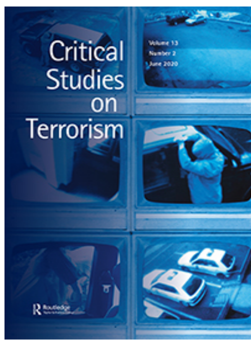

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ARTICLE

Is resilience a favourable concept in terrorism research? The multifaceted discourses of resilience in the academic literature

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ABSTRACT

The concept of resilience is frequently found in academic documents describing the favoured solution for how to address the threat of terrorism. Despite this, few attempts have been made to critically examine what resilience means and whether it is a favourable concept in terrorism research. Since multiple researchers in other disciplines have claimed that the resilience concept serves as an umbrella concept for a range of positive attributes, this study investigates the different discourses that resilience in the academic terrorism literature is built upon. The analysis outlines five different discourses in the academic literature that contain different descriptions of what it means to be resilient regarding terrorism. It is concluded that the meaning of terrorism resilience in the academic literature is multifaceted, ambiguous and sometimes contradictory. The positive connotation embedded in the concept of resilience and the absence of a description of what it means not to be resilient is problematic because it turns resilience into a utopian goal rather than a realistic counterterrorism project. Moreover, resilience normalises the view of terrorism as a ubiquitous omnipresent threat and legitimises counterterrorism measures as a positive, depoliticised necessity. Resilience is serving ideological purposes, and thus researchers should not uncritically accept resilience as the solution to the threat of terrorism.

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Introduction

Within academic circles, resilience has gained massive attention in recent years and the resilience concept is suggested as the basis for a common framework for radicalisation and terrorism prevention (Stephens, Sieckelinck, and Boutellier 2019). While the academic literature on resilience is extensive in various disciplines, scholars of terrorism have only recently begun to develop a body of research on the concept and its associated benefits and perils.

Resilience is, without doubt, a concept accompanied by positive connotations. The resilience concept invokes images of societies and individuals able to resist extreme views, prevent terrorist attacks from occurring and to bounce back from a terrorist attack. Who does not want to be resilient from a devastating threat such as terrorism? Many scholars have also welcomed resilience approaches to terrorism because they see them as

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an alternative to military interventions and as more locally adaptable strategies (Dalgaard-Nielsen and Schack 2016; Stephens, Sieckelinck, and Boutellier 2019). However, as many critical terrorism scholars have pointed out, approaches to counterterrorism are never neutral. Counterterrorism measures always entail negative side-effects and are always dependent on specific ways of seeing the threat of terrorism and what are considered legitimate ways of countering the threat (Jackson et al. 2011). As Crelinsten puts it, “How we conceive of terrorism determines to a great extent how we go about countering it, and what resources–money, manpower, institutional framework, time horizon–we devote to the effort” (2009, 19).

Consequently, the popularity of the resilience concept in regard to terrorism should not be viewed as a neutral response to counter the threat of terrorism. On the contrary, the popularity of resilience related to terrorism should be seen as a lens that steers our perception of the phenomenon of terrorism and what are considered legitimate counter-terrorism strategies. Furthermore, the popularity of the resilience concept in the academic community does not imbue resilience with neutrality. The introduction of the resilience concept in multiple disciplines was not triggered by theoretical or methodological break-throughs that would signal the need for a new scientific paradigm (Tierney 2015). Therefore, there is every reason to scrutinise the academic literature from a perspective that sees beyond the positive connotations of resilience and questions what resilience means and investigates the implications of different understandings of resilience.

The aim of this article is to investigate the meaning of terrorism resilience in the academic literature. Specifically, it investigates how the resilience concept is applied and utilised in the academic literature from an argumentative discourse analytical perspective based on Hajer (1995). An argumentative discourse analysis does not attempt to define resilience but instead explores the implications of the struggle over its meaning and its dialectical relationship with how we understand terrorism. The article claims that inherent in the different interpretations of resilience is an understanding of the terrorism phenomenon that privileges some interpretations of what kind of threat terrorism is and what are considered appropriate counterterrorism measures. It is concluded that scholars should not merely accept the resilience approach to terrorism because different understandings of terrorism resilience entail different and sometimes contradictory implications for the kind of threat terrorism poses and how it should be handled. Thus, the ultimate aim of this article is to enhance the understanding of terrorism resilience and to foster a multidisciplinary dialogue on whether resilience is a favourable concept in terrorism research.

The origins of resilience

Despite its current popularity, resilience is not a new concept. According to Alexander (2013), resilience has been used as a term to define systemic capacity to overcome disruption for at least 2000 years, such as resiliency in Roman Republican rule, despite political infighting, economic woes or natural disasters. In academic circles, the concept of resilience has been used for decades in ecology, physics, engineering and psychology (Comfort, Boin, and Demchak 2010). In ecology, resilience is attributed to Holling (1973) and refers to the ability of an ecosystem to transform in response to often unpredictable external disturbances without losing its core identity or functions. Within the ecological

understanding of resilience, the objects that make up a system can exist in multiple configurations or "regimes" and crucially may, at some point, fundamentally change (Walker and Salt 2012)

In physics and engineering, resilience describes the ability of a material or substance to resist or to "bounce back" to its original form (MacKinnon and Derickson 2013, 256; Walker and Cooper 2011, 146). Whereas engineering resilience implies that a system has one equilibrium, ecological resilience proposes that a system has multiple equilibria and can transform from one relatively stable state to another (MacKinnon and Derickson 2013; Walker and Cooper 2011). From both perspectives, resilience is distinguished from stability, since resilience refers to the capacity to adapt and transform rather than to reach a new stable state (Tierney 2015). Psychologists have employed the concept to explain why some individuals are able to withstand significant chronic and acute stressors without developing mental health problems, ascribing resilience at the individual level to stable personality characteristics (Bourbeau 2018). Although newer approaches in psychology and social work focus on the relationship between an individual and his/her social environment, the traditional psychological understanding of resilience regards it as a stable individual personality trait, in contrast to the ecological and engineering interpretations that differentiate resilience from stability. From these perspectives, resilience describes the capacity to adapt and transform rather than the capacity to resist a threat or to reach a new stable state.

Given these diverse interpretations of the resilience concept in its disciplines of origin, the concept carried with it ambiguous baggage as it spread and achieved prominence throughout several disciplines within a relatively short period of time, including development and urban studies, social work, criminology, economics, organisational studies, risk research and crisis management. More than 15 years ago, Klein, Nicholls, and Thomalla (2003, 42) stated that, after 30 years of academic analysis and debate, the definition of resilience had become so broad as to render it almost meaningless: "Resilience has become an umbrella concept for a range of system attributes that are deemed desirable". Multiple literature reviews published in various disciplines in recent years have reached similar conclusions (Bergström, Van Winsen, and Henriqson 2015; Manyena 2006). Resilience has been defined in dozens of diverse ways and the term is used broadly, incorporating both the capacity to resist and absorb disturbance and the capacity to adapt, bounce back and bounce forward from disruptive events towards higher levels of resilience (Tierney 2015).

Some scholars have pointed out that the resilience concept functions as a boundary concept (Brand and Jax 2007; Star and Griesemer 1989). Because the resilience concept is vague and abstract, practitioners and researchers from different fields can work together without first having to settle disagreements about the exact meaning of the term. Instead, collaborators can bring to their work diverse interpretations, interests and objectives (Tierney 2015). As Brassett and Vaughan-Williams (2015, 221) put it, the concept "seems to carry a productive ambiguity that both resists exact definition and allows for a spectrum of interpretations". Thus, resilience is neither an objective condition nor an immutable state that individuals or communities can arrive at. Consequently, Walklate, McGarry, and Mythen (2014, 422) argue that there are multiple "resiliences" that manifest themselves along a spectrum of different contexts and conditions.

Methodological approach

Given its diverse meaning in its disciplines of origin, the resilience concept entered the study of terrorism with inherent ambiguity. Despite this, few scholars within terrorism research have critically examined the concept of terrorism resilience. According to McGreavy (2016), a primary problem with resilience is "that it ignores its own discursivity, which constrains how we might come to know and do resilience differently". Subsequently, discursivity matters because the substantiation of terrorism resilience influences how we understand what it means to become resilient and what counter-measures are considered appropriate.

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the meaning of resilience in the academic literature from an Argumentative Discourse Analysis perspective based on Hajer (1995). Hajer sees discourses as particular systems or frameworks of assumptions, conceptual associations and beliefs. Such an understanding of discourse is in line with Foucault (1979, 2002), who claimed that there exists a set of rules in a society that is historically conditioned and that decides which arguments are seen as meaningful. Foucault considered discourses to be the macro-level formation of specialist knowledge that determines what can be said or thought about a specific subject.

In Argumentative Discourse Analysis, individuals are not totally free in their categorisation of the world but are subjected to the discourses in society in the historical time period in which they are living (Hajer 1995). According to this perspective, complex and ambiguous policy concepts, like resilience, draw popularity from their multi–interpretability, and their current understandings are the results of historical, social and political factors (Hajer 1995). Hajer suggests that people draw on different discourses when they communicate and define phenomena. Accordingly, how terrorism resilience is understood will be made up of many different discourses, because to discuss the phenomena of terrorism resilience will involve such complexity that, for example, one scientific discourse cannot satisfactorily explain either what terrorism is or how the threat should be met.

Since individuals draw on different discourses to understand terrorism resilience, the political power of the concept is not derived from its consistency but from its multi–interpretability. To be able to analyse this interdiscursive communication, Hajer introduces the concept of storylines that can illuminate how discursive orders are maintained and transformed. Hajer defines storylines as "narratives on social reality through which elements from many different domains are combined and that provide actors with a set of symbolic references that suggest a common understanding" (1995, 62). The resilience concept as a boundary object clearly meets the criteria of being a storyline. Consequently, this article aims to investigate what the different meanings of terrorism are and investigate what scientific discourses these meanings are founded upon.

Concepts, such as terrorism resilience, are not only a tool to represent facts and ideas; concepts also shape reality and may change our perceptions of the phenomenon of terrorism and how it should be handled. For that reason, resilience should be understood as a discursive frame that guides our understanding of terrorism as a threat, how terrorism can be prevented, and how society can protect itself from such a threat. The power of a discourse is not exclusively on the ideational level. The power of a discourse is also related to discourse institutionalisation that is the practices of how to deal with terrorism. Discourse institutionalisations facilitate the reproduction of a given discourse. Actors who

have been socialised to see terrorism in a specific framework reinterpret the phenomenon of terrorism within this framework. In this perspective, resilience will not only be seen as a means for coping with the threat of terrorism but as concrete discourse institutionalisations that support a specific view of the phenomenon of terrorism.

The empirical data this study is based on are academic literature (journal articles and books) on the topic of terrorism resilience. The Web of Science and Google Scholar were searched for articles which dealt with terrorism and resilience. Ninety-eight publications were reviewed, drawing on papers from any discipline that addressed the meaning of resilience in regard to terrorism. Since argumentative discourse analysis is the perspective this study is based on, the aim was not to simply perform a literature review of resilience in regard to terrorism to give a neutral state of the art of the current research on terrorism resilience. Rather, since the starting point is that complex concepts such as resilience are interdiscursive by nature, the aim was to identify the different academic discourses that give meaning to the storyline of terrorism resilience. The goal was to investigate the ontological assumptions regarding terrorism inherent in the discourses of resilience. Thus, the literature was investigated, asking: what kind of thing is terrorism resilience and what objects should be resilient? The analysis looked for regularities in the logics of resilience, focusing on definitions, disciplines of origins, and how resilience makes sense based on specific assumptions about what terrorism is and how it can be prevented.

Five different resilience discourses

Before 9/11, "resilience" was a term seldom found in terrorism research. Before this event, counterterrorism was predominantly the responsibility of state security agencies and this was the topic that was reflected in terrorism research at the time (Jore 2012). After 9/11 the application of the resilience concept accumulated in various disciplines, and this gave momentum to the birth of a range of counterterrorism approaches that fit under the umbrella of resilience. This literature review has outlined five different discourses on terrorism resilience in the academic literature. Each discourse corresponds to the different ways that resilience is understood and conceptualised by academics.

Resilience as withstanding: the militarisation of civil society and top-down planning

After 9/11, terrorism was high on the political agenda and was considered an imminent threat that societies worldwide needed to be prepared for. In the years after 9/11, counterterrorism policy turned to more proactive and pre-emptive strategies, focusing on securing high-risk targets such as mass transportation, national embassies, government buildings and dense city areas. Both surveillance and target hardening entailed that ideas and technology originally developed for military purposes to protect the nation-state were employed and extended into civil society and the everyday life of citizens. These societal developments and security strategies were often referred to as resilience and were discussed in disciplines such as urban planning, criminology and critical security studies. This discourse of resilience is linked to territorial security, and the counterterrorism measures in this discourse focus in particular on enhancing the physical robustness of the built environment and furthering human and technological

surveillance capabilities (Coaffee and Fussey 2015). Thus, this resilience discourse is a further development of the security literature developed around "militarising" or "securitising" cities and critical infrastructures in response to crime prevention that had been developed in the 1990s.

Resilience from this approach is a form of withstanding – to resist and cope with adversity defined as "the ability to detect, prevent and if necessary handle disruptive challenges" (Coaffee 2006, 204). Resilience means to prevent terrorism from happening and reduce vulnerabilities. Resilience thus corresponds to maintaining equilibrium by presupposing a social order that is continually at risk of disruption. Accordingly, this form of resilience resembles the psychological and engineering view of resilience which sees it as the ability to resist or bounce back to its original state when something happens. The resilient objects are high-risk sites such as government buildings, critical infrastructure, mass transportation systems, key financial centres and national embassies. Thus, discourse institutionalisations legitimised by this discourse are counterterrorism responses that are primarily territorially focused, reactionary and connected to specific sites of high vulnerability. Although this discourse focuses on domestic and local targets, the responsible parties involved are, to a large extent, traditional security agencies such as the police and national security agencies (Graham 2004). In this discourse, resilience is a result of top-down and macro planning, where counterterrorism largely is the responsibility of the state or the traditional security agencies but on a more local scale than before 9/11.

The ontological assumptions of this discourse are that we live in a permanent state of emergency because terrorism is a ubiquitous threat, with counterterrorism measures in public spaces being seen no longer as extraordinary but as a permanent feature of modern societies (Aradau 2016). This discourse has paved the way for building what some scholars refer to as a "security and surveillance state" (Coaffee 2006, 515; Wekerle and Jackson 2005), through the adoption of military strategies into civil societies.

Resilience as coping and bouncing back: descaled terrorism emergency preparedness and collective resistance

In the decade following 9/11, this event came to be seen as the first stage in a comprehensive transformation of the global threat landscape, in which unpredictable catastrophes became inevitable and thus there was a need for permanent emergency preparedness against terrorism. Concerns over "home-grown terrorists", in addition to an acknowledgement of the inadequacy of traditional state security agencies to counterterrorism, led Western governments to focus on resilience as a national goal (see, for example, Cabinet Office 2013a, 2013b, 2014: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 2010; Presidential Policy Directive 8 2011). To achieve the goal of national resilience, resilience building on multiple scales was deemed necessary. Accordingly, local actors and communities were not only responsible for protecting critical assets but also for how to cope with a terrorist attack. This increased focus on communities and local actors' obligations in counterterrorism was echoed in the massive research programmes initiated in the US as a direct response to 9/11. The national consortium for the study of terrorism, for example, launched community resilience as one of the research programmes after 9/11 (START 2019).

The focus on community resilience as a response to terrorism was in line with a new paradigm in crisis and disaster research at the time that focused on how disaster-affected communities could prepare for and cope with crisis (Tierney 2015; Manyena 2006). The intimate connection between disaster recovery and the resilience of affected communities was becoming a common feature of disaster risk-reduction programmes such as The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015 (IFRC 2004). This programme increased the attention on the capacity of disaster-affected communities to "bounce back" or to recover with little or no external assistance following a disaster. Thus, through the concept of resilience, the field of disaster studies had turned towards a new conceptual framework that emphasised system reorganisation and change in response to destabilising forces. This understanding of resilience is in line with how resilience had been described in ecology by Holling (1973), who applied the concept of resilience to the ability of systems to self-organise across multiple scales instead of through hierarchical governance.

These approaches entailed a shift from seeing counterterrorism as a question of macro-planning and strategic thinking to viewing it as a multi-scale collective resistance of communities, municipalities, local businesses and individuals. Through the resilience lens, counterterrorism became a question of decentralised self-governance against terrorism and a local and individualised responsibility. These changes in resilience policies were discussed by scholars in terrorism research, international relations, critical security studies, and in the crisis and disaster management literature.

This resilience discourse sees resilience as a form of multi-scale collective resistance because terrorism is ubiquitous, local and an unavoidable threat. In order to avoid the threat, a multi-scale approach is needed. Thus, resilience from this perspective means to be prepared and avoid terrorist attacks from happening through the self-governance of local actors. The discourse institutionalisations of the first resilience discourse are macro planning and measures that are inherently reactive, and materially and territorial focused. The second resilience discourse's logic moves beyond the ability to resist shock and restore equilibrium to focus instead on the ability of businesses, communities and individuals to self-organise terrorism prevention. The discourse institutionalisation of this discourse is thus the responsibility of local actors in terrorism preventions and coping with terrorism.

This approach to resilience describes a new form of equilibrium, where the civil population is held in constant fear and terrorism is the new normal that everyone needs to be prepared for. While the first discourse is based on pre-emption and precautionary actions, this discourse suggests a different response to risk and uncertainty (Hardy 2015). Pre-emption implies that risks are knowable and capable of being intercepted or, where threats are uncertain, that precautionary action should be taken to avert a risk to security (McCulloch and Pickering 2009; Zedner 2007). By contrast, this resilience discourse presupposes that individuals live with uncertainty and expect that terrorism can occur. Resilient individuals or local actors are those who expect the unexpected and are capable of responding to the threats (O'Malley 2010). Resilience thus becomes a sign, not of the occasional failure to predict, prevent, and manage the threat of terrorism. What is necessary instead is a "culture" of resilience (Walker and Cooper 2011, 154). By "integrating emergency preparedness into the infrastructures of everyday life and the psychology of citizens", governments may be indoctrinating citizens with a state of permanent civil anxiety (Ibid). Civilian populations are placed on a permanent war frontline in a constant

state of emergency, which is, according to Hardy (2015), precisely the kind of psychological consequence terrorists hope to achieve.

The continual need for resilience in the face of inevitable crises has the effect of constituting a resilient subject as "a subject that accepts the disastrousness of the world it lives in as a condition of partaking in that world" (Reid 2013, 355). Accordingly, resilient subjects are not political subjects but individuals and communities adjusting to external conditions. Consequently, this discourse advocates adaptation within existing structures rather than structural change or political aspects of resilience (Bulley 2013; Chandler 2013; Chandler and Reid 2016). According to this discourse, terrorism resilience necessitates accepting and adapting to the ubiquitous threat of terrorism rather than looking at root causes, political and structural explanations. Subsequently, instead of examining the political factors that produce terrorism, the resilient individual or community must prepare for, adapt to and live with terrorism as a ubiquitous threat. Thus, resilience-based policies are criticised by some scholars for being inherently conservative, as their purpose is to "maintain existing social structures in the face of external challenge" (MacKinnon and Derickson 2013, 259).

The discourse institutionalisation of this discourse is that resilience is fundamentally a matter of individuals and communities and requires local private–public partnerships. Thus, scholars have argued that unjustified responsibility is placed on communities at the expense of government liability (MacKinnon and Derickson 2013, 263), and local actors and individual citizens become a form of frontline defence. Hence, terrorism resilience becomes detached from the decisions of leaders and centralised decision-making.

Other scholars have pointed out that the downscaling of counterterrorism has occurred in parallel with the spread of neoliberalism which has increasingly made security into a commodity that is the responsibility of all levels of society, rather than codeterminous with national borders or existing in the context of a consensual international order (Ball 2011; Chandler 2013; Duffield 2011; Joseph 2013; MacKinnon and Derickson 2013; Reid 2013). These scholars claim that resilience is best understood as a neoliberal form of governmentality that places emphasis on individual adaptability as a form of self-reliance (Joseph 2013). As such, resilience is a cost-effective strategy in a time where many states face the depletion of funds, and therefore resilience has been criticised for its neoliberal character.

Resilience as management

The two first academic discourses are inherently critical of the notion of resilience in regard to terrorism. However, a growing body of literature offers normative theories and perspectives on how to manage the risk of terrorism. This literature builds on disciplines such as organisational studies, risk research and crisis management. For many decades, resilience has been used in organisational studies to describe how organisations can prepare for unexpected market changes and crises (see Alexander 2013; Weick and Sutcliffe 2011; Wildavsky 1998). In parallel, the risk and crisis management literature has been concerned with how to be able to perform risk assessments and to build robustness for uncertain and low-probability events often referred to as "black swans" (Aven 2015, 83). The commonality of these disciplines is that they for decades have been concerned with societies' increasing dependence upon complex and interconnected systems to

foster virtually all elements of modern life at the same time as new threats, such as terrorism, against these systems have emerged (Comfort, Boin, and Demchak 2010). As a result, criticism has been raised against traditional risk and crisis management approaches by scholars that claim that there is a need for a new paradigm that focuses more on uncertainty and how to handle new threats, such as terrorism (Aven 2015; Comfort, Boin, and Demchak 2010). As a response, several scholars from various disciplines have proposed resilience as the new management strategy for dealing with terrorism and other contemporary threats.

According to Anholt and Boersema (2018, 3), the turn to resilience as a management strategy signals a recognition of the fallibility of previous risk and crisis management approaches to deal with the new types of crisis and also a "belief in the possibility of controlling an uncertain world and prevent crises from happening if only the right mind-set and procedures are in place". From this perspective, resilience is a form of managing systems of complexity from unpredictable threats that can be achieved by following formalised procedures describing how to become resilient. Consequently, resilience is considered the solution for how to prepare for the unexpected and to manage uncertainty. Resilience is thus proposed as a way to build robustness even when threats are unknown and traditional risk estimates such as probabilities are hard to conduct. Aven (2017, 536), for example, claims that:

> This is the great attraction of resilience management. We do not need to know what type of events that can occur and express their likelihoods as needed in traditional risk assessments. In situations with large uncertainties, this is important as risk assessments then are not able to produce reliable probability estimates. It is of special relevance for complex systems, where it is acknowledged that surprises will occur. Resilience analysis and management are especially suited for confronting unknown and uncertain categories of events …

The management discourse deals with how actors at different societal levels can prepare for, avoid, handle and deal with the threat of terrorism, especially on an organisational scale by utilising specific methods or strategies. Resilience from this perspective means to have the ability or capacity to absorb the shock, adapt to the new reality and transform, in order to function either as before the crisis or in a superior manner (Keck and Sakdapolrak 2013). Accordingly, resilience is described as a system property that can be achieved through preparedness, adaption and learning.

Moreover, rather than an outcome, resilience is an ongoing process of "continual adaptive cycles of growth, accumulation, restructuring and renewal" (Welsh 2014, 15). Resilience is, therefore, an ongoing process for dealing with uncertainty and thus this understanding of resilience aligns with Holling's description of resilience in ecology, where the aim is not to reach a new stable state but to constantly adapt and find new forms of equilibria. In fact, a resilient system will from this perspective never reach an equilibrium, but constantly change and adapt to new realities (Leach, Stirling, and Scoones 2010). The complexity and system theories on which the discourse builds fit the description of the ecological concept of resilience because an important notion in this perceptive is that the systems need to be adaptable and flexible, in order to deal with unexpected threats.

As this approach is highly normative, the discourse institutionalisations of this discourse are the vast quantities of quantitative, semi-quantitative and qualitative

approaches proposed and deployed to develop and measure resilience at local, national, and international levels (Trump, Florin and Linkov 2018; British Standards 2014; ISO 28002:2011). This trend to standardise procedures for resilience is also found in disaster and community resilience (Tierney 2015). The resilient objects in this discourse are humans and their local community, organisations and the critical infrastructure that society relies on. Thus, the management discourse builds on both technological-engineering perspectives and social scientific perspectives.

Newer theories, such as resilience engineering, try to unite the technological and social aspects of resilience offering normative solutions to resilience enhancement. This perspective is described as an optimistic approach, allowing local actors to respond to crises as opposed to simply being subjects exposed to threats (Bergström, Van Winsen, and Henriqson 2015). Essential in this discourse is the belief that it is possible to manage risks, such as terrorism, through organisational procedures and decision-making, where the aim is to find acceptable solutions to a given risk problem. As such, the management discourse builds on the risk-management culture that dominated contemporary society. Thus, terrorism is conceptualised as a manageable, predictable and measurable phenomenon and, subsequently, a risk that could be minimised with the right prevention measures (Ericson 2006). Moreover, risk management involves simplification and depoliticisation of the highly complex and political phenomenon of terrorism (McCulloch and Dean 2015) and the standardised procedures developed for risk management can lead to greater focus on following procedures than on making a safer society. Additionally, the constant need to think resilience and update the resilience procedures serves as a constant reminder that terrorism is an omnipresent threat.

Resilience as bouncing forward: empowerment and social capital

While the former discourse sees resilience as positive active management, the literature within disaster management, social work and psychology that deals with community resilience and victims of terrorism has taken this positive element of resilience even further, describing resilience as empowerment, social capital and a new improved state.

For several decades, criminologists, crisis researchers, social workers and psychologists have observed that some individuals, neighbourhoods, communities, and societies manage adversities and respond and recover more effectively than others, and researchers have spent decades trying to understand why (MacDermid Wadsworth 2010; Tierney 2015). This ability to cope with crisis is referred to as resilience. Consequently, multiple scholars from various disciplines have embraced the resilience concept, focusing on why some nations, individuals or communities have the ability to cope with armed conflicts, political violence and terrorism.

However, the resilience concept is also applied to ordinary individuals that have not experienced trauma. In the 1990s, Martin Seligman, the president of the American Psychological Association advocated that study of "positive" human traits, talents, emotions, and activities, proposing that fostering them would enhance the wellbeing of both individuals and their communities (Seligman 1993, 2011; Seligman and Matthews 2011). Seligman referred to this as "positive psychology" and suggested that simple practices would suffice to further the human ability to "bounce back" from adversity. This literature is associated with the traditional psychological understanding, linking resilience to the

ability to overcome adversity. Subsequently, this research has focused on "the dynamic process where individuals show adaptive functioning in the face of significant adversity" (Schoon 2006, 6). Thus, the concept of resilience has been used to describe a positive outcome, despite experiencing adversity, as a continued positive functioning in adverse circumstances, or as recovery after significant trauma in line with the psychological definition of resilience.

This perspective sees resilience as a form of system characteristic that can be strengthened or weakened. The discourse institutionalisations of this discourse are practical training programmes designed to live with and manage the threat of terrorism. In the aftermath of 9/11, the concept of psychological resilience became prominent across the American mental health community. They sought to define "a capacity that Western minds and societies needed to develop in order to recover and continue functioning in the face of what they conceived as global terrorism" (Brunner and Plotkin Amrami 2019, 220). The focus on individuals' resilience was transformed to a mass-scale through training practices designed to enhance an inner strength and flexibility for individuals such as US soldiers and their families but also for the broader public. In 2002, the American Psychological Association posted the brochure "The Road to Resilience". The target audience was civil society and the aims were to communicate to civil society how to avoid being traumatised by the events of 9/11 and to build the capacity in the general population to learn how to bounce back from such a traumatic event (American Psychological Association 2002, sect., 1).

The implication of building individual psychological resilience on a mass scale was not to cure the mental traumas triggered by 9/11 but to build a mental capacity to cope with and bounce back from this event and future terrorist attacks. Instead of focusing on the negative effects and the suffering of mental disorders, resilience training programmes were designed to strengthen the ability of the healthy individual to withstand adversities. This tendency to build psychological resilience was not only restricted to the US; after the 7/7 attacks in London, the UK followed a similar trajectory. Consequently, the concept of resilience is no longer associated with pathology and therapy but with building strength. This is what Brunner and Plotkin Amrami (2019, 234) refer to as "post-therapeutic" resilience. The resilient subject is self-aware, problem-solving, autonomous, optimistic, physically and mentally fit, as well as rooted in the community. The resilient individual places no burden on the state, even if a terrorist attack occurs. Thus, the post-therapeutic subject aligns with the neoliberal perspective critique of resilience (Ball 2011; Chandler 2013; Duffield 2011; Joseph 2013; MacKinnon and Derickson 2013; Reid 2013).

This discourse captures more than resistance and getting back to the status quo. It is not enough for an individual or community to survive, cope and return to normal. Inherent in the resilience concept lies the expectation that individuals and society cannot only bounce back. They should also "bounce forward" and reach newer and better states. Resilience focuses on strengths and opportunities and has intuitive appeal because it focuses on strengths rather than weaknesses (Walsh-Dilley and Wolford 2015). This is in line with how resilience is described in multiple social science disciplines and by the UN, which has linked resilience to empowerment, stating that resilience holds special interest for marginalised and disaster-affected individuals and communities (Manyena 2006).

Resilience described as empowerment is also found in criminology, where some scholars have argued that resilience can improve current understandings about the

impact of crime on marginalised groups and emphasise the capacity not merely to survive in the face of adversity but to triumph over it and successfully recover (Mason and Pulvirenti 2013; Walklate 2011). Studies of resilience in the post-disaster response context see group and network emergence and change, improvisation, and creativity as indicators of community resilience (Kendra and Wachtendorf 2003; Kendra, Wachtendorf, and Quarantelli 2002). Consequently, the disaster management literature binds the resilience of communities and individuals that cope well with disasters such as terrorism to social capital. Important elements of social capital are community competence, effective communication, economic development, social support and embeddedness, collective efficacy, creativity in solving community problems, trust in information sources, and economic diversification (Aldrich 2012).

This understanding of resilience has been criticised by many scholars. Some claim that the focus on social capital reinforces existing social inequalities because some individuals are better placed than others to respond to crisis and adversity (Tierney 2013). Additionally, Brunner and Plotkin Amrami (2019) claim that, with the mental strength element of resilience and the connection to the ability of soldiers, affected individuals and communities to "bounce back" from trauma, the concept of resilience carries the danger of re-stigmatising service-members and victims of terrorism that suffer from a long-term post-traumatic disorder (PTSD) as lacking the strength to recover due to personal issues. Ultimately, this could legitimise blaming the victims of trauma for their mental suffering. While resilience approaches may not pin a disorder on individuals in the same way that, for example, PTSD has, they are still individualising technologies in the sense that they responsibilize individuals for being resilient in the face of traumatic events (Howell 2012). As such, the positive psychology and resilience are not just tools of empowerment, but a political project where individuals are responsible for their well-being, even when facing a terrorist attack.

Resilience as refraining from extreme ideas

The commonality of the aforementioned discourses is that they predominantly focus on potential targets of terrorism or counterterrorism subjects. However, the concept of resilience is also applied to potential terrorists and terrorists themselves.

During recent decades, there has been a growing focus on home-grown terrorism and how to prevent terrorism by focusing on root causes. Such approaches to countering terrorism are nowadays regarded as a necessary element of an effective and comprehensive counterterrorism strategy (Aly 2013). Thus, in recent years, there has been a rapid growth in research directed towards preventing violent extremism that has resulted in a body of literature spanning multiple disciplines. This literature frequently uses the resilience concept on multiple scales for how to prevent radicalisation. Moreover, the resilience concept is proposed as the basis for a common framework for the prevention of radicalisation (Stephens, Sieckelinck, and Boutellier 2019). This approach to terrorism conceptualises resilience as "the relation between terrorism and the social factors that can facilitate, enhance or block the terrorism threat" (Lucini 2017, 99), or as a form of psychological robustness that makes potential terrorists refrain from radicalised ideas and the willingness to use violence as a political means.

One prominent theme in this literature is that violent extremism can be prevented by developing some psychological capacity, skill or characteristic in individuals that prevents them from being drawn towards violent extremist ideologies or groups. These capabilities, skills and characteristics are often referred to as resilience (Stephens, Sieckelinck, and Boutellier 2019). From these perspectives, resilience is an ability that can be learned and encompasses critical thinking, empathy development, value buildings, that is, human rights and learning to accept diverse opinions (Feddes, Mann, and Doosje 2015). These interpretations of resilience build on the definitions of resilience found in social work, criminology and psychology, where the resilience concept has been utilised to conceptualise resistance or disruption of criminal behaviour (Juby and Farrington 2001; Hayden, Williamson, and Webber 2006). The idea is that by creating strong, critical, or flexible individuals, terrorism can be prevented. In this discourse, resilience is equivalent to refraining from extreme ideas. Subsequently, resilience is to have personal inner strengths and mental robustness.

The psychological understanding of resilience has thus spread to radicalisation and crime prevention. Resilience describes a process in which people can overcome or resist negative influences that block emotional well-being or as “a good outcome despite risk experiences” (Euer et al. 2014, 8). Resilience being seen through this frame means that individuals who are conceived of as “deficient or lacking” in resilience become the target of psychological interventions (Aranda et al. 2012, 551). Resilience becomes a characteristic that can be thought and internalised (Bonnell et al. 2011). Thus, the resilient objects in this discourse are attitudes, values and ideas of potential terrorists. According to this perspective, resilience is about sharing the same political attitudes as the mainstream community (Hardy 2015).

The assumption of terrorism that this approach is founded on is the idea that terrorism is a product of social, economic, and political inequalities and that these disparities motivate violent dissent. The idea is that alienated and marginalised individuals are more likely to engage with radical groups when they are isolated from the broader community or suffering mentally (Aly 2013). Thus, discourse institutionalisations of this discourse are networks at the community level.

Many terrorism researchers have welcomed the increased focus on communities and civil society in counter-radicalisation. Accordingly, government-centric efforts regarding counterterrorism lack credibility and, therefore, communities and local governments are better situated to have the knowledge about what measures are required at a local level to prevent radicalisation. Dalgaard-Nielsen and Schack (2016), for example, claim that families and trust-based networks, including local government, are the major sources of resilience in regard to violent extremism. They suggest a definition of resilience in this context as

> a community’s ability to leverage social capital understood as the existence of stable trust-based relationships and networks among the actors (civil society, local government, local businesses) to detect radicalization risks, prevent the recruitment of community members into violent extremism, and bounce back after instances of recruitment via learning and adaptability that permits the community to better limit future recruitment. (Dalgaard-Nielsen and Schack 2016, 310)

As illustrated in this definition, this literature, in line with the previous discourse, also links resilience to social capital. However, social capital in this discourse is described as the

existence of stable trust-based relationships and networks among the actors of a community, including local authorities (Ahmed et al. 2004). The notion of this research is that terrorism is a result of vulnerable, marginalised individuals who drift into terrorism as a result of finding some sort of community to belong to. Thus, by creating resilient communities, terrorism can be prevented. This literature draws on the perspectives found in disaster research and social work for how to build community resilience (Ellis and Abdi 2017).

The notion that radicalisation is caused by social problems, such as alienation and disaffection, has paved the way for the empowerment perspective, associated with criminology, psychology, disaster management and social work, to enter the radicalisation domain. Thus, by empowering the social and political agency of young people, terrorism can be prevented (Weeks 2018). This is probably a reason why the concept of resilience is so widespread in the radicalisation literature; it offers a view of prevention that recognises the potential and agency of individuals and communities. Additionally, by connecting the resilience concept to social capital and empowerment, the focus shifts from surveillance of suspects to a focus on strengths rather than deficits. This perspective is probably more appealing to the local actors carrying out the resilience work such as teachers, social workers and youth workers.

In recent years, an emerging academic debate, questioning the premise of resilience strategies that promote inclusivity, social harmony and attitude building, has occurred. Many scholars question whether such strategies will actually counter terrorism. First, some scholars question the relation between attitudes and terrorism, claiming that individuals can be radicalised and never engage in violence. They may also continue to be radical even after disengaging with violent extremist groups. Moreover, this approach risks misinterpreting violent extremism as a manifestation of irrational or radicalised behaviour and thus sees radicalisation as a product of individual and social factors rather than political factors (Aly 2013). Second, resilience-based policies are criticised for being "mass psychological resistance to terrorist ideology" (Hardy 2015, 87) and attempting to inculcate self-discipline as a method of governmental control because resilience relies on students' and young peoples' ability to internalise psychologically specific opinions and becoming well-disciplined subjects (Ball 2011; Hardy 2015). Third, some scholars criticise this approach to terrorism because local and public institutions (including schools, hospitals and religious communities) have become the extensions of the security services, helping to identify individuals who might become terrorists (Hardy 2015). Fourth, resilience strategies can lead to the stigmatisation of communities perceived as dangerous and delimit political and religious freedom of choice (Thomas 2010).

Discussion: resilience has transformed counterterrorism measures to a positive, depoliticised necessity

The starting point of this study was that resilience is an interdiscursive phenomenon, and five different discourses have been outlined that vary in how they constitute the resilient object and what it means to become resilient. Terrorism resilience implies being able to accept the threat and live with fear, to protect possible terrorist targets and infrastructures, to be prepared and to cope with terrorism, to be able to bounce forward to a new improved state, and it is the key to hindering potential terrorists from becoming

radicalised. The multi–interpretability of terrorism resilience illustrates the usefulness of resilience as a storyline; with its positive connotations, it is almost impossible to disagree with the terrorism resilience project. The resilience concept functions as a positive idea that enables communication across disciplines and discourses and that can smooth the way for collaboration. The substantiations of resilience found in the English written academic literature support an idea of the Western world as a decentralised network society of interrelated communities that prepare themselves for catastrophic terrorism. Hence, resilience supports a Western ideology on how to deal with the threat of terrorism and describes terrorism as a ubiquitous inevitable threat.

Thus, in the resilience concept lies a promise that we can learn to live with terrorism, although we cannot expect to see the end of it. As such, resilience moves the focus away from the political aspects of terrorism, directing the focus towards individuals and communities as the locus for change. The implications of this could be the neglect of attention to important structural challenges that cause terrorism, and relieving Western states of responsibility for conditions and injustices that may be giving rise to extremism. Instead of resisting and demanding the end of terrorism, the resilient individual adapts and develops coping strategies.

Many scholars see securitisation, omnipresence of terrorism and its prevention as part of a terrorism discourse. Consequently, the forms of resilience described in this study are in themselves part of the broader terrorism discourse. Thus, it is not only the resilience discourses but terrorism's imminent threat presence central in the conceptualisations of resilience that has paved the way for the discourse institutionalisations related to resilience. Additionally, there are some commonalities in how resilience is substantiated in the five discourses that go beyond the perception of terrorism as an omnipresent threat. They all support particular types of civil society–state relationships, and privilege local solutions to the threat of terrorism. Resilience thus is a move away from traditional security planning where counterterrorism has been the responsibility of state agencies; counterterrorism is no longer something extraordinary and related to specific high-risk objects. Through the storyline of resilience, counterterrorism has become depoliticised and normalised, and the multifaceted discourses that make up the resilient project lay the grounds for multiple discourse institutionalisations that all together entail that counterterrorism has become an aspect of almost all aspects of our daily lives.

Because of the positive connotations of resilience, bottom-up approaches to counterterrorism have been presented as something positive and thus there is a danger that these approaches have not been as critically examined as they should be. Historically, the implementation of counterterrorism measures has been controversial. The counterterrorism measures implemented as a result of 9/11 were debated and criticised, especially the military war on terrorism, surveillance, fortification of public spaces and new terrorism legislation. The argument for implementing these measures was that to achieve security, civil liberties had to be sacrificed.

When counterterrorism is seen through the lens of resilience it is framed through a positive connotation and many of the local actors that carry out the local counterterrorism role have welcomed the increased focus on communities and civil society in counterterrorism (Sjøen and Jore 2019). Accordingly, government-centric efforts regarding counterterrorism lack credibility and, consequently, communities and local actors are better situated to have the knowledge on what measures are required at a local level to

prevent radicalisation. Since the counterterrorism measures legitimated through the lens of resilience are dialogue, equality, empowerment, social justice and building robust citizens that thrive in their local community, the counterterrorism measures are in line with what most citizens consider positive elements. Thus, counterterrorism measures are no longer described as a negative that has to be weighed against civil liberties in order to gain security from terrorism. Quite the opposite, counterterrorism in the form of preventing radicalisation and creating robust communities has now become a means to achieve civil liberties, human rights and democracy. In this way, the positive connotation of the resilience concept disguises that all counterterrorism measures have negative side-effects, also the ones that are implemented to foster resilience.

In all of the five discourses outlined in this article, resilience is described as something positive. Because the academic literature exclusively applies the resilience concept to the social units that we want to protect, such as societies, communities, and vulnerable individuals, the literature totally fails to see that social units that are not considered a positive element can also be highly resilient. There are many social systems, such as terrorist groups or totalitarian states, which can be regarded as highly resilient, despite not being a desired state for most people. The positive connotation of resilience serves an ideological purpose. The resilience concepts also function as a frame that describes who are the innocent targets of terrorism and what units and values should be protected. Moreover, the academic literature describes different ways that social units can become resilient, but the literature fails to describe what it means not to be resilient. This is problematic from a scientific point of view. How can we know if something is resilient or not if we do not know what it means to not be resilient? This turns resilient into a utopian goal that cannot be measured and it becomes impossible to falsify the concept empirically.

Given the diverse meanings of the concept of resilience in regard to terrorism, and its extremely positive connotations, there is every reason to claim that the resilience concept serves more the role of cultural metaphor or utopian dream than that of a scientific concept that can lead to a safer society. This analysis of the resilience object shows that the resilience concept is applied to nations, societies, communities, municipalities, critical infrastructure, buildings, individuals, businesses, the city, victims of terrorism, terrorists, potential terrorists and the whole population. Consequently, it seems that the current understanding of resilience is that almost everything should be resilient. If all these social, physical and technical units can have resilience, it seems that resilience is applied to almost everything and thus the concept is rendered meaningless. The resilience concept hence becomes a concept that describes almost everything related to terrorism, and thus it describes nothing.

Conclusions

In this article, five different discourses in the academic literature that contain different descriptions of what it means to be resilient in regard to terrorism have been outlined. The resilience concept is applied to nations, cities, communities, organisations, critical infrastructure, potential terrorists and victims of terrorism. Consequently, it is evident that almost everything should be resilient to terrorism and thus the concept becomes so broad that it functions more as a utopian goal than a scientific concept. The major problem in the literature on terrorism resilience is that it fails to describe what it means

to be not resilient and thus it becomes impossible to falsify the concept. Additionally, the positive connotation embedded in the concept of resilience is problematic because it normalises the view that terrorism is a ubiquitous omnipresent threat and that terrorism is the new normal. It downplays the political factors of terrorism and legitimates a broad spectre of counterterrorism measures on multiple levels of society.

Concepts are critical to the functioning and evolution of science, but there is reason to question whether the resilience concept with its ambiguity and multi–interpretability will contribute to an evolution in how to actually make us safer from terrorism. In its current state, resilience has become a scientific umbrella concept, serving ideological purposes and the positive connotations of resilience have caused a lack of debate regarding counterterrorism measures. Consequently, terrorism researchers should critically consider this concept, rather than merrily accepting that resilience is the favourable solution to the contemporary threat of terrorism.

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Notes on contributor

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