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A Tale of Terror: Autoethnography and the Study of Terrorism

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ABSTRACT

Although terrorism is the only form of violence named after an emotion, terror, there appears to be negligible attention paid to comprehending and analysing this core emotion. Due in large part to the unique subjective factors of terror, there is immense difficulty in quantifying the emotion. Similarly, attempts to qualify emotions using qualitative methodologies are underexplored. This paper presents autoethnography as a legitimate, viable, and ethical research method for the study of terror in terrorism. The author advances a first person account of the experience of terror from a recognised terrorist attack in Istanbul in 2016. The intention is to provide a starting point for understanding the emotional complexities of terror, its unique qualities, and the inherent problems of researching and analysing such an emotion. The paper argues for the need to understand the emotion of terror, the unique characteristics that make the study difficult, how autoethnography can overcome such obstacles, and illustrates the point with a detailed accounting of personal experience of a terrorist attack.

Introduction: Terrorism, terror and emotions

Terrorism is the only form of violence named after an emotion: *terror*. Despite this unique characteristic, the field of Terrorism Studies appears to have paid negligible attention to comprehending and analysing this core emotion. Wilkinson, in one of the foundational texts of the field, argued that it is "the interplay of . . . subjective factors and individual irrational, and often unconscious responses that makes the state of terror, extreme fear or dread a particularly difficult concept for empirical social scientists to handle."[1] In other words, there is immense difficulty in quantifying the terror of terrorism. Similarly, attempts to "qualify," i.e., using qualitative studies, to understand terror are under-explored.

Presented here is a first-person account of experiencing a recognised terrorist attack. The intention is to provide a starting point for understanding the emotional complexities of 'terror' and its unique qualities. Rather than merely telling a story, the paper follows an autoethnographic rubric to provide a more analytical framework. Given the extreme situations of terrorist attacks, the paper provides a justification for autoethnography as a legitimate, viable, and ethical method for researching the terror of terrorism. Terror, being an emotion, is deeply subjective: what is terrifying for one may be inconsequential for someone else. This being the case, purely objective methods of research are unlikely to fully encapsulate the relative importance of understanding the terror of terrorism.

Studies[2] on emotions in state-society relations note the unquantifiable and ephemeral nature of subjective emotions, stressing the need to use methods usually not associated with social sciences. Terror is not the only emotion associated with terrorism with a host of other emotions and emotional language deeply embedded in the field, including: fear, revenge, disgust, horror, shock, anger, sorrow,

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grief (personal, communal, national). Many articles on emotions in International Relations (IR) or related scholarship often use terrorism examples to illustrate points. However, the core emotion at the heart of it all—terror—is not examined in any detail. Terrorism Studies is replete with emotional references: terrorists are often presented as 'fanatical,' 'irrational' or even 'evil'; while reactions to attacks likewise are termed 'anxious,' 'fearful,' 'sorrow' and so on. Political leaders are known to make emotional appeals when responding to terrorist attacks and sometimes politicians can draw the publics' ire if they do not appear to be emotional 'enough.'[3]

Emotions are regularly juxtaposed with rationality across various academic fields. Sometimes emotions are studied as deviations from expected 'rational actor models.'[4] However, Feminist methodological critiques[5] interrogate this supposed binary, delineating how 'reason' and 'rationality' are associated with dominant groups in social hierarchies, while emotions are associated with the marginal and less powerful. Discussed in the detailed case below, note is made of several instances where the 'rational' and the 'emotional' cannot be separated, especially in situations of incomplete information.

Throughout the discussion, 'emotions' are taken to mean "conscious manifestations of bodily feelings"[6] that can also have social and collective dimensions. Additionally, emotions can be understood to include a form of "strategic appraisals meant to enable successful responses to immediate circumstances."[7] This is to say that emotions are not only a mind-body relationship, but that such a relationship can be driven by reactions to external events.

Terrorism and terror can both occur on the microscopic-level of biochemistry by way of the human body's response-release of adrenaline and similar, through to the global-level of states and international organisations. Terrorism is simultaneously a psychological, psychiatric,[8] and physical form of violence. The physical violence of a terrorist attack is a distillate, a highly potent concentration of violence that indirectly targets a specific emotional response in an audience who are not necessarily the direct victim(s). Compared with more conventional political violence, say war of attrition, with a strategy of wearing down an opponent's material and manpower to wage war, terrorism primarily weaponises an emotion to advance a political goal. Terrorism is psychological in the sense of pertaining to emotions, "Terrorism is about psychology . . .. It is about making ordinary people feel vulnerable, anxious, confused, uncertain, and helpless."[9] To which I would add 'terrified.' The psychiatric violence of terrorism is in the sense of pertaining to the interplay between the evoked emotions and the resultant effects on physical health.

From a psychiatric perspective, an experience of the emotion of terror can cause distinct biochemical events—such as release of adrenaline—which can lead to long-term negative memory formations.[10] However, not everyone who experiences the same event will have the same psychiatric reactions, nor necessarily develop long-term symptoms. Traumatic events where we might experience moments of extreme danger have unique physical effects on our brains. These effects include "rapid and stereotypical defensive behaviours, sharpen perceptions, and prepare memory circuitry to record the circumstances in which the danger has been experienced so that it can be avoided in the future."[11] When the recollection of these memories cause bouts of fear, anxiety, and other physiological symptoms for an individual, they might developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).[12]

Understanding the role of emotions of the perpetrators or terrorists themselves is rightly of concern too. Previous studies note the particular roles of rage[13] and frustration in fomenting the resort to terrorism.[14] The emotions of victims and survivors have tended to be examined by psychological and psychiatric literature with a focus on PTSD and the longer term mental health effects. Understanding the emotion of terror is of concern to those in public health research[15] and how officials could or should respond. As I was later to learn in psychiatric therapy, medical research suggests that timely treatment with a "β-adrenergic blocker (a drug that blocks the effects of adrenaline on its β-adrenergic receptors) . . . might prevent the enhancing effects of emotional arousal on long-term memory."[16] Doing so disrupts the processes of memory formation which can lessen the chances of developing PTSD.

Even in the more critical approaches to the study of terrorism, the depth of research centred on victims and survivors of attacks is not matched by their centrality to the subsequent political

rhetoric.[17] An open question remains as to whether or not an individual needs to have experienced the emotion of terror, or fear to a lesser extent, for an act to count as an instance of terrorism. In other words: If a pipe-bomb explodes and no one is around to feel terrified, did terrorism happen? Identifying and understanding the victim and survivor experiences of 'terror' are crucial to understanding the essence, nature or phenomenon of 'terrorism.'

Numerous studies[18] of emotions associated with terrorism refer to fear and, to a lesser extent, anger. Fear can be both quantified and qualified in large studies[19] and yield interesting results. However, the phenomenon is not called "fearism" which is an indication of the qualitative difference between fear and terror. For example, Vasilopoulos notes "[f]ear and anger are triggered in threatening situations and are primary emotions evoked by a terrorist attack,"[20] but that which separates terrorism from other forms of political violence—the emotion of terror—remains largely unexamined. What is missing in this observation is a qualifying of who experiences these emotions. Vasilopoulos does refer to the wider society and their reactions to attacks, but this raises the issue of what the immediate victims and survivors experience emotionally.

Terror is both transient and long-term. Transient is that it lasts for a moment in time (seconds, hours or days), but its effects can last a life-time in the form of PTSD. From the perspective of victims, terrorist attacks appear random and unpredictable, further hindering researchers' objective methods of analysis. Conducting before-and-after studies of a sample population are nigh impossible save for random chance.[21] Studies on emotion and their subjective nature present challenges, according to Koschut, because "we have neither direct access to emotional states and intentions nor can we retrieve the emotional reception and experience of agents."[22] The primary reason for this paper is to provide an example of first-person experience of terror from a terrorist attack. However, the autoethnographic process of providing rich detail of the event might also be of value to researchers interested in the micro-dynamics of terrorist attacks or the banality of bureaucratic responses in the subsequent moments and hours.

Terrorism studies scholarship is evidently concerned with the emotions surrounding terrorists and terrorism with a discernible yearning to comprehend terror's inherent subjectivity. Autoethnography can provide a legitimate means to viably explore the unique subjective elements of emotions, and can do so without the ethical concerns to which other forms of ethnographic research are prone. The aim of advancing autoethnography is not to provide a challenge to the accepted epistemological culture of Terrorism Studies, but rather to provide an additional method and highlight its value in providing knowledge that otherwise would be excluded.

Origins of autoethnography

The academic and disciplinary origins of autoethnography firmly root its legitimacy as a research method. While the method does stand in contrast to more orthodox, positivist, and quantitative methods it presents a rubric for producing useful knowledge. Such knowledge production are most keenly felt in areas where the more favoured orthodox methods cannot gain access. The origins of the method lie in the wider social sciences' Critical Approaches, especially Feminism and Post-Colonialism, and the critiques of the inherent power dynamics of ethnography.[23] While we may strive for objectivity, pure objectivity is impossible[24] as the role "of the author cannot be erased."[25] Autoethnography has long been practiced in other fields such as by historians, travel-writers, and journalists,[26] but not so much by researchers in "the human disciplines."[27]

Such a realisation drives calls for greater reflexivity in many methodologies, notably those related to Feminism and Post-Colonialism. Moreover, with foundations in Feminism, autoethnography incorporates an ethic of care[28] in addressing issues of societal problems and justice, with a primacy of emotional experience. Much of this drive for reflexivity and author-awareness runs counter to the positivist methodologies in IR and related disciplines. King, Keohane and Verba have long posited against the use of personal experiences, with no concern for individual opinions, only what can be

tangibly demonstrated.[29] Any attempt to introduce personal experience as reliable knowledge does open the way criticisms of objectivity, academic rigour, and how such knowledge can be verified.[30]

Some would counter that holding autoethnography to a positivist standard of reliable knowledge is misguided. Rather, autoethnography could be evaluated using metrics[31] such as literary, affect, aesthetics or contributions to activism.[32] Considering these alternative metrics, autoethnography is often criticised for "being too artful and not scientific, or too scientific and not sufficiently artful."[33] As autoethnography is both a research process and product, the practitioner is then placed in the convergence point between the epistemological and ontological processes of research.[34]

Even if one could objectively measure a subjective emotion and experience, that would not necessarily discount the academic value of a first-person account to further enhance our collective understanding and appreciation of the experience of terror. Brigg and Bleiker, for instance suggest that for a discipline such as IR, evaluating autoethnographic knowledge can be determined by the author's "ability to generate new and valuable insights for particular knowledge communities."[35]

Purpose of autoethnography

One of the expressed purposes of autoethnography is to provide a form of "insider knowledge,"[36] which is to say that a writer can convey knowledge and experience that "outsiders" may not be able to gain. Someone who has direct knowledge or experience of an event or system can share these issues in ways that others might not be able to. This is not to say that such articulations are more truthful or accurate, rather the information may offer a novel approach or interpretation that might not otherwise be shared.

Autoethnography has been used for a range of lived experiences from the quotidian to "more sensitive topics where embarrassment, stigma, injustice, or danger are issues."[37] In some ways, the writing of an autoethnography is not a single, once-off, project but a learning process[38] for the writer that will continue indefinitely as one reflects on the writing over time.

An additional purpose of autoethnography stems from its origins in Critical Approaches to conventional ethnography and purports to demonstrate a clearer link between observers and their conclusions. In particular, there is a strong impetus to write against harmful ethnographies by cultural "outsiders" who "try to take advantage of, or irresponsibly regulate, other cultures."[39] Concomitantly, autoethnography can be a way for writers to note aspects of intersectional identities beyond existing classifications.[40] Doing so provides writers with a forum in which to reflect on their roles as both the researchers and subjects of events or experiences.

A third goal of autoethnography as a method, and importantly for the field of Terrorism Studies, is the intention to "describe moments of everyday experience that cannot be captured through more traditional methods."[41] To study the experience of terror as it happens is nigh impossible by most research methods. As researchers we cannot study the emotion of terror or the experience of a terror attack in a laboratory setting. While more conventional ethnography methods, such as interviews, could assist in our understanding, there are several ethics considerations relating to intentionally subjecting participants who may have PTSD to reliving traumatic events.

In a similar vein, Brigg and Bleiker content that a significant contribution of autoethnographic research is a step towards centring the examination of political problems over the restrictions of disciplinary-based conventions.[42] Provided the generated insights engage with discernible disciplines or knowledge communities. Moreover, autoethnography may be especially warranted when examining political issues that would otherwise be precluded.[43] For a knowledge community such as Terrorism Studies, strict adherence to conventions of evaluating research would make the study of the subjective experience of terror out of the question. Using personal narratives as research functions by authors inviting readers into their world,[44] to share their experiences and analysis of those

experiences as a means to reflect on particular events (in this case) and to better understand them from a more subjective perspective.

Autoethnography as a method

A subjective experience, like terror, necessitates a research method capable of incorporating the subjective as a core element rather than methods that seek to diminish subjectivity in pursuit of pure objectivity. Where ethnography is concerned, absolute objectivity is impossible. An embrace of the subjective is at the core of autoethnography's viability as a method of research. There have been a handful of studies utilising autoethnography in studies related to terrorism, most notably two studies by John Tulloch[45] drawn from his experiences of being a victim of the July 7, 2005 bombings in London ("7/7"). Tulloch notes being "both a close-up survivor of terrorist attack in London on 7/7 and at the same time an academic in media/risk sociology, I was unusually positioned . . .."[46] As a researcher of both the media and risk, Tulloch's studies concern how the media have used his story in different ways for their own ends, and the how the event has impacted his perceptions of risk.

Two other studies utilise autoethnography to depict events related to their occupations as terrorism researchers. Liela Jamjoom's study[47] delineates an Othering experience when presenting research on terrorism studies at a conference; and James Fitzgerald[48] provides an account of the trouble of travelling with terrorism research materials. As yet, autoethnography has not been used to centre the *terror* of a terrorist attack.

Autoethnography is part autobiography, part ethnography. Conceptually, autoethnography can be defined as "a research method that uses personal experience ('auto') to describe and interpret ('graphy') cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and practices ('ethno')."[49] It is both a research process and the product of such a process.[50]

When writing an autoethnography, the aim is to create a text incorporating elements of storytelling with the intent to "create evocative and specific representations of the culture/cultural experience and *to give audiences a sense of how being there in the experience feels.*"[51] In other words, the creative intention is to immerse the reader in the experiences of the author specifically to make these experiences relatable or familiar to those who have not experienced them. Particular attention is paid to utilising of "thick, vivid, and concrete descriptions"[52] to convey the experiences.

For autoethnographers, the core questions driving the writing are "who reads our work, how are they affected by it, and how does it keep a conversation going?"[53] Placing the reactions of the reader at the fore necessitates the practitioner utilising "literary craft, persuasive logic and personal/cultural thick description."[54] Moreover, as the product is intended to be a "felt-text," the practitioner ought to have both rhetorical and literary skill, and, importantly, the "courage . . . to be vulnerable in rendering scholarship."[55]

The method has often been used in cases where other, more established, methods are lacking or where marginalised voices have not be heard. Autoethnography has been used to "*provide alternatives to dominant, taken-for-granted, and harmful cultural scripts, stories, and stereotypes.*"[56] Practitioners of autoethnography can be viewed as participant-observers with an extreme form of insider knowledge, with "a complete membership role, and deep engagement and immersion in the scene."[57] An additional distinct difference between participant-observation and autoethnography is that the former is determined in advance of the research, with research clearance and protocols established before entering the field. Given the subject matters of autoethnographies, such advance planning is not practical or completely impossible.

Autoethnography can "offer accounts of personal experience to complement, or fill gaps in, existing research"[58] or provide a forum in which to use "personal experience to advance sociological understanding."[59] In this sense, autoethnography can offer a means to reliably incorporate the study of the subject experience of terror into the wider field of terrorism studies. Autoethnography offers a means of validating personal experiences as a source of reliable knowledge. What separates

autoethnography from autobiography, according to Allen, is "that you are a researcher. You have a set of theoretical and methodological tools and a research literature to use. That's your advantage."[60] The analysis of the experience elevates autoethnography above that of mere anecdotal evidence as the story (or anecdote) is not used to support a claim. Rather the introspection and analysis of the story is a means to provide insight for a particular topic or discipline.

Suggestions for guidelines and core elements of autoethnography include the following.[61] First, openness and vulnerability to different forms of knowledge. Second, drawing from a range of sensations and intuitions to gather information. Third, including sources of data that highlight the presence of the author. Autoethnographers intend for their readers to share the experiences, feelings and sensations of the author.[62] In order to accomplish this higher level of engagement and sharing with the reader, authors seek "to communicate not only the immediacy, the physicality and emotionality of the experience, but also its psychological and social elements, the internal dialogue of the writer with her/himself, and also to situate the experience with its wider structural context."[63]

When writing an autoethnography, authors ought to "strive to create a visceral life-world and a charged emotional and intellectual atmosphere; a relationship of mutual responsibility among subjects, authors and readers; aesthetic and analytical strategies that generate opportunities for dialogue (rather than an exhibition of mystery)."[64] An invitation for dialogue plays a significant role in comprehending and analysing terror for autoethnography. For it will be through discussions with others who have experienced terror that the field of Terrorism Studies can come to an understanding of this central emotion.

The process of autoethnography is to "retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity. However, in addition to telling about experiences, autoethnographers often are required by social science publishing conventions to analyse these experiences."[65] The reliance on retrospective and selective memories, however, does open the door for the reliability of those memories.[66] Moreover, there are several studies[67] showing the unreliability of eyewitness accounts, especially in legal settings. Such arguments notwithstanding, the first-hand accounts are intended to give evidence of the subjective experience, not to provide the objective truth of the events.

The nature of autoethnography and its reliance on deeply personal introspection is not necessarily an easy method to master, and can be more challenging than other qualitative methods.[68] There are number of ethical points that complicate the seemingly straightforward method, and are discussed in more detail below. Nevertheless, this paper centres not on the objective accounting of the events in Istanbul, rather the subjective experience of them and how those experiences still influence my daily behaviour and thoughts.

As a method, autoethnography shares some similarities with that of the widely recognised participate-observation studies. However, the fundamental difference is autoethnography's absence of pre-planning for the study. Given the secrecy in planning and indiscriminate nature of terrorist attacks, not to mention the inordinate risk a researcher would place themselves in, utilising typical research methods becomes absurd when considering their viability.

Ethics and autoethnography

Autoethnography may well be the only ethical way of studying terror. Other ethnographic methods, such as interviews, could be of value, however, considering the deeply traumatic events researchers ought to be mindful of possible harm to respondents. Recounting and remembering moments of terror carry an inherent risk of re-traumatising individuals. Traumatic memories are uniquely coded in our brains and bodies, so unless one has learnt how to disassociate memories with physical reactions —via PTSD therapy for example—interviewing survivors of terrorism entails a significant risk of causing harm to respondents.

There are studies based on interviews of survivors of terrorist attacks, with particular emphasis on PTSD aspects,[69] however these tend to be pursued by psychology and psychiatry,

and framed in the context of treatment. Asking survivors to relive traumatic episodes and engaging deeply with the emotion of terror—outside a context of treatment first—raises innumerable ethical questions. Some medical research[70] suggests that debriefing survivors in the immediately aftermath of a traumatic event, such as a terrorist attack, has the potential to worsen PTSD symptoms, particularly if the individual is still experiencing high levels of adrenaline.

At first approach, autoethnography may appear to have almost no research ethics hurdles to overcome. However, as some authors have noted, writing about one's personal life does include others[71] in the narrative, either directly or indirectly, which any autoethnographer ought to be aware. Second, there are elements of harm to consider. Open disclosure of personal issues can have effects on professional and personal lives. Again, these effects are not necessarily only limited to the author.

As a research method, autoethnography has the potential to minimise some of the ethical difficulties arising from covert research topics, or where research participates could be harmed.[72] Being aware of the potential to cause harm to one's self is important and relevant when doing autoethnography, and an issue confronted by other autoethnographers. On the one hand, the norms and assessments of autoethnography have broadened, yet on the other hand, there are still no ways to speak about one's pain or loss without doing harm to the self.[73] Chatham-Carpenter,[74] for example, provides a detailed account of the emotional and mental strain that research on particular topics can cause. In this instance, Chatham-Carpenter uses a strategy of giving a 'voice' to the cause of pain. Whilst helpful for some, such a strategy is not something I can do with the lingering memory of terror. I can visualise it as a dark abyss that slowly grows, consuming my mind's eye the longer I dwell on it. For this writing, though, I do need to dwell on it, let my mind explore the abyss, without losing control and trying to remember my safety bubble.[75]

My decision to write about my experiences in a public forum has been informed by the wider zeitgeist of mental health awareness and the willingness of others to speak of their trauma. Institutions now provide mental health first aid[76] training courses alongside physical health first aid. The mental and emotional toll on researchers of terrorism,[77] emergency rescuers[78] and even content moderators[79] are being recognised. The recognition of autoethnography as a viable method for the social sciences may well provide an avenue for others to share their experiences, particularly in the field of counter-terrorism and terrorism research.

Similar to Chatham-Carpenter's writing experience, I too am only able to write this project in a certain space where I feel comfortable.[80] For when writing about pain, autoethnographers need to be in a secure space, mentally and emotionally, in order to do "the hard work of feeling the pain and learning through the process of writing."[81]

In my personal case, the deep-dive into the memory and experience of terror has, does and will cause mental distress and physical pain. Three years prior to the events discussed, I was diagnosed with a chronic condition: post-herpetic neuralgia following an outbreak of shingles. The virus caused permanent damage to my trigeminal nerve whereby the nerve reacts to any stimulation as pain, causing me to feel near-constant pain. In the majority of cases, the damage is eventually resolved and the pain eases and disappears. However, the 36 hours of constant, unyielding stress of the whole experience in Türkiye greatly diminished any chance I may have of a full recovery from the nerve pain. Traumatic stress in particular can cause severe pain episodes.

While I did receive some initial therapy to cope with the immediate trauma, it was only after a diagnosis of PTSD and more targeted therapy that I was able to access those memories without triggering an intense emotional reaction and concomitant pain. However, even with the psychological tools to protect myself, I still need to progress slowly and carefully with this project for the sake of my own health. On several occasions I experienced bad pain attacks when researching and writing, particularly when reading evocative portions of others' experiences and when I dwelled too long on some of my memories.

Aspirant practitioners of autoethnography ought to consider other forms of potential self-harm. Notably in this regard, are to be mindful of potential consequences of 'outing' oneself with a particular identity: victim, survivor, mental and/or physical health concerns, and so on.[82] Such identities can carry with them particular stigmas that can be regarded negatively in some settings.

The pain I experience in writing this project need not be for nought, however. Autoethnography can also be a potent form of catharsis, and an important step towards healing,[83] coming to terms with events, and how to shape pain or trauma into something meaningful despite the strain of doing the writing. Mine is only one voice, expressing a singular instance of terror, however the hope is that further and future studies will incorporate more voices and experiences to develop our understanding of terror.

Pre-boarding: Background to the events

On the Tuesday evening of June 28, 2016, three men conducted a suicide attack on Istanbul's Atatürk Airport. 48 people were killed (including the three attackers) and another 238 wounded.[84] While no group directly claimed responsibility, the Turkish government blamed Islamic State (IS) and a seven-man cell operating in Raqqa, Syria. The cell was supposedly under the command of Akhmed Chataev, a Russian-Chechen, with other members from Russia's Dagestan Republic, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and possibly Uzbekistan. The attack was reportedly timed to coincide with both the anniversary of IS's establishment of its Caliphate (June 29, 2014),[85] and the Islamic holy month of Ramadan[86] to make it a "month of calamity for non-believers." Attacks during Ramadan and around the anniversary of the founding of the caliphate also occurred in 2015. Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Tunisia and Kuwait had all experienced attacks by IS or IS-affiliates around the same time.

The attack at Atatürk Airport involved three men using guns and bombs. The section of the airport attacked was the international arrivals terminal, on street level and just prior to the security checkpoint.[87] The attack was carefully planned over three stages. First, a bomb was detonated in the car park to trigger an initial emergency response and a reduction in personnel at the security checkpoint. Second, another bomb was then detonated at the security checkpoint killing scores of people as they were queuing for security checks. These diversions allow the attackers time for their third stage and carry out their suicide attack with automatic weapons and explosive belts inside the terminal building.[88]

Atatürk Airport is a major international hub with flights coming and going from all over the world. The departure gates are all in a long straight line, with the main exit into the arrivals hall at the mid-point. Other than the security checkpoints of passport/border control, there was (at the time) not much in the way of barriers between the departure gates and the arrivals hall. Which is to say there was very little separating the hundreds if not thousands of travellers from the attacks in the terminal. None of these events was made known to any of the passengers, at any stage by the ground staff nor the airlines.

On approach: Events as experienced

I boarded a flight from Edinburgh to Istanbul on the afternoon of June 28, 2016 as the first stage of what I had intended to be a short and relaxing trip. The trip was to visit my family, and to clear my head after a stressful six months before devoting my remaining time to the last chapter of my PhD thesis on types of armed actors in conflicts. The final chapter was to be on insurgents as a unique type of actor, with a section on their use of terrorism.

My flight itinerary was to fly from Edinburgh to Johannesburg via a stop-over in Istanbul. On approach and landing in Istanbul on the evening of 28 June, nothing appeared out of the ordinary. While the plane did seem to sit on the tarmac for a longer time than normal, any seasoned traveller would not notice anything untoward. After about 20 minutes all passengers disembarked and we entered the terminal. At first glance, everything appeared to be just an ordinary evening in an ordinary

airport. That was until I switch on my tablet (my phone battery had died). The device immediately began pinging with notifications. They were all from my partner at the time, and all very panicked, desperate to hear from me. I answered somewhat befuddled as to what the concern was about. She replied with a link to a breaking news article about an attack at a Turkish airport.

In the terminal

The news report was only a few lines at that stage and merely mentioned an attack at the airport with few details or, most importantly, if the attack was even over. Looking around I then saw that what I had taken as calm was in reality anxious tension. As I looked down the concourse, there were many frightened faces. All of sudden a group of people began running down the concourse, towards my direction. I could not tell what they were running from, and most of the other passengers joined them. Rationally I thought to myself that although I cannot see any apparent danger I would rather not wait to find out. I quickly gathered my bags and started to run with the others. After a few minutes, the crowd began to slow down with no sign of danger anywhere. Everyone remained watchful and largely stayed standing or cautiously moved towards the seating areas. Using the very spotty Wi-Fi signal in the airport, I was able to briefly message my family in Johannesburg.

About 10 to 15 minutes later, another group of panicked passengers started running towards the partially dispersed crowd from the last time. This time things felt more urgent. Cries of "Hurry! Hurry! Run! Run!" could be heard as they ran further along the concourse. I was swept up in the panic and we all rushed towards some escalators that were heading down to a lower level. A small crush developed at the top of the escalators as a few dozen people tried to squeeze on to two narrow escalators. I remember holding back so that an elderly woman could get ahead of me on the escalators.

Looking down to the lower level, we saw a member of the airport staff waving his arms in the air, trying to calm people. It took a few moments of convincing but eventually the panic eased. People still milled around, unsure of what to do. Other than this brief interaction, no airport staff made any interactions with the clearly anxious passengers. I and some of the others I encountered felt a bit foolish for so easily giving in to panic.

One of the first thoughts I had when I saw travellers running in terror down the departure hall was the memory of a controversial level in the video game *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*.[89] The gameplay centred on a terrorist attack at a Russian airport where the player calmly walks through an airport shooting civilians as they go. The scenes in Istanbul were harrowingly reminiscent of the scenes from the game. The cold and methodical killing, treating human beings with the same depth of compassion as an NPC (non-playable character) felt particularly stark. The immediate danger I was most worried about was this exact scenario: heavily armed gunmen making their way through a terminal, killing civilians in a calm and methodical manner.

There were no announcements made, all the flight information screens were still showing the same flight details, meaning the only thing guiding passengers were their own gut instincts, titbits of information from outside, and wild rumours. On the mind of many was the most recent high-profile terrorist attack from six months prior in Paris (13-November 14, 2015), with over 100 fatalities that unfurled over the course of a few hours. With no word from the airport or airline we had no idea if all was safe or if the attack was ongoing.

Standing around the area of my assigned gate for my connecting flight to Johannesburg, a young woman came up to me, asking: "Are you . . . South African?"

"Yes" I replied but not knowing what gave me away, perhaps my dark green passport was slightly visible in the front pouch of my backpack.

"Oh good, I think we're on the same flight."

I remember thinking about how odd it seems to be that in times of crisis our normal hesitancy to bond with strangers melts away, and we cling to whatever notional bonds of similarity we can find. The woman had a local SIM card from having been working in Türkiye for the last month and she was

able to contact her father back in South Africa, although information outside the airport was still vague. We had no idea of what was going on beyond the long concourse, and most worryingly, we had no idea if the attack was still ongoing. My new acquaintance remarked: "This is all very scary."

In my analytical, academic manner I replied: "that's what they [the terrorists] want you to feel." Strangely, we both felt reassured by that.

All the flight information screens were still showing the same unchanged details, but we noticed that some of the earlier flights had not boarded, much less departed, despite the displays. The flight to Johannesburg was still in green even though the time for boarding was fast approaching and there was no sign of the airline's ground staff. Without a working phone and only the free airport Wi-Fi signal that worked intermittently, travellers found it extremely difficult to get any reliable information. All this made for the perfect breeding ground for rumours and exaggeration.

Around the time of the stated departure, the screens all changed to "Cancelled" for every flight. In the midst of trying to figure out what to do next, a small group of airport staff started heading up the concourse. Everyone was being evacuated, with no reason or explanation given as to why or what we all should do next. All the passengers gathered their bags and slowly started heading in the direction we were shown. Along the way, we found other South Africans who were supposed to be on the same flight.

Passport control & baggage claim

After a snaking course through the bowels of the airport we arrived in a mammoth queue for passport control. There were hundreds, if not thousands, of passengers all queuing to go through the same handful of passport control desks. Occasionally someone would drop a bottle of water on the marble floors, or bang their luggage trolley into a board. At the noise, a few dozen people would get spooked and look to run. I then realised this is probably what happened earlier on the concourse: that someone had dropped a bottle of water on to a tiled floor and it sounded remarkably similar to the noise of a gunshot. A loud, but contained "pow!" sound.

The slow grind of passport control bureaucracy eventually pushed us all through to the other side. It felt like hours had passed but it was difficult to be certain how much time had gone by. Although now through passport control, there was still no information about where we were supposed to go or why, much less about the state of safety in the airport. There were only intermittently placed airport staff giving vague directions to exit.

Following these directions and looking around, I saw we were now in the main arrivals hall. On my left I could see the luggage carousels, all unmoving. There were a few bags and suitcases left scatter on the floor. This was the first sign of the violence and panic that had engulfed the hall. In front of the stationary carousels was an airport pharmacy store, with red and white caution tape blocking the otherwise open front. Some of the neon signage having visible blast damage. On the oppose side there were some large blank advertising boards that formed a funnel of people towards the glass door at the front entrance of the hall with a visible emergency exit sign above. Blue and red lights from emergency service vehicles reflected and refracted through the glass doors.

The combination of the boards on one side and the caution tape on the other started to squeeze the scores of travellers together as we all approached the exit. The exit was only the size of two large doors, meaning the large flock of people were forced close together with luggage trolleys, bags, families and travel companions all trying to stick together along a narrowing path.

My anxiety, and that of others, was increasing. The situation did not feel at all safe as I thought of my studies on terrorism, a large group of people in a confined space would make an easy target. A mother and her two children were just in front of me with their trolley. The reflection of blue lights from emergency service vehicles lit the underside of the top of the doorway.

"Pop! Pop! Pop! Pop! Pop!"

Terror. The unmistakable, deafening sound of automatic gunfire. People spun around and scattered as a wave of panic cascaded over everyone; people frantically searched for cover, pushing and shoving

in an effort to escape. The mother grabbed her children, desperately trying to reach safety. Others snapped through the caution tape, looking for refuge in the pharmacy. Next to me, people knocked over display boards and fled, not looking back or pausing to think. The terror and confusion was palpable, and I knew in that moment we were all at the mercy of the gunfire.

I knew that sound all too well: "Pop! Pop! Pop! Pop! Pop!"

Growing up in Johannesburg during the tumultuous times of political violence and terrorism in the 1980s and 1990s, followed by high crime levels, gunfire was a familiar sound in my ears. Unlike Hollywood portrayals, real gunfire is a sharp, staccato burst, almost clinical in its design and precision. Each pop, a small but deadly explosion, expelling a projectile and loading the next bullet in the chamber, with no extraneous noise. It is a sound that is forever etched in my memory, a haunting reminder: "Pop!"

The noise was loud and close, coming from just the other side of the glass doors but I could not tell from where as there were too many people in front of me. I too spun on my heels, trying to run, trying not to knock over the mother and her kids, trying not to lose my companions.

As the gunfire echoed through the air, a sense of impending doom washed over me. My heart pounded in my chest and my legs reacted without thought as I tried to navigate the panicked crowd. The blue lights of emergency vehicles illuminated the fear etched on people's faces as they scrambled for cover. The trolley lay abandoned, forgotten in the chaos as the mother clutched her children tightly, desperate to find a way out. Everywhere I looked, people were running, pushing, and shoving in a desperate bid for survival.

In those moments, terror consumed me whole. An inky blackness enveloped me, an abyss of dread that threatened to swallow me. My body felt like it knew what to do and what was coming, my back was tensing and bracing in a vain attempt to prepare for potential gunshots. My mind was shrouded in darkness, a pre-emptive grief creeping in as I knew that something important was about to be taken from me, only to be determined by the cruel whims of a bullet's trajectory. My recollection of the events is not a fluid stream, but a series of snapshots, each one punctuated by the sharp staccato of gunfire, with darkness filling the spaces in between.

Whoever these people were who attacked the airport that night, they wanted us dead. The Turkish grandmother, the Chinese students heading home from studying abroad, those going home from working internationally and away from their families. We were all equally unfit to live according to those who attacked the airport. In some respects those crowded moments of panic were also some of the most human: here we were, people from all over the world in a group of less than a hundred all running for our lives and looking out for each other. Complete strangers, forced together in panic and terror.

Terror, the emotion, felt like utter dread, a stygian blackness. I had felt panic and fear before in the context of violent crime. I saw a car hijacking when I was about 12, been mugged a few times, and had the odd close call with death. Terror felt different. With crime there was always this feeling that it was economic: they just wanted my phone or money so there is a very clear safe path. With terror there is no bargaining, making people experience the emotion of terror is what the attackers wanted. It was a feeling that there was no escape, no clear path to safety, just the overwhelming sense of being at the mercy of malevolent forces.

Among the shouts and screams, panic, and commotion, two or three airport staff were trying to climb on top of rubbish bins and began shouting for calm. They waved their arms, "Be calm" they cried. At first no one noticed, no one wanted to take a chance. I heard them calling, but the noise of the gunshots was still ringing in my ears. I looked back and saw behind the knocked-down board what finally calmed and quietened me: a small group of people in white coveralls and face masks. They were most likely the forensic detectives, collecting evidence. If the scene was safe enough for the slow methodical work of forensics, then it was most likely that there were no more terrorists.

The airport staff only repeated "be calm, be calm" and offered no explanation or reason for the gunfire. Adrenaline was still in my veins as I tried to slow my breathing.

All the commotion had dramatically altered the previously settled scene. With the large boards gone, we could now see the literal crime scene. Pools of drying blood, more discarded suitcases, more blast damage. I was struck by the pungent, noxious, acrid smell in the air. The smell was definitely that of gunfire, explosives, smoke and explosions. A sharp, harsh smell that stung the nostrils, still fresh, and a smell that should never be in an airport.

Back with my companions we did not want to talk about what just happened. We were all wondering silently to ourselves who fired those shots and why, how far away were they, was it an accident, was it another attacker? For all the darkness and dim flickering lights of emergency services we could not tell anything. No explanation was given about the gunfire, nor did anyone talk about it. The relief of not being harmed, I assume, was too much for all of us. Maybe we felt foolish at having fallen for yet another 'fake' attack, maybe we did not want to jinx our 'good luck,' or maybe we all had just had enough and were too exhausted to speculate about just how close we came to death.

Departures

Almost in a daze, we meekly followed the flow of people winding in and out of the airport. Few people stopped to look down as they pushed their trolleys, not wanting to dwell on the drying pools of blood that someone had tried in vain to dry or hide with large sheets of paper. The bloodied paper dragged under the wheels of the trolleys, leaving behind dried-sanguine trails and track-marks. There was blast damage too on some of the ATMs, with more pools of blood. Out of a mix of respect and horror, we tried not to step in the blood or the now ripped paper failing at its discrete job.

Eventually we all made it outside the airport and into the quagmire of confused travellers not knowing where to go; some were sitting on the pavement, many milling about, and more long queues. Travellers were instructed, in a non-specific manner, to board busses to continue with the evacuation. No information was given as to where we were going or why, not even from the bus drivers. On board the bus, we saw the city of Istanbul coming to life in the very early morning, a jovial Ramadan liveliness stood in stark contrast to the bloodied scenes just witnessed at the airport. The busses all stopped at Taksim Square in the heart of the city. We soon found a hotel that was open, with a very patient and helpful concierge who diligently sign us into rooms.

The next morning we headed to the nearest airline offices to see about rebooking flights. An arduous task in its own right as hundreds of stranded passengers were all desperate to get home. The concierge and hotel were most helpful, allowing for an open check-out time and arranging taxis back to the airport.

Security & connections

I grew up at the tail-end of Apartheid, a time of great violence at the hands of the police and military, instilling me with a healthy and democratic distrust of men in uniform. For the first time in my life I was relieved to see soldiers, armed to the teeth, outside Atatürk Airport. In an instant I felt a deep sense of real security, rather than false sense of security I usually felt at airports when having to take off my belt at metal detectors or surrendering bottles of water. Much of my anxiety over returning to the airport was assuaged by seeing the troops all around.

Getting through the security was, however, not easy at all. Again, there were long queues, scores deep, of passengers waiting to be processed through the departure passport control. When it was my turn to the present my passport, the official asked: "Where is your entry visa?" I replied that I did not get one when the airport was being evacuated. "South Africans required visas to enter Türkiye" he stated. "You will have to speak with the senior officials" came the instruction.

I calmly tried to work my way through the crowd to the start of the queues where the officer-in-charge was stationed. I explained the situation about not having an entry visa, and he asked: "Because of the bomb? Oh ok, that's fine. Go through." Then I made my way back to the front of the queue

whilst trying not to anger anyone by being a queue-jumper. The official asked a few more questions before letting me through.

When the time came to queue for the flight there was a visible difference between those who had borne witness to the terror of the night before rebooked on the new flight, and those who had no idea what had happened. The new passengers seemed bright and cheerful, joking and making small talk in the queue. Myself and the others from the night before carried ourselves with a heavy burden, hunched shoulders, always looking around, bodies tense with anxiety.

Throughout the whole ordeal, I had largely kept my emotions in check. Despite all the obstacles, slow bureaucracy, and running in terror, I felt I had to "keep it together," not wanting to surrender to the terror and panic lest I not make it home. That was until it came time to leave the airplane. The plane landed in Johannesburg, but was continuing on to Cape Town, and the OR Tambo airport staff were checking the flight details of those disembarking. I had my boarding pass with me, but among all the stress I could not find it when the airport staff asked to see it. This last obstacle, when I was so close to being home, finally broke my emotional resolved. I started arguing with the poor man, just wanting to get on my way. I at least had my passport readily available and that was enough to let me go on my way.

Coming through passport control, and collecting my bags, I emerged into the grand arrivals hall at OR Tambo in Johannesburg and rushed to hug my parents. I hugged them tighter than any time before.

Arrival of the aftermath

The next morning when I awoke I found where my body had been storing all that stress for the last 48 hours. My hips had seized in a muscle spasm and I could barely walk. For nearly a week I struggled to get around without pain. The tension in my back took weeks to fully release. Nightmares started almost right away: vague dreams of cold methodical killings in an airport. Some nights I wake up startled, fearing there is a stranger in my room. Stress also manifested as grinding my teeth in my sleep. The grinding was so bad that I had pulled my jaw out of alignment, and would eventually require surgery to resolve.

When I saw the scale of the destruction and heard stories from others who were more directly affected, I started to feel a sense of guilt. All told, I was never objectively in any high degree of danger, and most of the experiences of panic that myself and the other passengers experienced could have been easily avoided by the airport staff communicating with everyone. However, the broader situation was one of mortal violence, with the intention of sowing as much panic as possible. Moreover, what contributed to the heightened sense of anxiety for myself and others was the evacuation of the airport; if all was safe and under-control, why were we all being taken out of the building?

Rationality is context based, conditional and dependant on what information one has. The airport officials who witnessed the crowd scattering and fleeing in panic at the sound of the gunfire may well have deemed such behaviour as irrational. They were, however, privy to more information than us passengers; they may well have known the situation was entirely safe, that there were no more terrorists. However, no such information was conveyed to us, in which case, standing still and acting blasé at the burst of gunfire would have been profoundly irrational. From an objective point of view, my experience may not fit the definition of terror but it most certainly does epistemologically and phenomenologically. In the moments between that first "Pop!" and seeing the forensic team I had a justified, true belief that I could have been hit with a terrorist's bullet or the blast from a suicide vest.

In therapy discussions later I would find that my feelings of guilt over not being as badly affected as others was a symptom of survivor guilt. Hutson et al., define survivor guilt as: "a highly-individualized, interpersonal process involving the status of being spared from harm that others incurred, which is adversely experienced as distressing, manifested by diverse responses, and is driven by the context(s) from which it emerges."[90] Expressed in this manner, my feelings in the aftermath were a complete match. Somewhat ironically, I also continue to have feelings of

survivor guilt with my chronic illness,[91] in that it is not as bad as some other patients I have met. Moreover, my perception of what it meant to be a "survivor" as an abstract concept did not accurately match my experience in reality.

Therapy helped in learning how to separate the memories from panic-response of fight-or-flight. Doing this research does run the risk of weakening those tools of separation and triggering a flood of adrenaline, leading to more physical pain, and at times, my pain has been triggered. I have never forgotten what terror feels like, how it is different from panic, anxiety or stress. It is its own beast. Sometimes that feeling reaches like a darkened fist from deep within my memory to grab my mind in the present. The grab can manifest as a panic attack, a deep sense of dread, or a nightmare, mostly I am aware of it when I go to airports, especially when I stand in arrivals halls with my back to the entrance.

Two weeks later on July 15, 2016, the airport was again the scene of political violence as a group of Turkish army officers attempted[92] a coup d'état. My original travel itinerary involved a return flight via Istanbul on that same day. As I was still too rattled from the trauma I wisely changed my flight to a different airline and different route. I say it was a wise decision as my luggage contained a number of books I had previously planned to worked with, all on the topic of military involvement in politics. Having an exit stamp, but no entry stamp, in my passport for the day after a major terrorist attack and a suitcase filled with books about coup plots on the day and scene of an attempted coup may have been too much to rationally explain. I feared a situation similar to that of another terrorism researcher[93] and their experience travelling with research materials and running afoul of bureaucratic security.

When I returned to Scotland I met with my supervisors to explain the situation and we agreed that it would be best if I dropped my last remaining chapter on Insurgent Soldiers. The alternative was to take a six month leave of absence, but I could not be sure that I would have been any better at that stage. The university was very understanding and I saw a regular counsellor to help with some of the traumatic memories and immediate effects.

After submitting my thesis, I tried to return to research on political violence but found I had a strong mental block. Any time I tried to focus, I would have a panic attack that, while mild, would be enough to trigger a pain attack. Around the same time I was asked to review an article, to which I foolishly agreed. For the most part I did not have any trouble reading the article and offering appropriate critiques, until the article came to graphic depictions. Any time there was news of another terrorist attack, especially the attack on a train in France and the mass shooting at a concert in Manchester, I felt the deep, dark, stygian dread resurface. Clouding my mind and dragging my emotions down into the darkness. By June 2018, I no longer had any control over my emotions, anything but the blandest comedy ran the risk of awakening that emotion of terror.

I was diagnosed with PTSD from this experience in July 2018. I occasionally have nightmares, and sometimes I have panic attacks triggered by memories. While these symptoms are comparatively mild to what others may suffer, the sudden jolts of adrenaline and other stress hormones can cause intense pain along my damaged nerve. During my therapy for PTSD, that stress felt like acid coursing through my nerves, leaving me in intense pain for weeks afterwards. The therapist described the treatment with the analogy of road-rash, where tiny fragments of dirt (traumatic memories) have become imbedded in a wound, and now the best action is to scrub the wound. As painful as it might be, it is the only way to effectively deal with those memories. I underwent a 3 week course of Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) trauma therapy.[94] EMDR is a tool to help desensitise traumatic memories,[95] such that one can access the memories without triggering an emotional reaction. The first step, however, is to remember those traumatic moments and let the body feel all those memories. For example, when I remembered the stampedes, I focused on how my legs tensed up, ready to run. Each time we started on a new memory, the rush of adrenaline would later cause me much pain.

I would later learn that about the interplay between physiological and psychiatric effects that lie behind PTSD. When experiencing intense danger the mind and body release epinephrine and norepinephrine which while preparing the body for 'fight or flight' also play a crucial role in the process of converting short- into long-term memories.[96] Essentially, experience of extreme fear "activates brain systems that produce rapid and stereotyped defensive behaviours, sharpen perception,

and prepare memory circuitry to record the circumstances in which the danger has been experienced so that it can be avoided in future."[97]

Once the therapy finished, I still needed to practice the mental tools to disassociate the physical reaction to the memories. Such that I was only able to safely get back to my research on political violence a year and half later. In 2019, I started work on a paper about state terrorism, partly as a test to see if I could return to research on political violence. For the most part I was fine reading through the witness testimonies until I came across one particular testimony with vivid descriptions of an incident. There was something about this story that triggered my memories. The pain became unbearable and in an ill-judged attempt to change my medication to deal with pain I set off a cascade of side-effects that continued for months. It was not until a year later that I felt strong enough to re-try the research. My ability to complete that paper gave me the confidence to return to my book and finally deal with the chapter on Insurgent Soldiers and their use of terror.

Conclusion

Autoethnography can provide an extremely useful method for Terrorism Studies by allowing researchers to explore aspects of the phenomenon of terrorism that more orthodox methods may struggle to access. The emotion of terror at the core of terrorism cannot be easily studied given the subjective elements of emotions in general, and the specific physical, psychological, and psychiatric aspects of terror in particular. Whilst it may be possible to reliably measure and record subjective feelings of terror, such measures may not always be practical or ethical. This discussion is a contribution to a necessary discussion on understanding the emotion of terror in the phenomenon of terrorism.

The case for autoethnography to be a legitimate, viable and ethical research method for Terrorism Studies can be summarised as follows. The legitimacy of autoethnography is evident in the wide acceptance of the method across a range of disciplines. The unique challenges in researching emotions—subjectivity, difficulties in quantifying and qualifying, accessibility—are notable strengths of autoethnography.

The indiscriminate, secretive, random, unpredictable and brutal nature of terrorism mean that any forward research planning to study emotions in the midst of an attack is not feasible. There are no laboratory settings nor proxy environments in which researchers can adjudicate the physical, psychological, and psychiatric experiences an individual may experience in a terrorist attack. Autoethnography can thus offer a viable means for researchers to gain insight into those experiences and manifestations that would not otherwise be able to.

The unique biochemistry and physiology of traumatic memories associated with experiencing terror can additionally bring research ethics concerns for other forms of ethnographic research. Experiences of trauma entails the possibility of developing PTSD, in which case interviewing survivors and victims has the potential to cause harm by triggering PTSD symptoms. Although autoethnography has some research ethics concerns, these are minor to negligible compared to other methods of emotional inquiry. Terror is a unique emotion that is not easily replicated, nor indeed should it be.

There are several implications, questions and conclusions that my autoethnography raises. Being a researcher of terrorism for a number of years and having more extensive knowledge of the capabilities and tactics of terrorists than the average traveller, I was perhaps more predisposed to anxiety and terror over the course of the events. I knew about the tactic of follow-up attacks, such as that used by the Provisional IRA.[98] The tactic involved a second bomb that would detonate sometime after the first as a deliberate strike against those arriving on the scene. While waiting at the departure gate, I suspected that there could be follow-up attacks. In reality, my assumption was partly true as the attack started with a diversion explosion in the parking outside the airport before the main attack in the airport-proper. The knowledge of these tactics did increase my anxiety, perhaps more than most, when I heard the gunfire whilst trying to exit the terminal.

What can we make of the stated and theorised motivations of IS for this attack? As mentioned, IS had stated they wanted to make the month of Ramadan a period of "calamity for unbelievers." With the

attack at Atatürk Airport, they were successful: with scores dead, more injured, and many hundreds negatively affected in numerous ways. For me and my unique health condition, in all likelihood I will be suffering for the rest of my life from the temporary nerve damage now probably made permanent.

The Turkish government's attempts to improve its international reputation was no doubt severely affected too. An attack of this magnitude at a supposedly secure facility caused incalculable loss to the tourism of Türkiye as well as greatly damaged the national carrier, Turkish Airlines, who have been trying to make inroads into the international travel market.

Regarding my emotional experience of terror: did those who plotted the attack deliberately and necessarily set out to manifest the emotion of terror in their victims? To what ends were they motivated? How does the terror that I experienced, as a South African studying in Scotland, relate to their goals? For that matter, how does the *terror* experienced by any victim relate to the motivations of any *terror*-ist? The micro/individual-level analysis of terror seems absurd given the supposed geopolitical ambitions of IS: the scores of immediate victims murdered in the attack cannot make any changes to presumed Turkish government policies in Syria. Nor could those of us who born witness to the horrors, the haunting images of pools of blood and the stinging smell of explosives that stalk our memories would have little individual bearing on Middle East politics and security.

Through my experience I knew that terror is not the same as fear, whilst the wider audience or society may experience fear at witnessing an attack. Additionally, there may well be difference in degree of terror and fear. Taking my case as an example, my family and friends were no doubt worried about me and feared for my safety; for the majority of my experience I experience heightened levels of anxiety and some moments of panic; and had it not been for the singular moment when I was close to gunfire, that may well have been the sum of my experience. In hearing that gunfire, however, I experienced a deep and overwhelming sense of dread, terrified of the what might happen in the instance, a fear for my life far beyond anything I had experience before, in short: terror.

My experience of terror was incidental to the aims of the terrorists. Türkiye had experienced a number of terror attacks in the years prior to the attack at the airport, often targeting sites of tourism. The logic of these attacks may have been to embarrass the Turkish government via other states' concerns over the wellbeing of their citizens whilst in Türkiye. The nationality of the victims may matter little. The indiscriminate nature of the violence was a significant aspect of the sense of terror. Attacking an international airport meant that international travellers were a target. Our mere presence in the airport was the only criterion for being targeted; there were no protections for being a foreigner, for being removed from the conflict in Syria and Iraq, for being a believer or not.

There is a reason why the phenomenon we study is called "terrorism": the emotion of terror is distinct and powerful with the capacity to shape a victim's very physiology. The effects can ripple out into society in innumerable ways and most certainly affecting more people than those who contained within fatality and casualty counts.

Notes on contributor

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Notes

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30. Ibid.., 789.
31. Ibid., 791.
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39. Adams, Ellis, and Holman Jones, "Autoethnography," 4.
40. Liela A. Jamjoom, "A Spectacle of Otherness: An Autoethnography of a Conference Presentation," *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal* 16, no. 1 (2021): 261–77, https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-12-2018-1708.
41. See note 39 above.
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43. Ibid., 796.
44. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, "Autoethnography," 279–80.
45. John Tulloch, "Becoming Iconic," *Criminal Justice Matters* 73, no. 1 (2008a): 33–4, https://doi.org/10.1080/09627250802277009; John Tulloch, "Risk and Subjectivity: Experiencing Terror," *Health, Risk and Society* 10, no. 5 (2008b): 451–65, https://doi.org/10.1080/13698570802408718.
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48. James Fitzgerald, "Why Me? An Autoethnographic Account of the Bizarre Logic of Counterterrorism," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 8, no. 1 (2015): 163–80, https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2015.1005934.
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50. Rambo and Ellis, "Autoethnography."
51. Adams, Ellis, and Holman Jones, "Autoethnography," 2–3. Emphasis added.
52. Ibid., 3.
53. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, "Autoethnography," 284.
54. Spry, "Performing Autoethnography," 714.

55. Ibid.
56. Adams, Ellis, and Holman Jones, "Autoethnography," 3. Emphasis in original.
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58. Adams, Ellis, and Holman Jones, "Autoethnography," 3.
59. Sarah Wall, "Easier Said than Done: Writing an Autoethnography," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 7, no. 1 (2008): 38–53, 39, https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690800700103.
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61. Brigg and Bleiker, "Autoethnographic International Relations," 797.
62. Allen Collinson and Hockey, "Autoethnography," 181.
63. Ibid., 183.
64. Holman Jones, "Autoethnography," 2.
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