



Terrorology and Methodology: A Reply to Dixit and Stump

David Martin Jones & M. L. R. Smith

To cite this article: David Martin Jones & M. L. R. Smith (2011) Terrorology and Methodology: A Reply to Dixit and Stump, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 34:6, 512-522, DOI: [10.1080/1057610X.2011.571196](https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2011.571196)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2011.571196>



Published online: 20 May 2011.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 429



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 2 View citing articles [↗](#)

Terrorology and Methodology: A Reply to Dixit and Stump

DAVID MARTIN JONES

School of Political Science and International Studies
University of Queensland
Brisbane, Australia

M. L. R. SMITH

Department of War Studies
King's College, University of London
London, United Kingdom

We did not volunteer to review the first issue of *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. It was the editor of *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* who, in the spirit of encouraging properly critical debate, invited us to do so. Inured to the questionable theorizing, methodological confusion, and policy irrelevance of the discipline of international relations as it developed in the wake of the Cold War, even we were somewhat surprised by the tone (strident), theoretical content (pretentious), and approach (sweepingly assertive) of the new journal. Consequently, our review charted this pseudo-academic descent into self-regarding, and self-referential, incoherence.

Priya Dixit and Jacob Stump provide a thoughtful commentary upon our review and also attempt to show what a properly “critical approach” to the study of terrorism might entail. Let us state, from the outset, that we agree with several of Dixit and Stump’s broad observations. Equally, there are areas where we disagree, or believe that their criticisms misread or misrepresent our analysis. In particular, we would contend that Dixit and Stump overestimate the capacity of critical theorists to solve the problems that they acknowledge we have identified.

Dixit and Stump, therefore, provide a useful platform for us both to respond to their criticisms and examine further the fault-lines that traverse critical and conventional terrorism research in terms of: state bias; critical theory and emancipation; the epistemological issues raised by relativism, objectivism and contextualism; and terrorism as practice. We shall address the points they raise with respect to those subheadings.

Received 22 December 2010; accepted 30 December 2010.

Address correspondence to Professor M.L.R. Smith, Department of War Studies, King’s College, University of London, Strand, London WC2R 2LS, UK. E-mail: mike.smith@kcl.ac.uk

Evidence for State Bias

We argued in our original review that it was not our intention to defend what may be termed orthodox or traditional terrorism studies. As analysts, we have, for the better part of two decades, and long before critical terror studies was conceived, expressed reservations about the ruling assumptions of what passes for terrorism studies.¹

For this reason we are entirely receptive to the view that traditional terrorist studies privilege the state and depict it as struggling against a protean and destructive phenomenon termed terrorism. Such approaches are evident in the literature and do limit methodological rigor, as Dixit and Stump maintain. We also agree with their claim that researchers should be more transparent about how they situate themselves in the field and understand the key terms they deploy.

At the same time, in our review, we nevertheless questioned the manner in which contributors to *Critical Studies on Terrorism* assumed, rather than showed, that state bias existed in the conventional literature. In this, critical theory unconsciously mirrors the practice of traditional analysts who assume that “terrorism” constitutes an existential threat to the state without empirically demonstrating this to be the case. By contrast, Dixit and Stump’s survey of syllabi in U.S. universities gives some empirical support to their claim concerning state bias. Dixit and Stump, in other words, make the intellectual effort to demonstrate their hypothesis, which the editors and contributors to the first edition of *Critical Studies on Terrorism* conspicuously did not.

It would have been interesting, however, if Dixit and Stump had extended their survey of syllabi and degree programs to British and Australian universities. Here they would have discovered a significant corrective to state bias. A brief review of courses offered on terrorism and international relations in British universities and among the so-called Australian Great Eight institutions reveals a systematic predilection for courses that adopt, or incorporate, critical approaches to the study of terrorism along with a more general propensity to promote critical security studies. Our survey of tertiary institutions in the United Kingdom with established reputations for political and international studies found that out of 42 universities sampled 37 (88 percent) indicated clear evidence of critical and poststructuralist approaches within teaching syllabi and course programs, and/or represent the teaching and research orientation of members of the faculty cohort.²

In our original review we particularly took issue with the belief, held by a number of contributors to *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, and reflected in British and Australian university programs, that conventional terrorism research deliberately conspires both to de-legitimize the critical voice and marginalize the non-Western “other.” In this regard, we found that critical theory engages in sweeping generalizations about the Western media presentation of terrorism and assumes or cherry picks facts to demonstrate political bias and a predetermined state conspiracy. Such a critical worldview again unconsciously mirrors the weakness of traditional terror studies during the Cold War, where writers like Claire Sterling in *The Terror Network* detected the hidden-hand of the Soviet Union behind every significant violent sub-state actor of the time. As we stated in our review, conventional and critical approaches often seem two sides of the same debased coin.

More generally, the *soi disant* critical orientation of *Critical Studies on Terrorism* embraces the uncritical assumption that Western democracies have engaged in a conspiracy to demonize resistance by third world and particularly Muslim non-state actors. The critical approach thus places the assumption of the questionable and malign motivation of democratic governments (that nevertheless, and somewhat ironically, support the critical research agenda through the grant giving machinery) above conceptual precision and

hypothesis testing. In the process, critical thinking problematically imports the paranoid outer reaches of the blogosphere into academia, thus legitimizing the conspiracies of hidden-hands, sinister schemes, malign forces, secret agendas, and controlling systems of power purveyed on websites like Spinwatch and Neocon Europe.

In this context, Dixit and Stump's proposal to advance critical inquiry by "de-naturalizing the state" is less than helpful, not least because it merely reinforces the obsessive suspicion of the state that defines critical terrorology's worldview. In particular, Dixit and Stump's suggestion is based on the reductionist claim by Weldes, Laffey, Gusterson and Duvall that the whole field of "security studies" (an ill-defined subject area at the best of times) is predicated on immutable state threats. Consequently:

Actors and their insecurities are naturalized in the sense that they are treated as facts that, because they are given by the nature of the interstate system, can be taken for granted. Taken as natural facts, states and other organized actors become the foundational objects the taken-for-granted of which serves to ground security studies.³

The proposed "de-naturalizing" of the state rests on this flimsy criticism of security studies, which raises more questions than it answers. What, we might ask, does "de-naturalizing" the state really mean? Taken to its logical conclusion it implies that we cannot discuss states as social facts. Nor can a de-naturalized perspective accept that the international system is primarily composed of states that express themselves through collective identities and interests and give material form to these through institutions and symbols that range from flags and anthems to national airlines and armed forces.

From the constructivist ontology that Dixit and Stump embrace it appears that because there are no social facts that are not socially constituted there can be no such thing as facts at all. But if states cannot at a minimum be construed as social facts with histories and interests then how, we might wonder, can we begin to study their actions? In their subsequent discussion of terrorism as practice, the world Dixit and Stump inhabit is comprised purely of discourses and practices. Even a state's terror strategy, from this perspective, erroneously assumes an "objectively existing phenomenon."⁴

Extending the process of de-naturalization, moreover, leads to some bizarre and nihilistic conclusions. The logic of constructivism would entail "de-naturalizing" not just the state, but all social arrangements, and any human organization, from nationalities, governments, and sub-state actors, to universities, academic journals, language and the constitution of the self itself. Ultimately, such "de-naturalization" undermines the foundations of social inquiry. All human institutions, from the state downwards, rest on assumptions and practices that are socially and historically constituted. All institutions and social structures can therefore be deconstructed.⁵

Fundamentally, there is nothing particularly novel about this insight that in fact began with the ancient Greek distinction between *nomos* and *physis*.⁶ Yet, if a program of inquiry simply regards constitutive processes as the only thing worth studying, then all phenomena collapse back into language, which robs everything, including constructivism itself, of meaning. As the Australian philosopher John Anderson observed of this style of thinking, it functions "as a substitute at once for philosophy and for a real theory of language."⁷ The point is, as we argued in our review, that to achieve a genuine understanding we must either investigate the facts that are talked about or study the fact that they are talked about in a certain way. If we concentrate on the uses of language we are in danger of taking our discoveries about manners of speaking as answers to questions about what is there.

This path leads not to any meaningful insight, but to the paradoxes of idealism Jorge Luis Borges explored in his *Ficciones*. In Borges's short story "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," the metaphysicians of the imaginary world of Tlön (or the world conceived by constructivism) do not seek "for the truth, or even for verisimilitude,"⁸ which they consider devoid of interest, but instead pursue a "kind of amazement."⁹

For, ultimately, if human agents are themselves, as Dale Copeland notes, merely "puppets of the ideational system in which they find themselves" then "each would exist as a socially conditioned 'Me', without the free-willed 'I' capable of resisting the socialization process."¹⁰ Such a condition of linguistic mutability, in fact, undermines any transformative possibility for the international system, or indeed anything else. Yet, ironically, this is the very thing constructivists and critical theorists want to show is possible.

Furthermore, if Dixit and Stump do not accept the logic of their constructivism, which abandons academic engagement for the path of Tlönist astonishment, then they must assert, somewhat arbitrarily, that we should de-naturalize the state, yet leave all other social institutions in their "natural" state. Such a method only frames the debate in a way that favors a set of ideological preferences, which inevitably prejudices the outcome of any inquiry by determining that all problems are the fault of the state and its insidious systems of exclusion.

Dixit and Stump's proposed de-naturalization of the state, therefore, fails any adequate standard of hypothesis testing. Put simply, you cannot "de-naturalize" the one thing you might object to in the current political system, but leave all other practices and social arrangements, including the constitutive positions you occupy, naturalized as if you existed in Olympian detachment. As we pointed out in our review, at best this position is intellectually incoherent, and at worst hypocritical.

We exemplified this point in our initial review with reference to Ken Booth's contradictory assertion that critical theorists must recognize that they inhabit a world constituted by powerful ideological systems, yet must themselves "stand outside" those systems.¹¹ Such schemes repeat the Marxian fallacy of false consciousness, asserting that everyone, apart from the critically initiated, has their understanding distorted by the ideology in dominance. Critical theory apparently endows its disciples with the unique capacity to "stand outside" these systems of dominance and see through the othering processes of the state. Meanwhile, those trapped in the quotidian reality of the state have no access to this higher insight. Booth's article in *Critical Studies on Terrorism* shows where this style of thinking leads: to the conviction that the followers of critical theory alone can transcend the mundane and the political.

Critical Theory's Commitment to Emancipation and Transformation, or the Consequences of Oughtism

Dixit and Stump further contend that effective critical terrorism research should be advanced by redefining critical studies in a way that abandons the Frankfurt School's insistence on emancipatory and transformative praxis. Thus, the authors maintain, to be properly "critical" merely requires "drawing attention to how meanings are formulated, identities produced and actions legitimated"¹² in ways that are not necessarily normative or emancipatory.

We sympathize with Dixit and Stump's aspiration to modify the critical preoccupation with the abstract transformation of the prevailing national and international order, but find their prescriptions either banal or self-defeating. In their desire to disassociate critical theory from its Frankfurt School roots, Dixit and Stump want to move critical terrorism studies in directions that critical theorists would necessarily resist. This is a reasonable ambition but

would only further confuse the notion of critical theory. Adherence to the Frankfurt School and its Habermasian verities are in fact constitutive of this critical identity. In critical theory circles, criticism and the Frankfurt school are synonymous.

Despite their heroic attempt to divorce criticism from critical theory, Dixit and Stump's claim that the "critical can mean a range of non-traditional ways of doing research,"¹³ is too vague. The authors cite Karin Fierke to the effect that to be "critical" means looking at issues in fresh ways, questioning existing assumptions, and opening up new spaces of inquiry. This seems entirely unremarkable. If all they mean is that to be critical is to be skeptical, well, that is surely the task of any properly conceived scholarly exercise.

Yet, skepticism is precisely what critical theorists disavow. To be critical in the Frankfurt school sense is to be *engagée*, that is to say, committed to the project of emancipating the silenced "other" and transforming the state based international order along normative, postnational, communicatively rational, lines. If the answer to any inquiry is already determined then skepticism is negated. The critical terror approach is not skeptical, and it is not academic. It is actually a debased form of faith.

In this regard, Dixit and Stump considered the references in our original review to critical theory's disciples, prophets, and commandments a "facile" grab.¹⁴ They were not intended to be. Our comments made a serious point. The critical approach meets the criteria for inclusion in what the political philosopher, Michael Oakeshott, termed the "politics of faith." It is a closed system of thought, the ruling assumptions of which are unfalsifiable. It is neither pluralist nor, as our experience with its high priesthood demonstrates, open-handed in debate.¹⁵

Critical terrorism study is, therefore, not so much a system of academic thought but what Eric Voegelin described as a "new political religion."¹⁶ In our view, the practice of faith should be confined to churches, mosques, and other places of worship. That critical terrorism studies, and its critical security studies variants, may be found in international relations departments on Western campuses, attracting large numbers of students to its creed, does not mean that it constitutes a rigorous, self-critical, method of investigation. Its transcendental belief in transformation and emancipation assumes a world that ought to be. It does not, as realists do, accept the world as it is. It was precisely this form of oughtism that Machiavelli, the founder of modern political science, dismissed in *The Prince*.

That such a transcendental idealism pervades critical theory is evident, as we demonstrated, from the statements of critical terrology's leading protagonists. Thus, Ken Booth asserts that the imperative of international relations is not merely to interpret the world but to change it.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Anthony Burke holds that international issues should be pursued with a normative bias toward nonviolence and universal human emancipation. The process requires the "political taming of unbounded capitalism," leading to a transcendental "telos of mutual understanding" where we recognize the "human interconnection and mutual vulnerability to nature, the cosmos and each other."¹⁸ Such an approach conforms not to scientific inquiry but to what Voegelin saw as Gnosticism, namely, a "purported direct, immediate apprehension or vision of truth without the need for critical reflection."¹⁹ Given this transcendentalist predilection, we submit that Dixit and Stump overestimate the capacity of existing critical theory to reform itself into a methodologically coherent system of thought.

Additionally, we would further question what exactly Dixit and Stump's call for greater methodological plurality entails and why it should necessarily characterize a particularly "critical" study of terrorism? Advancing their version of pluralism, Dixit and Stump claim that our original review contended that "a questioning stance toward terrorism automatically implies hatred of 'Western politicians and the media.'"²⁰ We did not, in fact, say this.

In academia, a questioning stance is always welcome. What we argued, however, was that critical theory's commitment to emancipation and transformation limits what can be questioned and thus forecloses intellectual diversity.²¹ It is mind-closing, not mind-opening.

That said, we would agree with Dixit and Stump's contention that critical theory's "focus on emancipation as a goal is problematic because it ignores *whose* [original italics] emancipation 'we' should be concerned about."²² This is a limitation that we have in fact previously identified, observing that self-proclaimed critical theorists often appear confused about who precisely they should be emancipating. In particular, critical theory seems caught between its empathy for the non-Western "other" and the universalist, yet essentially postmodern Western, emancipationist agenda that it also advances.²³ To avoid the paradox at its core, critical theorists revert to faith-based affirmation and the suppression of questioning voices.

As we have argued elsewhere, critical theorists find it more convenient to deplore the informal practices of exclusion they find at work in Western liberal-democracies than to criticize the formal systems of repression, torture, and enslavement practiced in the non-Western world. Consequently, the critical position frequently affords solace to non-liberal or authoritarian regimes and practices of thought (as we demonstrated with reference to its empathy with the radical Islamist agenda).²⁴ Ironically, analysts pursue this *soi disant* critical agenda from within the same Western campuses that permit their ideas and illiberal practices to flourish.

Relativism, Objectivism, and Contextualism

From what we have both observed and experienced, critical theory subscribes to the view that knowledge is power. To this end, its high priests seek to control hiring and firing on university appointment committees in departments of international relations, and dominate state agencies charged with allocating grants for research. In this way, they function as a classic Neo-Marxist cultural vanguard pursuing their Gramscian Long March through the institutions, closing the academic mind in the process. Arguably, they have succeeded in many departments of international relations in Britain and Australia where critical theory and constructivist approaches now prevail. This social fact tends to invalidate their somewhat exaggerated assertions that critical theory represents the only means to open discourse to "dissident voices."²⁵ If you are the orthodoxy and sedulously enforce it, you cannot, except through a process of Orwellian doublethink, also be a dissident.²⁶

This brings us to Dixit and Stump's most acerbic criticism, namely, our "facile criticisms" of "relativist research" and their own preference for methodological contextualism. Contextualism, they aver, overcomes the "artificial," "relativist-foundationalist" dualism, which according to Bent Flyvberg makes it "easy to think but hard to understand." Following Flyvberg via the poststructuralism of Michel Foucault, Dixit and Stump contend that something called "situational ethics, that is, by context [sic]"²⁷ should replace the problematic relativist/foundationalist dichotomy to which our work allegedly subscribes. Contextualism, in this recension, "depended on the effective limits of the present and the circumstantially available norms rooted in historical and personal contexts." Dixit and Stump continue: "the limits to what can be thought said and done are practically sustained within and through social norms."²⁸ More particularly, they assert, "our sociality and history, according to Foucault, is the only foundation we have . . . and this social historical foundation is fully adequate."²⁹

This contextualism strikes us as incoherent. Its normativism is both worryingly determinist and oddly foundationalist. It is not the place here to explore the limitations of

Foucauldian thinking. Suffice to say the archpriest of deconstruction and genealogy demonstrated a limited grasp of linguistic philosophy and selectively adapted the historical record to suit his genealogical conclusions. His situational ethics, moreover, led him to identify with both the excesses of the Iranian revolution and Maoist style vigilantism rather than due legal process. This might be a situational adjustment, but it can only be ethical if might is right and knowledge is power.

More generally, we do not subscribe to something termed foundationalism and would make two points about relativism. Firstly, we would recognize that the recourse to the tactics of terror by a non-state actor has to be located in a historical and contingent experience. This we would argue is what our work on Islamism attempts to do and we would see an analogous attempt to situate contemporary non-state organizations that have sought to utilize campaigns of violence in the work of those writers like Walter Laqueur and Bruce Hoffman, which Dixit and Stump find problematically realist. The awareness of the contingent experiences that shape the emergence of violent non-state actors, and state responses to them, requires of course both careful research and access to documentary material that may only be forthcoming in the fullness of time. It is, then, a historical mode of inquiry that attends to human behavior and its discursive expression in contingent circumstances. To confuse it with science and causality would be to commit categorical error. To see this approach as either relativist or anti-relativist is to misunderstand and misrepresent the nature of such an inquiry.

Secondly, as Isaiah Berlin observed in a reflection on the history of political thought and relativism, it is possible to be relativist about values, but not about facts. Dixit and Stump's contextualism, however, suggests they subscribe to a relativism concerning social facts. As the neglected Australian philosopher J.L. Mackie noted:

any thinker who alleges all truth is relative [or as Dixit and Stump would contend contextual] is either saying nothing at all or else cannot avoid committing himself to some assertions for which he claims simple and absolute truth. It may be alleged that something exists from only a certain point of view; but (even if it made sense to speak of existing from a certain point of view) the fact that a certain thing exists from a certain point of view is itself a simple fact, it just is so, and not from any point of view.³⁰

In other words, if some so-called truths, or to use the argot of Dixit and Stump, "practices," are socially relative, then that they are so is a truth that is not socially relative. Further, once the relativist, situational ethicist, or contextualist (take your pick) has acknowledged that she is herself claiming to know some absolute truths, she cannot consistently reject, on general grounds, all other claims to knowledge of truth. She would have to show in what way her thinking and observation are more accurate than those of the people whose assertions embody merely relative truths or those, in the context of terrorism studies, that the overly naturalized state has legitimated. Critical theory, of course, gets around such self-refuting relativism by refusing to address it and silencing those voices that raise it as a problem in its research design.

Dixit and Stump, in this respect, misunderstand our position, which is not so much anti-relativist, as against a form of equivalence that is ultimately corrosive of Western self-understanding. The reckless minds that pursue critical theory exploit the relativist turn in Western thought given to them by a Western tradition of self-questioning in order to equate liberal-democratic pluralism with the worst kinds of oppressive tyranny. In this cynical exercise the editorial board of *Critical Studies on Terrorism* exploits the traditional

openness of the Western academy to self-criticism in order to situate themselves in positions of academic power whence they proceed to suppress the practice of open debate.

Terrorism as Practice

Dixit and Stump's final point about treating terrorism as practice is perhaps even less convincing than their contextualist methodology. This is not because they are wrong, but that they are making a distinction where there is not really a difference. Strategic theory, properly understood, always treats the study of terrorism (the creation of fear for political ends) as a practice. Moreover, this understanding has been central to rigorous strategic analysis for several decades, as we demonstrated with respect to the classic writings of Thomas Schelling. Such an understanding, therefore, does not begin with either Charles Tilly or Richard Jackson. We suggest that Dixit and Stump read some proper strategic theory rather than relying on those who misrepresent it through the opaque lens of critical theory.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion we would like to point to an interesting feature of this exchange with Dixit and Stump, namely, that it occurs in a U.S. journal, with an American editor, who is prepared to see his own work criticized by two U.S.-based academics. Such a critical exchange would not take place in any current British or Australian journal of international relations, let alone in *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, in thrall as it is to its *soi disant* critical orthodoxy. The actions of the editors of *Critical Studies on Terrorism* in response to our original review reinforce this impression. Rather than robustly contest our review in an open forum, they preferred instead to compose slighting messages to the editor of *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, impugning our motives, our "sub-scholarly polemic" and our integrity.³¹ We are neither offended nor surprised by such an *ad hominem* response. Such tactics are commensurate with the faith-based nature of the critical orthodoxy, instinctively averse to the questioning of its position, and like any inquisitorial closed-minded association predisposed to suppress dissent wherever it may arise.

Dixit and Stump clearly disagreed with many of our arguments, but they had the professional respect to set out their position and critique our stance on the printed page. By contrast, smears and denunciation deserve no respect. This journal offered the editors, of what we understand is the rapidly diminishing "Welsh School" of critical terror studies, the opportunity to respond to our review, but they declined. If they have a counter-argument then they should attempt to express it. However, in the interest of objective scientific inquiry, let us put a thesis out there for us to test: the hypothesis is that the editors of the journal of *Critical Studies on Terrorism* are unable to respond with a counter-argument for one simple reason: they do not have one.

Notes

1. See M. L. R. Smith, "Holding Fire: The Missing Military Dimension in the Academic Study of Northern Ireland," in Alan O'Day, ed., *Terrorism's Laboratory: The Case of Northern Ireland* (Aldershot: Dartmouth Press, 1995), pp. 225–240; David Martin Jones and M. L. R. Smith, "The Commentariat and Discourse Failure: Language and Atrocity in Cool Britannia," *International Affairs* 82(6) (November 2006), pp. 1077–1100. It is notable that the leading lights of critical terrorism

studies seem to believe that a critical voice appeared only when they emerged on the scene in the mid-2000s. This is a belief that Dixit and Stump also appear to share.

2. The five major institutions (Buckingham, Dundee, Leicester, Liverpool, and Nottingham) where critical approaches cannot be discerned, does not indicate that such approaches are absent, simply that they cannot be detected from available information. Among the 88 percent of those institutions that do indicate the presence of critical and poststructuralist scholarship does not imply that such approaches constitute the predominate line of thought in any one department or school but does demonstrate such approaches are neither excluded nor marginalized. The basic findings that critical/poststructuralist scholarship comprises a significant part of mainstream and orthodox study of the subject in the United Kingdom is corroborated by other sources, notably the 2009 Teaching, Research and International Policy (TRIP) report: See Richard Jordan, Danial Maliniak, Amy Oaks, Susan Peterson, and Michael Tierney, *One Discipline or Many? TRIP Survey of International Relations Faculties in Ten Countries* (Williamsburg, VA: Institute of the Theory and Practice of International Relations, February 2009), pp. 31–32. Elsewhere, an initial survey of the major Australian universities, the so-called Great Eight (Adelaide, Australian National University, Melbourne, Monash, New South Wales, Queensland, Sydney, and Western Australia) indicate that critically orientated approaches are present across the teaching of the disciplines of politics and international relations. Readers are welcome to contact the authors for a copy of our investigation and findings.

3. Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson and Raymond Duvall, "Introduction: Constructing Insecurity," Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson and Raymond Duvall, eds., *Cultures of Insecurity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 9.

4. Dixit Priya and Jacob L. Stump, "It's Not as Bad as It Seems; Or, Five Ways to Move Critical Terrorism Studies Forward," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 34(6) (2011), pp. 501–511; as Jorge Luis Borges observes in a different context, "such monism . . . invalidates all science." *Labyrinths* (London: Penguin, 1964), p. 34.

5. One of the reservations we have about Dixit and Stump's methodology is that they treat fairly basic philosophical insights as if they were recent discoveries of constructivist/critical theory investigation. Hence, in note 5, they declare that: "There is no presuppositionless social science," citing a 2008 text by Patrick Thaddeus Jackson who, the authors aver, "argues that all social science speaks from an ontologically distinct perspective that makes certain presuppositions." Dixit and Stump appear unaware that this is the ground for scientific understanding that pre-dates Patrick Thaddeus Jackson by a good couple of thousand years. Elsewhere, the authors seem to treat Alexander Wendt's 1999 tract, *Social Theory of International Relations* as the Year Zero for international relations theory.

6. See *inter alia* Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964). Somewhat differently, Borges remarked of David Hume's view of George Berkeley's idealist arguments that they admitted "not the slightest refutation nor did they cause the slightest conviction." Borges, *Labyrinths*, p. 32.

7. John Anderson, *Studies in Empirical Philosophy* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1962), p. 279.

8. Jorge Luis Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," in *Ficciones* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), p. 34.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

10. Dale C. Copeland, "The Constructivist Challenge to Structural Realism," *International Security*, 25(2) (Fall 2000), p. 209.

11. Ken Booth, "The Human Faces of Terror: Reflections in a Cracked Looking Glass," *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 1(1) (2008), p. 78.

12. Priya and Stump, "It's Not as Bad as It Seems," pp. 501–511.

13. *Ibid.*

14. We own up to a mistake here. In making light of Booth's promulgation of "fifteen commandments" or "higher navigation aids" to use his terminology, our original review referred to a comment made by Premier Clemenceau at the Paris Conference in 1919, who we claimed "remarked of Woodrow Wilson's nineteen points" "God Almighty only gave us ten." This should, of course, have

been a reference to Wilson's "Fourteen Points for Peace." Booth thus has the distinction of handing down more commandments than both President Wilson and God.

15. Michael Oakeshott, *The Politics of Faith and the Politics of Scepticism* (ed. Timothy Fuller) (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 45–67.

16. Eric Voegelin, *Political Religions* (trans. T. J. DiNapoli and E. S. Easterly) (Lewiston, NY: Edward Mellen Press, 1985).

17. Booth, "The Human Faces of Terror," pp. 67–68.

18. Anthony Burke, "The End of Terrorism Studies," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 1(1) (2008), p. 47.

19. Eugene Webb, *Eric Voegelin: Philosopher of History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), p. 282.

20. Priya and Stump, "It's Not as Bad as It Seems," pp. 501–511.

21. David Martin Jones and M. L. R. Smith, "We Are All Terrorists Now: Critical—or Hypocritical—Studies 'on' Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 32(4) (April 2008), p. 299.

22. Priya and Stump, "It's Not as Bad as It Seems," pp. 501–511.

23. See for example, M. L. R. Smith, "Hear the Silence: Investigating Exclusion in Cold War International Relations," *Cold War History* 1(3) (April 2001), pp. 62–64.

24. Jones and Smith, "We Are All Terrorists Now," pp. 297–299. This is something we elaborate on elsewhere, David Martin Jones and M. L. R. Smith, "Beyond Belief: Islamist Strategic Thinking and International Relations Theory," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22(2) (March 2010), pp. 242–266.

25. Karin Fierke, *Changing Games, Changing Strategies: Critical Investigations in Security* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998), p. 13.

26. In another work in the critical oeuvre a number of the editors of *Critical Studies on Terrorism* assert that critical scholars like themselves are a persecuted minority, subject to "political attack and intimidation . . . marginalization, exclusion and loss of place in scholarly and policy circles." Richard Jackson, Marie Breen-Smyth and Jeroen Gunning, "Introduction: The Case for Critical Terrorism," in Richard Jackson, Marie Breen-Smyth, and Jeroen Gunning, *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 8. As Professor Henry Patterson, the respected historian of Irish Republican political thought pointed out in a review of this volume, these delusions of persecution are deeply solipsistic if not "faintly comical." Patterson comments: "All three editors have tenured positions in a good British university, do not report any problems running 'critically-oriented' modules and courses and seem to have no problems in convening conferences and seminars and organizing panels at international conferences." See Henry Patterson, "Book Review," *Democracy and Security* 5(3) (September 2009), p. 308. It might also be noted that in the "Acknowledgements" to this volume, the editors opine that "the pursuit of a 'critical' approach to the study of terrorism can be a lonely, and at times precarious undertaking." In the next paragraph they proceed to thank 54 fairly mainstream academics for their fulsome support.

27. Bent Flyvberg, *Making Social Science Matter* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 99; Priya and Stump, "It's Not as Bad as It Seems," pp. 501–511.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

30. J. L. Mackie, "The Philosophy of John Anderson," *Australian Journal of Philosophy* 40(3) (1962), p. 273.

31. A message from one of the editors of *Critical Studies on Terrorism* (we do not know their name) and passed on from the editor of this journal on 20 April 2009 reads: "As Chief Editor, I presume you saw the latest offerings of Smith and Jones in Studies on [sic] Conflict and Terrorism. Given their personal histories with Aberystwyth, it reads like a rather bad case of sour grapes and does little to advance scholarly debate—which is a pity as, hidden under the diatribe, there were some good points, which would have come out much better if couched in a less emotive way. I must admit I was a bit disappointed that SCT [sic] had allowed itself to become a platform for such sub-scholarly polemic, and, judging by what I hear, it hasn't reflected very well on the journal over here in the UK. Thought you might want to know." A "narrative" is obviously being promulgated that questions our

motives in order to avoid taking on the issues we raise. At one level of course this merely reflects the usual immature provincialism at work in some British and most Australian tertiary institutions. More disturbing, however, is the attempt to reduce an intellectual disagreement to personalities by the attribution of baser motives to our review (dark references to “personal histories,” “sour grapes,” etc.). Such recourse to the reductive politics of personality fits critical theory’s propensity to paranoia and its reluctance to accept open debate (any criticism being redescribed as “emotive” and “sub-scholarly”). Since our anonymous detractor raised the matter, our “personal histories with Aberystwyth” extend to the following: one of us attended Aberystwyth some three decades ago where he spent three largely unremarkable years as an undergraduate, is a lifetime member of the Alumnus Association, and contributes to the university’s student hardship fund. The other’s father hails from the vicinity, but apart from spending a number of family holidays in Dolgellau has rarely entered the small, and small-minded, Ceredigion town. In other words, neither have had anything except the most insignificant contacts with the Department of International Politics and the Aber jabber, which would make the basis for a reworking of the classic Kingsley Amis satire on provincial Welsh humanities departments *Lucky Jim*.