory and "openly normative" project (Jackson 2007, 249). A decolonial approach, then, invites itself naturally to this project. Not only is it openly normative in its mission to disrupt global structures of white supremacy and coloniality, it also is centred on deconstructing the constructions and productions of Western (colonial-)modernity,[4] one of which, I argue, is the terrorism/counter-terrorism apparatus. Acknowledging CTS' mission as such also means accepting CTS's limitations (see also Khan 2021, 2024). In my understanding, CTS was not founded as a discipline that sought to produce a "better" Terrorism Studies, but rather as a discipline that radically challenged its *productions*. It is therefore not a discipline which should attempt to save "terrorism", strip it of its negative racial and colonial baggage, or reclaim it as a legitimate and/or objective signifier. Rather, it is a discipline which was founded to study not the content of "terrorism" but its discourse, its productions and constructions, and the harmful consequences this has had for actors with less power than those employing the label against them (Breen Smyth et al. 2008). The ultimate goal that would follow from this mission should be the abolition of "terrorism" as a valid classification of any form of political violence. This, I further argue, needs to precede the much-needed calls for the abolition of *counter*-terrorism – an institution that is closely linked to incarceration, the police, and the military, all of which abolition scholars and activists have long called to abolish.

To illustrate the argument of this article, I proceed by first explaining why the concept "terrorism" is irredeemable and should not be re-invented, reclaimed, or recovered by scholars dedicated to the critical study of "terrorism", but rather acknowledged as a racially infused, colonial, and gendered concept whose utterance and use in discourse has facilitated neo-colonial rule, racial violence, and global punishment in the modern-colonial world. In the second section of this article, I explain the difference between decoloniality (the theoretical approach and project encouraging epistemic disobedience) and decolonisation (the movement spearheaded by activists calling for reparations and repatriation usually of colonised/occupied land). Following from this, I introduce the

literature on abolition in the third section of this article, where I make the case for including "terrorism" as a concept which CTS scholars should seek to, ultimately, abolish rather than reinvent or make more flexible. This means calling for an abolition of the Terrorism Industry more generally, an industry which is connected to the police, carceral system, and other security institutions whose abolition Black, Indigenous, and anti-capitalist scholars and activists have long called for. In the final section, I reflect on CTS's scholarly responsibility to prevent an attempted move towards reclaiming/reforming "terrorism", and thus projects such as a "Decolonial Terrorism Studies".

Tracing "terrorism's" colonial origins and racial conception

There is more than one way in which the category or idea of "terrorism" is racialised. All of which, however, demonstrate how irredeemable it is as a neutral, objective, or legitimate classification of political violence. On one hand, the category "terrorism" is racialised on a conceptual level. Not only is it clearly and predominantly associated with non-white people, it is also a tactic that is predominantly considered to be one reserved for non-state actors who stand in opposition to the legitimate, Westphalian nation state, which is tied to whiteness (Gentry and Sjoberg 2015, 40; Gentry 2020; see also Sen 2022). This conceptually racialises the non-state actor who challenges the legitimate state's monopoly on violence regardless of the actual race of its perpetrators. On the other hand, historically (and arguably consequentially), the classification of "terrorism" has been used in colonial contexts, often to suppress and delegitimise anti-colonial resistance and rebellion and to categorise non-compliant, colonised subjects (Ghosh 2017; Husain 2021a, 2021b; McQuade 2020). This colonial use, I argue below, carried over into its present and continued racialised use against predominantly non-Western and/or racialised actors around the world. This becomes most obvious in contemporary counterterrorism practices that resemble forms of colonial rule and control.

Terrorism's racial conception

Acknowledging race as a construct and system that applies beyond skin colour and assumed biological race reveals how "terrorism" is racialised in a much broader way and in opposition to the legitimate, Westphalian nation-state, which in turn is tied to the constitution of modernity/coloniality[5] and ultimately whiteness. The category "race", rather than (merely) relating to individuals' phenotypical differences, is a structuring principle that was invented specifically to demarcate the differences between Europeans and non-Europeans but also Europe and the rest of the world more generally (Thompson 2015). It functions to uphold global hierarchies that extend beyond individual people and that affirm the superiority of whiteness (which was assumed to be exhibited by the European race (Wynter 2003)). It is therefore not just a category used to describe people, but rather functions to establish racial hierarchies which establish "white" as not just another race, but rather "that to which race relates as its norm" (Lynch 2017, 289).

In other words, while race is most commonly associated with individuals and their heritage and features, these individuals constitute but a small part of the concept of race even when they always function as the prime example of it. Instead, race operates by categorising not just bodies but also concepts, phenomena, or practices as white (or

white-adjacent) and non-white. Racial identities can be inscribed onto, or imagined in, concepts, practices, or other bodies. Proximity to whiteness can be signalled through certain languages or practices which are associated with whiteness, regardless of the actual race of a person or institution's make up. Terrorism in that context is undeniably racialised as a tactic that is usually associated with non-white people, their governments, the Middle East, or – before the 1980s – also the Soviet Union and "eastern bloc nations" (see Third 2014).

However, especially in the last two decades as terrorism research has become more popular, terrorism has become predominantly associated with non-state actors and defined as a tactic reserved for these actors by the most prominent terrorism researchers and counter-terrorism practitioners (see e.g. Hoffman 2006; Richardson 2006; Wilkinson 2001). To understand how this association of terrorism with the non-state actor racialises "terrorism" conceptually, it is important to understand that the idea of the (Westphalian) modern nation-state is a racial one – one that is tied to whiteness and associated with this: modernity, progress, and civilisation. The Westphalian system that is said to have invented the modern nation-state as we know it today is also a symbol of the constitution of *modernity* in Europe. It is held as a proof for Europe's (superior) civilisational status and progress; a status that other nations and peoples around the world had to be "taught" first and arrived at much later than Europe had. Thus, from its very inception the modern nation-state is tied to whiteness, linked to racial hierarchies and functioned for colonial purposes.[6] It is, as Charles Mills (1997) so aptly summarised, a racial state (see also Bhambra 2022).

Thus, opposition to the modern nation-state and its monopoly on violence is an inherent system threat. The system here is the modern-colonial system which is governed by (structural) white supremacy and for which the nation-state has become one central element. Violent non-state actors who threaten the state's monopoly on violence are thereby also threatening modernity which automatically racialises them, removes them from whiteness, linked to the idea of modernity. As other scholars have observed more generally, there is an epistemic bias against non-state actors in IR scholarship (Ab Razak 2018; Gentry 2016, 146; Sen 2022). A so-called "Westphalian narrative" dominates IR scholarship and promotes the foundational idea of the primacy and legitimacy of sovereign states which leads to the "hermeneutical injustice of denying power, credibility and ultimately legitimacy to nonstate actors" (Gentry 2014, 21). This automatically delegitimises violence perpetrated by non-state (or non-state approved) actors and makes them prone to be labelled as terrorist (see also Sen 2022). And indeed, they have been – especially in colonial contexts as I show further below.

It is no coincidence that the vast majority of scholars and political actors associates and explicitly defines terrorism as a tactic reserved for illegitimate, *non-state* actors who challenge the legitimate state. Jackson (2008) has referred to this as the "ghost of state terrorism" within Terrorism Studies and literature. Interestingly, in the few instances where states are discussed as prone to terrorism or harbouring terrorists, it is usually non-Western, so-called "weak" or "fragile" states in the Global South. Until the 1980s it was also the Soviet Union or Eastern bloc states (Third 2014). In both cases, however, terrorism is not associated with the legitimate, Western, Westphalian state. This has clearly racial implications. Thus, non-conforming, system-threatening forms of violence or resistance which are positioned

outside of the norms of what the modern, Westphalian state has established as acceptable, automatically and conceptually racialises this violence, resistance or challenge even when its perpetrators are considered white (such as the Irish in the case of the IRA; the Basque with ETA or even the anti-establishment, anti-Capitalist (thereby anti-modern) groups such as the German RAF or Italian Red Brigades) (see also Khan 2023).

The way CTS's founders have explained terrorism as a "negative ideograph" (Breen Smyth et al. 2008, 2) further explains this, what I argue to be racial, conceptualisation of terrorism. Negative ideographs "identify a society's key values by negation, defining what a society is not" (Breen Smyth et al. 2008, 2; Jackson et al. 2011, 70). Western society has and continues to define its key values in opposition to those of the non-West, especially Islam and the "Orient" or "Muslim world" (Gani 2021). The discourse on preserving, protecting, and promoting "British values" (Winter et al. 2022; Mogbolu, this issue) or "Australian values" (Abdel-Fattah 2020) in the context of counterterrorism discourses in the UK and Australia is a case in point. These values are – sometimes more implicitly and other times very explicitly – defined in opposition to (what is considered to be) "Muslim" or "non-Western" values more generally. Whilst this conceptual racialisation of terrorism makes it more likely for non-Western subjects to be identified or labelled as "terrorists", it also means that white, Western subjects can be racialised as "terrorist" if they are constructed as a system threat or as acting outside of what society, the state, or system has established as legitimate, or acceptable. Conversion to Islam, for example, racialises even white actors as non-white (Moosavi 2015). Opposition or challenge to capitalism (as I show further below) is another way in which those who enact this challenge can be racialised and readily associated with "terrorism" (see Husain 2021a, 2021b).

As Third (Amanda 2014, 21) sums up, terrorism "comprises the activities of groups positioned outside the formal structures of power within the societies they attack", it is therefore usually "a tactic of violent and *subaltern* resistance" (emphasis in original). In other words, labelling something as "terrorism" defines an enemy "and in so doing, reinscribes the ideological boundary between legitimate and illegitimate violence" (Third, 2014, 22; see also Stampnitzky 2013, 4). This boundary in the West has traditionally been demarcated in racial terms.

Terrorism's colonial origins and function

It is increasingly being acknowledged, especially by scholars of the "critical" camp, that "terrorism", at least its contemporary discursive use, does indeed have racial connotations and is often based on racial imaginations (see e.g. Ahmed 2014; Abu Bakare 2020; Gentry 2020; Schotten 2018; Younis 2021). What is less acknowledged or known is that the term "terrorism" also has a long history of being used as a legal and political category of "colonial difference" (McQuade 2020, 248; see also Ghosh 2017; Husain 2021a; Dunlap 2016; Wagner 2016). A history that pre-dates 9/11 and has much deeper roots than has been assumed by most terrorism scholars to date. Indeed, beginning in the early 20th century, it was common for Europeans to refer to indigenous revolts as "terrorism" (Nakissa 2022; see also Deery 2003; Prakash 2013, 503–4). Thus, whilst "terrorism's" *contemporary* racialised (and gendered) connotations are not usually contested, at least

not by Critical Terrorism Scholars, the fact that its racialised connotation might have much earlier origins, is one that needs to be acknowledged and interrogated more seriously.

Such an interrogation has important bearings on the question of whether the category and study of "terrorism" should be abolished or merely reformed. Without knowledge about the genealogy of "terrorism" and its deeper colonial origins, its current racialised status could be (and has been) argued to be fixable. To be more precise, this stance, taken to its logical conclusion, would argue that "terrorism" and its study needs to be redeemed, reformed, or as has recently been suggested, "decolonised". In other words, we need to strip "terrorism" of its current problematic, Orientalist, racial and racialised connotations, and associations. This would then mean that we need to further challenge Eurocentric knowledge production about "terrorism" and counter-terrorism and indeed engage with "diverse" Global South knowledge and expertise about "terrorism" and how to fight it (see Mohammed 2022; Oando and Achieng 2021). However, as I will argue here, taking more seriously the long history of "terrorism's" colonial function and racialised conception, leads to the more convincing conclusion to call for its abolition rather than reformation. "Terrorism" as I argue here, is not redeemable.

Examples of anti-colonial resistance, labelled as terrorist, include Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) in Apartheid South Africa, the Algerian FLN which Frantz Fanon was involved with, SWAPO in Namibia or RENAMO in Mozambique, or the Mau Mau in Kenya. Many other anti-colonial movements or groups on the African continent, as well as left-wing groups in Latin America and around the world more generally have been labelled as "terrorist" after the second World War and during the Cold War especially (Oando and Achieng 2021, 359). Black Liberation Movements in the US, such as the Black Panthers, too, were considered as "terrorist" (see Meier 2022), so were many other Black liberation groups in the US (see Husain 2021b). Indeed, it has become a cliché to point out that Nelson Mandela who later in his life was globally acknowledged and revered as an iconic, anti-colonial freedom fighter, had until 2008 been on the US terrorism watchlist (Richardson 2006, 27). Angela Davis, one of the most well-known Black and anti-racist abolitionist activists and scholars in the US, was also considered a terrorist by many in the 1970s. After being placed on the FBI's most wanted list, then-president Nixon later congratulated the FBI on the "capture of the dangerous terrorist, Angela Davis" before her trial that subsequently acquitted her (Aptheker 1997, 24). Assata Shakur is another well-known example and former member of the Black Liberation Army who is currently still on the FBI's most wanted terrorists list (Husain 2021b).

In fact, in the 1970s, the UN had to amend its own definition of "terrorism" after it was put under some pressure by newly independent states who insisted the official definition of "terrorism" would be worded in such a way as to not include national liberation movements, such as those that had achieved their own independence and liberation from colonial rule (Hoffman 2006, 24). Similarly, the African Union was reluctant at first to engage with the term "terrorism" as it was concerned that the term seemed to encompass those groups fighting for self-determination, liberation, and against colonial and imperial rule (see Oando and Achieng 2021, 362). This goes to show that the conflation of "terrorism" with anti-colonial, anti-racist struggle persisted right from the start when the term "terrorism" entered political and academic discourse and the study of terrorism started

becoming a sub-discipline distinct (but never completely delinked) from the study of counter-insurgency. It also goes to show how the classification as "terrorist" served a political and colonial purpose of signifying illegitimacy.

One example of how colonial constructions of the "terrorist" persist to this day is provided by McQuade (2020, 243) who demonstrates in his work how British colonial administrators constructed Muslim Indians as predisposed to terrorism. Muslim Indians' activities were often linked to anti-colonial resistance at the time. McQuade further argues that this colonial construction of the Muslim as prone to terrorism continues to be used by the contemporary Hindu nationalists today who are building on what British colonial administrators established.[7] As McQuade (2020) notes:

> [. . .] Only by rigorously interrogating the premises and cultural perceptions that underlay early discourses of "terrorism" in the colonial world does it become possible to understand how the term came to acquire its current connotations. Ultimately, such an approach is key to any attempt to understand the modern phenomenon of "terrorism" in analytical, rather than political, terms. (248)

Although it was not just Muslim Indians who were constructed as prone to terrorism,[8] it is noteworthy that the prototypical terrorist today, in popular imagination, is still the Muslim, male and Oriental/South Asian figure (Qureshi 2020, Younis 2021; Ali 2020; Mogbolu in this issue). Whilst this is predominantly used by Western states against its racialised citizens, it can also be employed within post-colonial societies, such as Modi's India today.

However, even in the multiple cases where terrorism has been assigned to groups or actors that were not from the Global South and instead constituted white, European or Western actors, the terrorist label has served a similar colonial purpose of signifying illegitimacy and denying the same rational political agency that state-approved actors benefit from. As Husain (2021a, 208) has noted, in the US context "terrorism" as a concept arose from not only counterinsurgency to anti-colonial or anti-racist struggles but also anti-capitalist struggles more generally. Indeed, in the 1970s "terrorism" was also predominantly attached to the Soviet Union and the "eastern bloc" nations (Third 2014, 84). Anti-capitalism, however, has also been racialised as anti-modern and anti-Western. Much anti-colonial resistance was also explicitly anti-capitalist which further racialises anti-capitalism conceptually as well as factually. Anti-capitalism, in fact, and as decolonial and abolition scholars have pointed out, is an essential part of and cannot be separated from decolonial resistance and struggle (Davis 2003; Mignolo 2011; Rodríguez 2018).

But even Ethno-nationalist examples which are well-known, such as the Irish IRA and the Basque ETA, have similarly to subaltern, non-Western groups struggled against colonial rule. The Irish case is one that illustrates not just how race constitutes a construct indeed (the Irish have, at times, been considered non-White)[9] but also demonstrates a case of colonialism that took place much closer to home. Irish-Palestinian solidarity as well as explicitly voiced solidarity by abolition scholars (such as Angela Davis (2016)), freedom fighters (such as Nelson Mandela) and others further illustrate the parallels between Global South anti-colonial struggle and more contemporary anti-colonial struggles such as Palestinian resistance and Irish nationalism from the 1970s until today.

Contemporary counter-terrorism practices as a continuation of colonial rule

However, what most obviously illustrates the racialisation of "terrorism" is the racialised responses to it under the mantle of "counter-terrorism" policies and measures. Indeed, for counter-terrorism to constitute such a clearly racial project it needs to have been preceded by the racialisation of "terrorism" itself. A growing body of literature has pointed to the racial nature of contemporary (as well as past) counterterrorism practices and their resemblance to colonial forms of rule (see Abu Bakare 2020; Dunlap 2016; Meier 2022; Nguyen 2023; Owens 2015; Sentas 2006; Sabir 2017). Indeed, as Sentas (2006) has demonstrated, contemporary counterterrorism legislation and practices in Australia serve to marginalise and police Aboriginal communities, thereby constituting the continuation of colonial forms of rule under a different guise. As Husain (2020, 2021a) further demonstrates, contemporary US-led counter-terrorism campaigns have made use of tactics and practices first tested out in colonial settings to quell anti-colonial resistance. Its contemporary manifestations, then, constitute neo-colonial forms of control, surveillance and rule, both domestically (see Meier 2022; Micieli-Voutsinas 2023) as well as abroad and in the name of "interventions" such as in Afghanistan in the name of the Global War on Terror (see Owens 2015). Even in many postcolonial countries, contemporary counterterrorism practices continue to be used by the political elites in the same way they had been used and introduced by colonial administrators prior to their independence (see e.g. Abozaid 2022; Alzubairi 2019; Finden and Dutta 2024; Nakissa 2022).

Thus, the racialised imagination of the "terrorist" and "terrorism" more generally, ultimately, produces and generates counter-terrorism practices and policies which are clearly racial and, as I have shown above, colonial. These practices, which include militarised policing, surveillance, punishment, imprisonment and detention, are included in those practices which abolition scholars and activists have long campaigned against. One of the most obvious examples which demonstrates the connection between the counter-terrorism apparatus and the prison system is constituted by the inmates of Guantánamo (see also Nguyen 2023; Schotten 2018). Whilst calls for abolishing Guantánamo have been made even by (former) presidents, calls for the abolition of counter-terrorism more generally are less likely to be accepted as readily. However, in order to think about the abolition of counter-terrorism, we first need to grapple with the abolition of that which enables it: the acceptance of the category "terrorism" as a (valid) classification of political violence.

However, before turning to the theory and logic of abolition in more detail, it is important to clarify the difference between decoloniality (as a strand of thought) and decolonisation (as praxis and political movement). Both abolitionist and decolonial activists and scholars usually work towards the same goals and share the same emancipatory ethos and convictions (see Pulido and De Lara 2018; Stein 2021). However, with the current inflation and cooptation of the use of "decolonisation" as a metaphor, it is important to recall the actual meaning of it and its relation to related concepts, one of which is the theory and praxis of abolition.

Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality

To work with the framework and school of "decoloniality", it is crucial to first understand the concept of "coloniality", first coined by Aníbal Quijano (1992). Coloniality is a concept which describes the co-constitutive "darker side" of modernity (Mignolo 2011). Modernity, rather than neutrally describing an era spearheaded by Europe, is instead better understood as a "narrative that builds Western civilisation by celebrating its achievements while hiding at the same time its darker side, 'coloniality'" (Mignolo 2011, 2–3). This then means that there is no modernity without coloniality (Quijano 1992). Modernity is a narrative that Europe draws its self-identification from and yet it is so deeply "imbricated in the structures of European colonial domination over the rest of the world that it is impossible to separate the two" (Bhambra 2014, 115). Indeed, the beginning of the "modern" era went hand in hand with colonial conquest and empire building in Europe (Bhambra 2014). However, what preceded even this since the Renaissance was a hierarchical conception of the "human" (Asad 2015; Çubukçu 2017; Wynter 2003), facilitated through the construction of race as a hierarchical category. One that later formed the basis and justification for colonialism and one that continues to be the basis for the global system of white supremacy today.

This means "coloniality" is not to be confused with "colonialism". Whilst the latter can be ascribed to a specific time in history which saw the colonisation of land and the subjugation of its people under colonial rule, "coloniality" is the mindset that enabled and *justified* this colonisation in the first place. It is a mindset, logic, and global structural system that continues to exist even after the official decolonisation of most of the formerly colonised lands and its people. As decolonial, postcolonial, as well as scholars from the Black Radical Tradition (see Robinson [1983] 2000) have argued, many structural components, such as patriarchal structures, racial hierarchies, global capitalism as well as religious, linguistic, and epistemic hierarchies come together to constitute what we know as "modernity" and what decolonial scholars have referred to as coloniality, its other side (Lugones 2010; Quijano 1992). Coloniality is what preceded colonialism and continues to succeed it to this day. (Colonial-)modernity, then, is an ongoing project. The focus of CTS scholars, I contend, should be in studying how constructions and discourses on "terrorism" have contributed and continue to contribute to this project.

As I have explained further above, the racial conceptualisation of "terrorism" as always outside the boundaries of the legitimate, heteronormative Westphalian state system that functions as one of the most important signifiers of Western modernity, already demonstrates how "terrorism" is indeed an issue of coloniality and should be studied and investigated as such. I therefore see the purpose of Critical Terrorism Studies in critically interrogating in what ways the employment of "terrorism" in discourse, and the execution of "counter-terrorism" in response to the former, constitutes an agent of Western modernity.

Decoloniality versus decolonisation?

As Grosfoguel (2011, 14) notes, "[o]ne of the most powerful myths of the twentieth century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to the decolonisation of the world". Quite the opposite, colonial structures and forms of rule

and control have persisted and even been continued by the native elites of some formerly colonised countries. As I have already discussed in the previous section, an obvious example for this is constituted by contemporary counter-terrorism practices in formerly colonised countries which have been introduced during colonial rule or have been imported later through Western imperialism. These continue to form colonial forms of government and control even in the absence of official colonial rule today (see for example Abozaid 2022; Alzubairi 2019; Finden and Dutta 2024; Oando and Achieng 2021).

Decoloniality, then, is a theoretical framework and methodology which makes central a focus on de-linking from European, colonial forms of knowledge production and instead drawing from other and multiple forms of knowledge (i.e. the so-called Pluriverse, see Grosfoguel 2012). It is focused on epistemic disobedience and therefore constitutes an epistemological project, that is a project focused on challenging dominant forms of knowledge production and where this knowledge production is occurring. It is "epistemic reconstitution" (Mignolo 2017; Quijano 1992).

It is crucial here to make the difference between "decoloniality" and "decolonisation" clear. As Mignolo (2017) has put it, "decolonisation" can be understood very specifically as the period in which African, South American and Asian countries sought and succeeded in claiming back their lands and achieving national self-determination and liberation from colonial rule. This "decolonisation", however, was not always a complete success. As mentioned above, whilst an official "decolonisation" of land has occurred in many instances, a complete "decolonisation of the mind" (Thiong'o 1998) and more generally of the structures that colonial administrators have put into place, did not occur. This, then, is what the project of "decoloniality" seeks to address.

This project, then, is aligned with Tuck and Yang's (2012) academic plea to avoid calls for "decolonisation" which, as they have argued, should not be used as a metaphor for things other than the material process of claiming back land and seeking reparations. Instead, when claims for "decolonisation" of things like the curriculum, schools, universities, or disciplines, are made, the radical nature of the process of "decolonisation" becomes diluted, distorted and misappropriated. As Fanon ([1961] 2021, 27) notes, "decolonisation" is always a violent process. If such calls, then, become mainstreamed and applied to other phenomena, they start becoming a way to make white settler positionalities more comfortable and ultimately assuage white guilt. However, "decolonisation" should never be comfortable, and always unsettling and radical (Tuck and Yang 2012).

Thus, rather than calling for a "decolonisation" of a term (i.e. "terrorism") that *is* colonial, functions for colonial purposes and continues to perpetuate coloniality and the project of Western modernity, the way to address and acknowledge terrorism as an issue of coloniality is by engaging with decoloniality and abolitionist theory and praxis as I show below.

Abolition and "terrorism"

Decolonial thought has many parallels with and overlaps with that of Black abolitionist movements and theories. Many abolitionist scholars also view themselves as decolonial scholars and vice versa. Both theories/praxes are based on an understanding that their

respective projects are unfinished. Whilst decoloniality contends that "decolonisation" is an unfinished project, abolitionists argue that the abolition of slavery is an unfinished and incomplete project (Stein 2021, 395). Whilst the persistence of coloniality today demonstrates that colonialism has not really ended and continues under different names and guises, the police and prison system today demonstrate that slavery continues under different guises and names. Both coloniality and the prison system, I argue, are intricately linked to the contemporary discourse and praxis of "terrorism"/"counter-terrorism" (see also Husain 2020; Muslim Abolitionist Futures 2021; Nguyen 2023; Schotten 2024).

However, similar to calls for "decolonisation", abolitionist movements have in recent years, and especially so in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement, gained renewed attention and popularity. Unfortunately, this also always means that there is a danger that abolitionist critique and scholarship will be co-opted and mainstreamed in the same way that other buzzwords such as "intersectionality"[10] and "decolonisation" have been co-opted and (mis-)appropriated in recent years. Thus, introducing this scholarship and movement to a field, such as (Critical) Terrorism Studies, and by extension International Relations, is potentially exposing this scholarship to the same kind of co-optive and opportunist logic that has affected (and deradicalised) other radical, anti-establishment, anti-colonial, feminist theories and movements.

By introducing it here, rather than providing yet another buzzword that can be wielded by CTS researchers, I seek to provide a pushback against increased deradicalisation of the (once much more radical) field that CTS constitutes today.[11] Engaging with abolitionist scholarship is radical. There is no room for seeking compromises or solutions with the state apparatus in order to "improve" current counter-terrorism practices. There is no room for reforming or improving Terrorism Studies. As I argue in the following, bringing abolition to (Critical) Terrorism Studies means acknowledging and departing from the conviction that "terrorism" is a racialised, colonial term whose utterance is always already a form of violence. Its utterance further enables counter-terrorism practices which in turn enable colonial and racial forms of governance and control whose abolition rather than reformation CTS researchers and activists should campaign for.[12]

Abolitionist scholarship and praxis

Among the Black feminist scholar-activists who have spear-headed activism and work on contemporary abolitionist movements, the most well-known is (Davis 2003; 2005; 2016) whose own history of imprisonment and subsequent acquittal has made her scholarship and story accessible and known to a larger audience outside of academia. Central to the abolitionist movement is the call for the abolition of the carceral system. Prisons, as Davis and others have argued, constitute an institution which continues to facilitate "slavery by another name" (Boggs et al., 2019, 2 cited in Stein 2021). However, abolitionist theories and critiques which are rooted in the Black Radical Tradition date back much further and have been formulated by Black scholars like Cedric Robinson ([1983] 2000) and WEB DuBois (1935) before their more recent formulations by Black feminist scholars and activists like Ferreira Da Silva (2014), Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2018), Alisa Bierria (2020) and Angela Davis (2003).

As Davis (2005, 32) argues, prisons, especially in the US context, constitute an institution reminiscent of and indeed building on and originating from the institution of slavery. In other words, prisons constitute the legal continuation of systems of discipline and punishment introduced during the era of chattel slavery in the US.[13] In fact, the US's 13th amendment which officially abolished slavery also legalised it as a form of punishment for crime, thereby ensuring that slavery could indeed persist by another name (Rodríguez 2018, 1580–1581; see; U.S. Constitution n.d.). Thus, rather than reforming the prison system, which would still not sufficiently grapple with those colonial origins, written into the prison system today, it is necessary to abolish the current carceral system if a true challenge to the system of global capitalism (which enables the carceral system) is sought (Davis 2005, 68–69; see also Shilliam 2021, 690). In making her argument, Angela Davis (2003, 2005) draws on WEB DuBois' work on "abolition democracy" (1935) in which he argued, among other things, that the abolition of slavery alone would not in itself result in the disappearance of the *structures* that enabled slavery in the first place (see also Shilliam 2021, 691). As I have outlined above, the same has been argued by decolonial scholars with respect to the official decolonisation of formerly colonised countries. National liberation alone does not do away with the colonial structures that were put into place in those countries. This makes the connection between decolonial and abolitionist thought yet more obvious.

However, as Pulido and De Lara (2018, 80) argue, DuBois' original comments on abolition need to be read and understood within the limitations of "the spatial-temporal realities" of the aftermath of reconstruction which he was writing in. They can, as indigenous scholars (see Tuck and Yang 2012) have pointed out, also be "read as a settler-colonial move that guarantees civil rights by integrating Black people into the possession of indigenous land" (Pulido and De Lara 2018, 80). Thus, rather than "treat[ing] abolition [. . .] as scripture written by DuBois (1935)" Pulido and De Lara (2018, 80) propose adopting Cedric Robinson's historiography of the Black Radical Tradition which "treats [abolition] more as a dialectical space for radical and contingent possibilities." Thus, drawing on the Black Radical Tradition and Black feminist thought, abolitionist theory and critique can also be more freely understood as radical theories of change which complement decolonial theories and critiques (Stein 2021, 395). As Ruth Gilmore (2018) has argued, abolitionism cannot be reduced to efforts towards the eradication of the police and the carceral system only. Instead, abolition should be understood as a "theory of change" more generally (Gilmore 2018). It necessitates an anti-colonial, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist commitment to changing the world.

The ethos of abolitionism, ultimately, is to do away with all hegemonic structures and frameworks which have and continue to enable the carceral system among other things but racial capitalism, coloniality, and colonial logic more generally (Rodríguez 2018, 1579 and 1612). This very logic, I contend, is also what has enabled and continues to enable racial counterterrorism regimes around the world which disproportionately target minoritised and racialised people and as some scholars have pointed out continues to constitute colonial rule by other means (Husain 2021a; Sentas 2006). The counterterrorism apparatus is also directly linked to the carceral system (Micieli-Voutsinas 2023). The Global War on Terror has greenlit the incarceration without trial of countless individuals of South Asian or Middle Eastern heritage (Davis 2003, 31; Nguyen 2023; Schotten 2018, 2024). Prison inmates more generally are often labelled as "terrorist" by their guards, especially if

they disagree with the inmates' political beliefs or associations (Rodríguez 2003, 199–202). Angela Davis' own designation as such by president Nixon at the time is another example for this (Aptheker 1997). As Atiya Husain (2020) put it, "[t]o be called a terrorist is, by definition, to have one's political ideas exist outside the scope of acceptable discourse and licit protest."

However, the counter-terrorism apparatus is an institution which is only possible and preceded by the invention and construction of "terrorism" as a racialised concept to begin with. It is an institution which is the most important part of the so-called Terrorism Industry, a term first coined by Herman and O'Sullivan (1989). At the same time this industry is dependent on the continued acceptance of "terrorism" as a valid classification for political violence in the first place. Thus, when I call for an abolition of the Terrorism Industry, I hold that it begins not with the abolition of counter-terrorism but with the abolition of "terrorism" as a valid description for violence.

Abolition of the terrorism industry

Terrorism, as the CTS founders noted in the first volume and issue of this journal, is a growth industry (Breen Smyth et al. 2008). Countless books and other media on "terrorism" get published every year. Conferences and programmes on "terrorism" continue in popularity and so-called "terrorism experts" continue to amass (see also Stampnitzky 2013). Countless NGOs, think tanks, governmental and non-governmental actors are dedicated to either the fight against "terrorism" or the continued study of it. New laws, policies, and doctrines for counterterrorism are constantly produced all over the world. Wars have been launched in its name. Some politicians have even referred to a "Terror-industrial complex" that has emerged in response to an exaggerated fear of terrorism across societies in the world (Rana 2016). The Terrorism Industry then refers to those actors that make up an ever-growing industry that profits from inflating the threat that terrorism can actually present to any society. These include but are not limited to: terrorism scholars and experts, the media, politicians, security actors, counter-terrorist actors such as the military and police (Herman 1996; Herman and O'Sullivan 1989; Mueller 2006). More recently, social media users on platforms, such as Twitter, have further been noted as producing and contributing to "terrorism expertise" (Marshall 2023, 92).

In this light, I understand the Terrorism Industry as comprising all actors, bodies, and institutions that are involved or invested in "terrorism's" continued use as a valid classification of violence. I further see all productions, discourses, and discussions on "terrorism" as a part of or contributing to that industry, which, unfortunately, also includes my own work and CTS more generally, even if its purpose is to challenge the productions and constructions of "terrorism". Indeed, violence, as Sjoberg shows in her article of this issue, is guaranteed to be a part of the work of CTS scholars. The only solution for challenging this industry efficiently, then, is constituted by aspiring towards its abolition – not its reform or "decolonisation". Whilst abolition might seem a colossal project, for CTS scholars it can have a very limited start: The abandoning of the term that constitutes the main currency of the Terrorism Industry. In the longer term, of course, embracing abolitionist thinking means aspiring to not just the abolition of "terrorism" as a category, but ultimately the abolition of CTS as a field of study (Schotten 2024) which should only exist to resist "terrorism" discourse (and the industry this produces) and not to perpetuate

it further. However, preceding this, the short-term goal for CTS scholars is simple and starts with 1) acknowledging and emphasising the irredeemability of "terrorism" as a legitimate category of political violence and 2) working against "terrorism" by envisioning, calling for, and working towards the abandonment of this category, first in scholarship then in practice.

Although abolition is often considered a radical call, it is also the least violent solution. As Atiya Husain (2020) notes with regards to the counterterrorism apparatus more specifically, unlike all other "potential remedies to the carceral state and its counterterrorism [abolition] grasps at the root of the problem and would not trade in partial remedies that simply reproduce the problem." Thus, if a radical challenge to Terrorism Studies and its industry is sought by Critical Terrorism scholars (as it should), nothing short of abolition should be the end goal. Rather than thinking about fixing (or "reforming", "repairing", "improving") a system, or in the case of Terrorism Studies, a discourse and terminology, that is not only harmful, gendered, racial and colonial but is *building* on racial, gendered, colonial logics, we need to entertain more radical possibilities and praxes of abolition and decoloniality. Working towards the abolition of "terrorism" as a valid category of political violence first is necessary for realising the end goal – an abolition of the Terrorism Industry more generally which would ultimately include and result in the abolition of the counter-terrorism apparatus.

Abolition as theory and praxis "is grounded in a Black radical genealogy of revolt and transformative insurgency" (Rodríguez 2018, 1576). It is based on the acknowledgement of the modern-colonial system and state as the producer and upholder of racial injustice, genocide, incarceration, and global punishment. It is further based on the acknowledgement that these forms of punishment are disproportionately directed against racialised bodies which can also (though not to the same extent) include the poor, white working-class (Davis 2003). Calling for reform instead of abolition, in Rodríguez' (2020) words "is at best a form of casualty management" and at worst makes us complicit with the colonial, white supremacist institutions which have set up and put these institutions (ranging from police, prisons, and military to the terrorism/counter-terrorism apparatus) in place.[14] Therefore, working with the state, even if it is Global South states or state actors, does not further CTS's original agenda and instead stands in contradiction to a decolonial ethos (see also Abu Bakare and Wright in this issue).

Alternatives to abolition?

Although I have made my position in this article very clear in arguing that nothing short of abolition is an appropriate mission for the future of CTS as a field, I do recognise and acknowledge that other forms of resistance to the term "terrorism" have value and have historically and strategically been used by anti-racist scholars and activists to expose double standards, and especially to draw attention to the ubiquity of white supremacist violence (see Erlenbusch-Anderson 2022). However, I make a distinction here between activist CTS work and scholarly CTS work. Whilst the strategic use of the term can have its more immediate benefits and sometimes constitutes the only strategy available in the struggle against the racialised employment of the term (especially within activist work), it remains a first step and not an ultimate goal.

Many scholars, especially within CTS, whose work continues to pose challenges to the Terrorism Industry, have also attempted to expose the (racial) double standards in the employment of "terrorism" by stretching the term and shifting its meaning, and making it more flexible in order to argue that it can and should also be applied to other forms of violence than those perpetrated by non-state (mainly Muslim) actors. However, I do not consider this an appropriate end goal for CTS. Richard Jackson (2008) and many other CTS scholars have argued for states to be considered "terrorist" in an attempt to destabilise the term "terrorism" and make it lose some of its meaning and emotive punch. Caron Gentry (2022), for example, has made the case for considering domestic violence and misogynist violence as a form of terrorism. A recent trend within CTS and beyond has called for white supremacist violence to be included in the rubric of "terrorism" thereby also challenging the continued racialisation of "terrorism" as something reserved for Brown and Black actors. However, as I have shown above, whilst well-meaning, including white supremacist violence as "terrorist" does not, in fact, challenge the racial, colonial, and gendered conception of the term.

Regarding the case of domestic violence, then, Sjoberg (2015) argues much more convincingly that if domestic violence was indeed framed as "terrorism" too, it would invite the counterterrorism apparatus into the bedroom. Similar to her argument, I argue that labelling more violence(s) as "terrorism" gives the term even more power and makes it more prone to the use and abuse it is already benefitting from. Thus, the only meaningful challenge to the racial, colonial, gendered concept of "terrorism" is to abolish and discard it as a valid signifier of political violence.

Indeed, and as Palestinian-American poet, Fargo Nissim Tbakhi (2023), holds, calling for example Israeli or American state violence "terrorism" too, ultimately only reifies a category which cannot be recuperated and will continue to constitute "a one-sided weapon [whose] bullets belong to the state". In a similar vein, Atiya Husain's (2020) comments on the increased calls from the political left in the US to classify the Ku Klux Klan as a "terrorist" organisation are worth quoting at length:

> [. . .] this call is misguided. To correct the problem, we do not need things on the right to be classified as terrorism, too; we need to void the category of terrorism completely. It cannot be salvaged because the very thing that gives it its meaning is its racial connotations, even when it is used for white supremacists. Far from a neutral word meaning very, very bad, terrorism is a deeply racialized concept. It is *because* of those racial meanings that the word has more punch than "white supremacy," for example.

In other words, whilst attempts to "stretch" the term terrorism to encompass forms of white supremacist violence, state violence, or even domestic violence, often come from a critical place of resistance to the dominant (harmful and colonial) discourse on terrorism, they do not ultimately serve to address the root problem or indeed work towards what I argue to be the only appropriate end goal for CTS: abolition.

Conclusion: what is the responsibility of CTS?

CTS emerged at a critical moment in history, in the wake of the so-called and US-led "War on Terror", when dominant discourses on terrorism were even more obviously racialised

than they had been before. It provided a platform for much needed intellectual resistance and challenge to this dominant, colonial, Orientalist, and oftentimes outright racist, discourse. CTS's founders therefore were very clear in that its mission relied on a normative and ethical commitment to provide a challenge to the dominant discourse and construction of terrorism (Jackson 2007, 249; see also Martini 2020). This ethical and normative commitment is key, I argue, for imagining a decolonial turn in CTS. Engagement with decoloniality is essential for CTS as a field that aspires to remain relevant as a project that serves those most targeted and harmed by the Terrorism Industry.

Recognising and making central this ethical and normative commitment for CTS means acknowledging a responsibility in scholarship on the critical study of terrorism. This responsibility also extends to reflecting on what a decolonial approach in CTS can or cannot claim. CTS, as I have argued, cannot "decolonise", and it should not attempt to co-opt, re- or mis-appropriate calls for decolonisation. More importantly, CTS has a responsibility to reject projects that envision a "Decolonial Terrorism Studies". Rejecting such a call does *not* mean rejecting decolonial approaches more generally, which, as I have shown here, encompass abolitionist thought and praxis. Instead, a rejection of this project, would signal a continued commitment by CTS to centre its project around *deconstruction* at minimum and *abolition* as end goal, rather than *transformation* or *reform*. Whilst the former allows for "decolonial approaches", the latter would seek (an unattainable) "decolonisation" of CTS, Terrorism Studies and ultimately its industry (see also Khan 2024).

In CTS, engaging with decoloniality means 1) acknowledging and 2) investigating how the dominant discourses on "terrorism" uphold and serve the project of Western colonial-modernity. Terrorism, I argue, is embedded in a colonial imagination and discourse even when the language of "terrorism" is not used: other forms of violence, resistance, or protest that have challenged the modern-colonial, Westphalian state's monopoly on violence have been imagined as "terrorism" (and consequently were responded to in the same way) long before the current discourse on terrorism was established. Among these are insurgencies, anti-colonial resistance, and other protests. As Schotten (2018; 2024) further notes, early colonial discourses on the native "savage" have fulfilled the same function that discourses on the "terrorist" now do. Nevertheless, it seems that "terrorism" has replaced these earlier discourses of, for example, the native "savage" with that of the "terrorist" (Schotten 2018). This, I suggest, highlights the continued importance of making discourse central to any decolonial mission that CTS wants to engage in.

Focusing on discourses will also ensure that future directions of CTS are clear.[15] Even in the case of a successful abolition of "terrorism", CTS's mission and responsibility would be to identify, critique and ultimately call for the abolition of future placeholders of "terrorism". Because just like "terrorism" has replaced earlier discourses on the "savage" other (Schotten 2018), so too will the apparatus of global white supremacy likely find a replacement for "terrorism", to continue the colonial project of Western modernity. This means that CTS's mission is unfinished and will continue to stay relevant for as long as global white supremacy re-invents itself. However, the ultimate end goal for CTS should be to envision a world in which CTS becomes irrelevant and can be abolished itself. This, of course, needs to be preceded by active work towards abolitionist futures which do

away with "terrorism" discourse in the first place, and counter-terrorism practices in the second.

Abolition is about "presence" as much as it is about "absence" (Gilmore 2022, cited in Nguyen 2023, 32). This means whilst abolitionist thinking is about imaging and working towards the absence of all those practices and institutions and ultimately structures that enable genocide, racial violence, and global punishment, it should also be about the presence of alternative forms of justice systems. In the case of abolishing "terrorism" discourse the alternative should not be difficult to imagine. Indeed, violence which is commonly branded as "terrorist" can always also be categorised with more helpful terminology that lacks the same racial connotations and colonial implications. At the same time such violences always need to be accompanied with appropriate contextualisation which rejects the "moral dismissal of nonstate perpetrators of violence – via the label 'terrorist'" (Ab Razak 2018; see also Nguyen 2023, 81; Sen 2022).[16]

Abolition is often claimed to be a project that is too radical to be realistic. Not only is this untrue – every abolished institution (monarchies for example) has been thought of as untouchable and inevitable until its abolition – but for CTS the (start of) this project is also very limited and therefore achievable. Such an undertaking need only start with 1) the acknowledgement of "terrorism's" irredeemability and 2) the abandonment of this category in scholarship and ultimately praxis. Ultimately, CTS's existence can only be justified for as long as its main purpose continues to be resistance to the dominant discourses on "terrorism" and not its perpetuation or reform.

Notes

1. This was at the time of the author's writing in 2022.
2. See: Qureshi (2020); Khan (2021); Erlenbusch-Anderson (2014); Schotten (2024); See also other articles in this special issue by Schotten; Meier; Chukwuma; and Abu Bakare.
3. As I explain in more detail further below, I understand the "Terrorism Industry" as comprising all actors, bodies, and institutions that are involved or invested in "terrorism's" continued use as a valid classification of political violence.
4. I refer to "colonial-modernity" rather than just "modernity" throughout this article to challenge the erasure of the darker, co-constitutive other side of modernity which decolonial scholars have referred to as "coloniality".
5. As I explain further below, "coloniality" refers to the so-called darker side of modernity and comprises colonial knowledge production, global racial and gender hierarchies, capitalism, and language hierarchies which all hold in place colonial logics and mindsets even in the absence of official colonial rule.
6. It is worth noting that the Westphalian nation-state is also colonial from its very inception. The modern nation-state in Europe emerged at the same time as colonial empire building did. In fact, the identity-building of the newly developed nations in modern Europe was dependent on their colonies and "predicated on their relationship to the colonised others" (see also Ahmed 2000, 10).
7. This alongside many other Global South examples of political elites using the discursive power of "terrorism" against their own citizens, demonstrates that engaging with Global South expertise, perspectives or theories on "terrorism" is not a decolonial solution to the study of terrorism. Instead, Global South elites often continue to use the Western import of "terrorism" in the same colonial way it was invented for in the first place. Examples for this are given by Abozaid's (2022) and Alzubairi's (2019) work on Egypt as well as Oando and Achieng's (2021) work on Kenya.

8. The word "thug" for examples has colonial origins. Colonial administrators in India designated the "Thuggee" Hindu cast as a hereditary criminal cast, who killed for no rational reason. This example was then used by prominent terrorism scholars as a prime example of early or medieval terrorism (see Khan 2023; Wagner 2016 Mogbolu, this issue).
9. See Ignatiev's (2009) work on "how the Irish became white".
10. For a more detailed discussion on how "intersectionality" has been co-opted in recent discourse and scholarship, see Jennifer Nash (2008) and Salem and Jibrin (2015).
11. See also Rodríguez (2018, 1578) on the permanent pushback abolitionist scholars receive from those who seek to find more "realistic" or "practical" solutions (such as discourses on "reforming" rather than "abolishing") that ultimately still work with and for the exact system that abolitionist scholars criticise as the enabler of racial, colonial, masculinist oppression, injustice, and genocide.
12. One example of a US grassroots organisation that has brought abolitionist thought to "counter-terrorism" (and the "War on Terror Apparatus" more specifically) is "Muslim Abolitionist Futures", founded in 2021.
13. This is very US-specific, however, as Davis (2003, 42) further notes, the European prison system has also been imported by colonial administrators to Asia and Africa. It has also been the foundation of the settler-colonial project in Australia. The carceral system, therefore, can be argued to be another colonial remnant across many societies today.
14. See also Tuck and Yang (2012) and Pulido and De Lara (2018 78) on making appeals to the settle colonial state: "Abolitionism [. . .] recognizes that making appeals to the settler colonial state makes us complicit with dispossession; asking for 40 acres and a mule equates freedom and justice with a small piece of the plunder made possible by the past and present removal of indigenous people from the landscape"
15. For a more detailed discussion on the importance of discourse and the expansion of what kind of discourse CTS studies, see Michael Livesey's contribution to this issue.
16. Far from condoning revolutionary violences, for example, Frantz Fanon ([1961] 2021), in acknowledging that decolonisation is always violent, instead recognised it as a response to and result of its violent, colonial context and instigation.

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