Protecting Whiteness: Counter-terrorism, and British identity in the BBC's *Bodyguard*

Abstract: This paper uses *Bodyguard* to trace the ways that whiteness is represented in counter-terrorism TV and so draw the links between whiteness, counter-terrorism and culture. It argues that *Bodyguard* offers a redemptive narrative for British whiteness that recuperates and rearticulates a British white identity after/through the War on Terror. As such it belongs to a later genre of counter-terrorism TV shows that move on from, but nonetheless still propagate, the discursive foundations of the ongoing War on Terror. This reading of *Bodyguard* is itself important, as popular culture is a site where much of the British population made and continues to make sense of their relationship to the UK during the War on Terror, forging often unspoken ideas about whiteness. It affords the opportunity to draw out the connections between whiteness and counter-terrorism, connections that need further scholarly attention to fully understand the complex relationships between security and race.

Keywords: counter-terrorism, television, whiteness, popular culture.

In the UK, prolonged engagement with the War on Terror has had a profound effect on social relations, government policies towards minorities, and discourses of race and racisms. Racial hate crimes are on the rise,[1] and terrorism is still positioned as an ever-increasing threat to national security.[2] There is a growth in white nationalism associated with populist politics, as well as greater attention being paid to ongoing structural racisms and white privilege.[3] Race and racism play a contentious role in British politics for example the government released a report claiming there is no structural racism in the UK[4], only months before an independent report finds evidence of anti-Muslim racisms within its own political party.[5] Accounts of the mobilization of particular ideas of whiteness in popular politics miss the impact of the War on Terror on our current political moment and the intersections of whiteness and security. This paper uses *Bodyguard* to investigate the relationship between whiteness and security through and within popular culture. Popular culture is a key site where much of the British population made sense of their relationship to the UK during the War on Terror and forged often unspoken ideas about whiteness.

This paper asks how the televised threat from terrorism creates a particular white British identity. It locates the explanation in popular culture not because this is the only space in which identities, practices, objects and institutions are constituted, but because this space is amongst the most important place for this, as "we are all immersed in these discourses in our daily lives; they

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[1] Home Office, Hate crime, England and Wales, 2018/2019.

[2] Mi5, What are the biggest threats to national security? 2019, https://www.mi5.gov.uk/faq/what-are-thebiggest-current-threats-to-national-security.

[3] Satnam Virdee and Brendan McGeever, 'Racism, crisis, brexit'. Ethnic and racial studies, 41:10 (2018), pp.1802- 1819

[4] Commission On Ethnic and Racial Disparities, The Report, 31st March 2021, available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf

[5] Singh Swaram, The Singh Report: report of the independent investigation into alleged discrimination, citing protected characteristics, within the conservative and unionist party in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 245h May 2021, available at https://singhinvestigation.co.uk/

constitute our everyday common sense."[6] The central contribution of this paper is to show how, even in this seemingly more nuanced representation in *Bodyguard*, there is a framework of whiteness that continues to underpin the binary logic of terrorism and counter-terror. I argue counter-terrorism and whiteness are mutually constitutive. The boundaries of race, belonging and nation are articulated and animated in counter-terror discourse, so that counter-terrorism secures Britain both literally (as security practice) and figuratively (as a racialised discourse of identity). The paper therefore uncovers the ongoing interrelation of whiteness, counter-terror and popular politics.

The argument in this paper is founded on several central claims building on this engagement with *Bodyguard* and informed by several bodies of scholarship in Critical Whiteness Studies and Security Studies. The first is that counter-terrorism and whiteness are mutually constitutive. This is a study of whiteness as a socially constructed category, positioned as the 'normal' or 'standard' against which 'other' racial identities are understood. Second, that whiteness is articulated through and central to security discourse and practice. Third, that whiteness maintains power through its constant reassertion, but that this re-assertion itself relies upon the idea of whiteness as a norm. Fourth, that there is a re-articulation of white innocence at work in this narrative. Fifth, that security practices rely upon racialised security narratives in which white knights protect white victims and therefore contribute to the establishment of whiteness, even where these ideas are brought into question. Lastly, that threats and fear of terrorist violences are bound up with racialised fears and discomfort, where questions over who and what is threatened in these stories are revealing as regards to who or what is being secured in counter-terror. "The War on Terror marks a significant shift in postcolonial articulations of whiteness"[7] and this paper is an investigation of how whiteness and terror continue to speak to and through one another in culture 'after', or in response to, the War on Terror. The paper explores an important aspect of the ongoing relationships "between empire, racist culture, state practice and political economy."[8]

This paper is theoretically informed by Critical Whiteness Studies, and "driven by the recognition that there can be no racial justice without attention to white supremacy and to the contributions of white people to its historical and current structures of domination."[9] Where previous accounts of counter-terror discourse have shown how popular culture creates the racialised terrorist other, and therefore both rearticulates and represents anti-Muslim racisms, I suggest that to fully understand the relationship between counter-terror and race, whiteness must be centred in the analysis. This furthers a relational approach to security – recognising that counter-terrorism and the racist logics it relies upon are not exceptional, but part of a broader ecology of social and cultural systems where race is central to answering the 'how possible' questions of security. Located within a Critical

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[6] Jutta Weldes and Christina Rowley, C. 'So, how does popular culture relate to world politics?' in Federica Caso and Caitlin Hamilton, eds. Popular culture and world politics: Theories, methods, pedagogies (Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing, 2015) pp.11-34, (p.16).

[7] Sunera Thobani, 'White wars: Western feminisms and the War on Terror'. *Feminist Theory*, *8*(2), pp.169-185 (2007):170

[8] Gargi Bhattacharya et al. *, Empire's Endgame: racism and the British state,* (Pluto Press: London 2021).

[9] Shona Hunter and Christi van der Westhuizen, Routledge Handbook of Critical Whiteness Studies (Routledge: London, forthcoming).

Security Scholarship that pays attention to the relationships between security threats and national identities and the gendered and racialised boundaries that national identities reuse and rely on.

The paper begins with the theorisation of whiteness on which it relies. It then proceeds with a discussion of the importance of popular culture as a site of racialised security politics. It introduces *Bodyguard* and places it within a longer history of televised terrorism drama. The analysis is organised around the ways in which whiteness works in the text to re-establish itself: white victims; white heroes; and white terrorists. I argue that *Bodyguard* can be seen to re-establish and re-present British whiteness articulated against the terrorist threat. I argue that, although there are some moments where a more critical account of terrorism and the related racial discourse are introduced, ultimately much of this works to rearticulate whiteness in response to the racialised violences of counter-terrorism. This recuperation of whiteness is a response to the controversies of the War on Terror, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and counter-terrorism policies at home. In the conclusion, I use these findings to consider how *Bodyguard* can also function as a text to expose the relationships between whiteness, counter-terrorism, and security more broadly, linking this back to Critical Whiteness Studies.

Whiteness, Security and Terrorism

Racism has been central to the expression, experience and sustenance of terror and counter-terror. Academics and commentators have pointed to how representations in popular culture include racist and racialising images of the Islamist terrorist 'other'[10]. Work has shown how the seemingly 'trivial' depictions of terrorism in film, TV, videogames, and other popular cultural sights reify racist/Orientalist logics that contribute to anti-Muslim racisms and enable particular counter-terror practices.[11] Meanwhile, whiteness scholars have shown how popular culture is one of the places where whiteness is normalised and constituted. A failure to engage with the way whiteness is itself a racial identity that is constructed and deployed in terrorism discourse prevents academics from fully engaging with the impact of race and terrorism in the emergence of a British politics that is increasingly demarcated along racial lines.

This paper adds to accounts of the representations on terrorism and counter-terrorism in popular culture by centering whiteness in the analysis, where whiteness is understood as a discursive creation that exists as an unmarked racial category whose power is secured and wielded through its obfuscation.[12] Understanding whiteness not as fixed biological category, but a relational identity, constructed as superior to 'other' identities; a "constantly morphing identity refracted by context."[13]

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[10] For examples of media commentary see Luna Durkay ''Homeland' is the most bigoted show on television' *The Washington Post,* 2nd October 2014, available online at https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/10/02/homeland-is-the-most-bigoted-show-on-television/ last accessed 24/06/21. For examples of academic enquiry see footnote below

[11] For example see Melisa Brittain, 'Benevolent invaders, heroic victims and depraved villains: White femininity in media coverage of the invasion of Iraq' in *(En) Gendering the War on Terror: War Stories and Camouflaged Politics*, edited by Kim Rygiel (London: Routledge, 2006) pp.73-96. And Gargi Bhattacharyya, *Dangerous Brown Men: Exploiting Sex, Violence and Feminism in the 'War on Terror'* (London: Zed Books Ltd. 2013).

[12] Katherine Botterill and Kathy Burrell, '(In)visibility, Privilege and the Performance of Whiteness in Brexit Britain: Polish migrants in Britain's shifting migration regime', *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 37, no. 1 (2019): 24.

[13] Matthew W. Hughey, 'The (dis) similarities of white racial identities: The conceptual framework of 'hegemonic whiteness'', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33, no.8 (2010): 1289

Who it contains, and how it contains particular bodies, shifts over time and space, though it remains a marker of privilege, often invisible to those who inhabit it; though not to those who suffer the exclusions and violences it enables and is enabled by.[14] Understanding the way that whiteness relies upon its position as "equating white subjects and their specific cultural mores and values with the universality of the human" is key to understanding how whiteness operates as the 'norm'.[15]

The specificity and plurality of whiteness, and the ways that it comes into being must be emphasised so that criticisms of racial hierarchies are attuned to the particular and specific mechanisms of race in contemporary Britain. Gabriel puts forward five uses of whiteness: white pride politics, which is about the "conscious pursuit and celebration of whiteness" ; normative whiteness, which may not be explicitly racist, but which contains implicitly racialist values, aesthetics, and forms of inclusion and exclusion; ontological whiteness, which is about the privileges that are "bestowed on those commonly assumed to be 'white'"; progressive whiteness, which "condemns white pride and normative versions of whiteness yet, in which 'whites' continue to dominate both ideologically and organisationally"; and finally subaltern whiteness, which addresses minority whiteness.[16] These frame the analysis of whiteness in this paper because they enable an understanding of both the explicit and subtle ways that whiteness can be expressed in counter-terrorism discourse.

Whiteness therefore is discursively created, and as whiteness scholars have identified, popular culture is a key place in which this meaning is established. [17] There is a considerable body of research on whiteness and popular culture, ranging from video games[18] and fantasy literature[19]to reality television[20] and superheroes.[21] These works seek to expose how popular cultural texts "reinforce notions of racial identity without overtly speaking race" and have shown how whiteness is represented and constantly reinscribed as an identity across popular culture.[22]

A critical account of the operation of whiteness in terror discourses is central to understanding and challenging racialised security imaginaries and practices.[23] Bhattacharyya et al urge that critical attention to race and racisms in contemporary Britain demands that we analyse the inter-connections of empire, culture, state and economics. In Security Studies a focus on national identity returns us to the pioneering work of Campbell who argued security discourse not only creates the threat, but also creates the self which is threatened, who show that "a notion of what we are is

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[14] Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

[15] Thobani, *White Wars,* 172.

[16] John Gabriel, *Whitewash: Racialized Politics and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1998): 5.

[17] Michael Omi, 'In Living Colour: Race in American culture' in Ian Angus and Sut Jhally, S. eds. *Cultural politics in contemporary America* (London: Routledge, 1989):114.

[18] Dietrich, David R. 'Avatars of whiteness: Racial expression in video game characters.*' Sociological Inquiry* 83, no. 1 (2013): 82-105.

[19] Helen Young, *Race and Popular Fantasy Literature: Habits of* Whiteness (London: Routledge, 2015).

[20] Mark P.Orbe, 'Representations of race in reality TV: Watch and Discuss', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 25, no.4 (2008): 345-352.

[21] Sean Guynes and Martin Lund. *Unstable Masks: Whiteness and American Superhero Comics* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2020).

[22] Phil Chidester, 'May the Circle Stay Unbroken: Friends, the Presence of Absence, and the Rhetorical Reinforcement of Whiteness*', Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 25:2 (2008): 157.

[23] Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1997), 1.

intrinsic to an understanding of what we fear."[24] This happens through difference, through the opposition to the enemy, and also through the narration of peoples and places, where the stories that are told contribute to our understanding of the world and our place within it. These discourses are invariably reliant on gender and race to 'make sense' because these concepts provide an apparent link to a 'natural' or fundamental organising logic. In counter-terrorism, this is about the creation of both the terrorist other, but also the innocent victim of terror, and the justified counter-terrorist hero.

In her writing on the War on Terror Bhattacharyya makes clear how ideas of sexuality, race and gender are used to 'other' the terrorist and at the same time rearticulate the idea of Western superiority and entitlement, ultimately legitimising the War on Terror.[25] Faludi considers how gender stereotypes were rearticulated after 9/11 to present a new, white, hero figure: the firefighter. She considers how this discourse also created the ideal female citizen, who supports the war by buying American; she makes home, keeps safe and provides the counterpoint to the oppressed Afghani women.[26] There has also been writing on the way that particular white feminisms have been crucial to providing justifications for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq - at first used explicitly, by President Bush, as the US campaign was framed in terms of granting freedom to otherwise oppressed Muslim women (which in turn tied into patriarchal masculine American self-image). In Thobani's 2007 analysis, she complicates these accounts further by recognising how even in these critiques of the War on Terror, feminists reinvoke white ideals.[27] This has also been reanimated in later discourses that highlight the role of white women in counter-terror operations, both within official accounts of terror and within popular culture representations, namely *Zero Dark Thirty* and *Homeland*.[28] Breen and Meer have demonstrated the value of using Critical Race Theory "explore how a general latent whiteness is given political content through a particular racialization of Muslims" so that securitisaton strategies have prioritised securing whiteness in 'real world' settings.[29] Understanding the ways that the narratives of counter-terror continue to 'do; this work and (re)establish whiteness is a challenge to the continued racialisation of Security

Unpacking whiteness is vital to the ongoing post-colonial critique of International Relations as both practice and discipline. Howell and Montpetit, engage with the way that whiteness operates in Securitisation Theory.[30] In an empirical account, Chisholm traces "how logics of whiteness are called upon to legitimise claims of authority and power within private security."[31] In a powerful article on

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[24] Campbell, *Writing Security*, 73.

[25] Gargi Bhattacharyya, Dangerous brown men: exploiting sex, violence and feminism in the 'war on terror' (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2013)

[26] Susan Faludi, *The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America* (New York: Macmillan, 2006).

[27] Thobani, *White Wars*

[28] See for example, Zillah Eisenstein, 'Dark zero-feminism' *Amass*, 17, no.3, (2012):.44-46. And Marysia Zalewski, 'Theorizing Emotion: Affective Borders in *Homeland*' *Critical Studies on Security* 1, no.1 (2013): 133-135.

[29] Damian Breen and Nasar Meer, "Securing whiteness?: Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the securitization of Muslims in education." Identities 26, no. 5 (2019): 595.

[30] Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit, 'Is Securitization Theory Racist? Civilizationism, Methodological Whiteness, and Antiblack Thought in the Copenhagen School." *Security Dialogue* 51, no. 1 (2020): 3-22.

[31] Amanda Chisholm, 'The Culture of Whiteness in Private Security', In *Routledge Research Companion in Security* Outsourcing, (eds) Christopher Kinsey and Joakim Bernestein (London: Routledge, 2013): 257.

whiteness, in International Relations Theory, Sabratnam exposes "[w]hite subject-positioning as patterned by interlocking epistemologies of immanence [and] ignorance."[32] This article builds on and extends this burgeoning literature showing the relationships between security narrative and whiteness in this specific example adding a more sustained account of the central relationship between whiteness and security as discursive creations that *Bodyguard* exemplifies.

Bodyguard: 'the threat is closer than you think'

Bodyguard aired in the UK on 26 August 2018. It is the most watched television drama in the BBC's history, with 17.1 million viewers watching the final episode.[33] It is hugely popular narrativised account of counter-terrorism; British-written and produced, it is an important site for the construction of the meaning of counter-terrorism in British culture, deserving of analytical attention. It also contains and continues the relationships of whiteness and counter-terror that makes clear the way images, stories, and emotions of (in)security work to reinscribe racial hierarchies.

The context of *Bodyguard* is important. *Bodyguard* is post-9/11 and post-the War on Terror, three Prime Ministers and six years from the end of combat activities in Afghanistan. Islamic terror threats are still a feature of the security landscape, but these are ISIS rather than Al Qaeda-inspired. Recent UK experiences of terrorism that shape terror discourse in the UK include the London bombings of 2005 as well as the Westminster Bridge attack and the Manchester Arena bombing, both in 2017. *Bodyguard* contributes to a discourse around counter-terrorism that is removed from the gung-ho American inspired War on Terror discourse, whilst inevitably containing intertextual traces of that which has come before it. Many of these events are references, combined with the real London locations and the use of accurate Police names and structures the show strives for a verisimilitude that also enables slippage between the show and 'real life'.

Importantly, *Bodyguard* continues a trend in mainstream terrorism dramas of offering a deliberately more critical and complex account of counter-terror and sits within a wider sub-genre of counter-terrorism television. These shows, continuing the popular appeal of terror as entertainment, have narrativised the terror threat, and as such been key to the rearticulation, reassertion and dramatization of terrorism and its associated traumas for Western audiences. Security and Cultural Studies scholars have offered powerful accounts of the terror discourse in *24*[34], *Spooks*[35] and *Homeland*[36] paying attention to their role in the establishment and circulation of 'common sense' understandings of terror and counter-terror.

[32] Meera, Sabaratnam, 'Is IR Theory White? Racialised Subject-Positioning in Three Canonical Texts', *Millennium,* online first, (2020).

[33] Chris Edwards, 'BBC One's Bodyguard is now the UK's most watched TV drama since records began' Digital Spy 23/10/2018, available at https://www.digitalspy.com/tv/a869073/Bodyguard-bbc-one-most-watched-tv-drama/ last accessed 11/11/2018.

[34] Elspeth Van Veeren, 'Interrogating 24: making sense of US counter-terrorism in the global War on Terrorism', *New Political Science* 31, no.3 (2009):361-384; Rolf Halse, 'Counter-stereotypical images of Muslim characters in the television serial 24: a difference that makes no difference?' *Critical Studies in Television* 10, no.1 (2009): 54-72.

[35] Peter Morey 'Strangers and stereotypes: The Spooks controversy and the framing of Muslims.' *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 46, no. 5 (2010): 529-539.

[36] Jack Holland, *Fictional Television and American Politics: From 9/11 to Donald Trump* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

Importantly, scholars have identified ways that these television shows often;

> begin by deploying the usual set of stereotypes only to unsettle them and even use them to reflect back to the viewer some of the more unthinking prejudices and smug attitudes the West has been encouraged to indulge in as civilizations supposedly clash.[37]

With white terrorists, people suffering PTSD from the Iraq war, questionable politicians, Muslim good guys, and conflicted heroes, *Bodyguard* falls into a sub-set of television depictions of counter-terrorism that reflect upon, and even seem to invert, tropes of terrorism. Scholars have explored ways that depictions of 'good' Muslim characters can open critical reflective spaces in the drama[38] that can be inhabited by audience members[39], whilst also recognising ways that even seemingly critical moves can also fail.[40] So that "efforts at identity contestation" can lead to "sedimentation and reification of the binaries upon which American counter-terrorism efforts have been based since 9/11."[41] Alsultany puts forward a concept of simplified complex representations to identify the practice by which seemingly sensitive representations can work to reinforce racialised narrative strategies.[42] She identifies seven strategies that are deployed to "give the impression that the representations they are producing are complex" when in fact that actually "promote logics that legitimise racist policies and practices, such as torturing Arabs and Muslims."[43]

Bodyguard is both a depiction of, and a response to, War on Terror narratives. It reworks the binaries of the War on Terror, but it does not undo or transform them. *Bodyguard* opens with Budd, thwarting a suicide bomber on a train he is traveling to London on with his two young children. He finds Nadiya Ali wearing a suicide vest, finger hovering over the detonation trigger in the toilets on board the train. In an act of individual bravery, he talks her down from detonating the bomb whilst also preventing her from being shot by a police sniper. In the plot the terrorism threat level is high, and the lead character Montague is a target because she is attempting to pass new legislation, an update of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, through parliament. Legislation that gives the police greater counter-terrorism powers. She speaks stoically of doing whatever it takes to "defend democracy". Budd, a British soldier turned policeman, is given the role of Personal Protection Officer for Montague whilst he attempts to master a seething resentment towards politicians, explained as being a direct result of his experiences as British soldier in the War in Afghanistan. They embark on a relationship, whilst the terror level remains high. There is an attempted bombing of Budd's children's school. There is an assassination attempt on Montague- which Budd thwarts and discovers was led by his ex-army comrade Andy Apsted. Continued terror drama ensues as it becomes clear that there is an inside leak that is enabling the terrorists to continue to target Montague. And when Montague is ultimately killed by a bomb, Budd is himself suspected of involvement. In the final

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[37] Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin. *Framing Muslims*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2011:175.

[38] Peter Morey, 'Strangers and stereotypes: The Spooks controversy and the framing of Muslims.' *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 46, no. 5 (2010): 529-539.

[39] Louise Pears, 'Ask the Audience: Television, Security and *Homeland*' *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 9, no.1 (2016): 76-96.

[40] Rolf Halse 'Counter-stereotypical images of Muslim characters in the television serial 24: a difference that makes no difference?' *Critical Studies in Television 10*, no.1 (2015):54-72.

[41] Holland, *Fictional Television*, (2020), 113

[42] Evelyn Alsultany, *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11.* New York: New York University Press, 2012, 116

[43] Ibid.

denouement, involving a high-tension cross London pursuit in which Budd is himself trapped in a bomb vest we learn that the plot was executed by jihadis in collaboration with organised crime (united in opposition to the legislative change to RIPA) aided and abetted by a corrupt police officer. The seemingly unwilling suicide bomber of episode 1 (Ali) turns out to be mastermind behind the attacks. It is melodramatic, blending Budd's failing marriage, his relationship with Montague with all the pathos and action of the usual action drama.

The show contains a deep ambivalence around counter-terrorism, showing the battle-scarred outcome (in Budd and Apsted) from Britain's involvement in the War in Afghanistan, hinting at government corruption and political ambition as being key drivers of counter-terror policy, and suggesting that counter-terror legislation might itself perpetuate terror. It received positive critiques and awards to match its high ratings figures. However, at the same time, it reanimates the terror threat; the ultimate terrorist plot is perpetrated by a self-described 'jihadi' and we are led through the violent action by a muscle- bound ex-soldier. Whiteness is secured through the narrative and characters within *Bodyguard*, articulated through and against the terror threat and counter-terror practices.

Bodyguard offers a way to understand the relationship between counter-terrorism and whiteness that remains central, even in the more complex and ambivalent counter-terror climate of the current historical moment. I argue that *Bodyguard* shows how whiteness and counter-terrorism continue to be mutually constitutive and how, even when the moral certainties of counter-terrorism are undermined, it remains within, and further bolsters a white frame of reference and experience. This article offers an analysis of the text itself given that it is a popular place through which the public encounter counter-terror discourse and thus it plays a role in forming their common sense understanding. At the same time, Bodyguard is read as a popular vernacular text, that illustrates the interconnections of security, counter-terror and whiteness that need the urgent attention of Critical Security scholars.[44]

Securing whiteness in *Bodyguard*

In this section, I use the main characters and some key scenes of *Bodyguard* to unpack the workings of whiteness in relation to counter-terrorism. It is in these images that we learn what is being protected (white people) by whom (white soldier/heroes) from what (plot spoiler: Muslim terrorists). This story represents whiteness through a counter-terrorism narrative. The move from the gung-ho Jack Bauer of *24* to the mentally scarred Budd of *Bodyguard* is a response to the intervening British experiences of counter-terror. It speaks to the challenge of reclaiming the legitimacy of counter-terror in the wake of its failings, violences and flaws. It also speaks to particularly British articulations of national identity bound up in current populist expressions of politics. I suggest that the emotional narrative of *Bodyguard* tells this counter-terror story in a way

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[44] On popular vernacular text see Kyle Grayson, 'How to read Paddington Bear: Liberalism and the foreign subject in A Bear Called Paddington.' *The British Journal of politics and international Relations* 15, no. 3 (2013): 378-393. Rhys Crilley, in 'Where We At? New Directions for Research on Popular Culture and World Politics.' *International Studies Review* (2021), early view, has argued that popular culture and world politics scholars pay closer attention to whiteness, a research agenda this article contributes to.

that can recuperate British whiteness and innocence, identifying the ways that counter-terrorism is at once part of the loss of innocence and a narrative device through which it can be reclaimed.

This exposes a white underpinning to counter-terror logics even where whiteness seems to be confronted. This whiteness is akin to what Moon calls 'ethical whiteness", a:

> key formation in which whites(as racially marked people) and whiteness (as a floating signifier) are produced through simultaneous ethos, pathos, logics and affect, agency and vulnerability, employ the terms of the human through vectors of emotion, rationalist, insecurity/security and civil society" which acts as "a conduit of violence, ethical whiteness surfaces in those moments in which whites take a long look at themselves and return their own gaze in self-possession, triumph and repetition.[45]

Ethical whiteness is produced through a melodramatic plot line, articulated via insecurities, but resolved in (and through) engagement with the moral complexities of terror and racial profiling, to produce a victorious white hero.

White victims and racial innocence

The assumed innocence of British whiteness has been put under further strain through Britain's engagement with the War on Terror and questionable counter-terror practices. This, of course, relates to the ongoing post-colonial disturbance of white innocence and the cultural response to this and the constant need for whiteness to reassert itself against perceived crisis. This section explores the use of victimhood in *Bodyguard* to show how the narrative relies upon and rearticulates ideas of whiteness to make sense of and restore an 'innocence' lost in the War on Terror. It re-establishes a position of white innocence integral to continued white hegemony and that also reaffirms the need and legitimacy for counter-terror.

Home Secretary Montague is the official object of Budd's services as *Bodyguard*. A soldier-protector of a woman is a well-worn trope, not only in television thrillers but across popular culture, here we see this disturbed. Typically, the female victim is the repository of innocence, domesticity and femininity, the 'beautiful soul', and defending her innocence is the noble deed of a masculine figure.[46] This discourse was integral to the gendered logics of the War on Terror, whereby innocent Western women were threatened by barbaric Eastern men.[47] It has a longer history in the establishment of British empire and self-image.[48] However, Montague is a public woman working in politics. Her innocence is immediately undermined in episode one when she is seen defending the government's invasion of Iraq, and as she seeks to introduce controversial counter-terrorism legislation (RIPA 18). Here, we see a victim that is not so easily defended, something that Budd actively struggles with and which seems at first glance to be a rejection of the simple racialised 'good

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[45]Charania Moon, 'Ethical Whiteness and the Death Drive: White Women as the New War Hero' in *Camera Obscura* 35, no.1(2020): 131

[46] Jean Bethke Elshtain, 'On Beautiful Souls, Just Warriors and Feminist Consciousness', *Women's Studies International Forum,* vol. 5, no. 3-4, (1982): 341-348. And Susan Jeffords, *Hard bodies: Hollywood masculinity in the Reagan era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

[47] See for example Brittain, 'Benevolent invaders'.

[48]Graham Dawson, *Soldier heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinitie*s (London: Routledge, 2013)

versus evil' dichotomies of terrorism discourses that see innocent white victims under threat from 'dangerous brown men'. She represents a white British establishment, through her position as Home Secretary, a representation underlined by class.

Yet, a sexually promiscuous and unruly woman still fits within the standard repertoire of female subjectivities in security discourse. Her loss of innocence is underscored when she begins a sexual relationship with Budd. Her corrupt/ corrupting nature is further exposed when she fails to tell Budd about the threat to his children; in the way she uses her political influence to gain access to a specialist school for Budd's son; and in her late-night attendance at the Prime Minister's home, which she implores Budd to keep secret. She is described as a sociopath by her aide. Budd is asked by counter-terror police to keep her under surveillance at the same time as protecting her. Responsibility for the War on Terror, the excesses of counter-terror are linked through Montagues' conduct and her defence of the War in Afghanistan, to politicians and politics. The drama does create space for criticism of the Afghanistan war and continued infringements on civil liberties. Though these are attributed to Montague, signifier for the 'political elite'.

There is an us and them binary invoked here that is not split along racial lines. In this moment, we can see how hierarchies of whiteness exist and how they are here used to reposition an everyday honest working-class whiteness as being distinct from a deceptive ruling class elite. The class division is underlined in a bed scene in episode three where Budd tells Montague his ambitions to be a doctor were thwarted by the lack of opportunity to secure work experience. Made clear to a British audience through the received pronunciation of Montague against Budd's Glaswegian accent. This division is a familiar rhetorical move in populist white discourse that restates a particular anti-establishment white nationalism. When Budd says he has seen too many "die for stupid causes and politicians" the audience can be on his side as he continues to defeat terrorists, whilst being removed from both the extremes of the War in Afghanistan and the questionable motives of politicians. This is familiar from populist logics that pit the idea of the people (and often more specifically the white working-class man) against the incompetent/ corrupt ruling classes. The links between populism and whiteness[49] and populism and security[50] are beginning to attract academic attention as their interrelation becomes clearer and more urgent in an increasingly racialised British politics.[51]Here we see its expression in popular counter-terror discourse, as ever, intertwined with race.

However, though white innocence is seemingly disturbed through this somewhat ambivalent object of protection, the real motivator and ultimate protective role for Budd is provided via his ex-wife (Vicky Budd) and children. In the opening scene, it is his sleeping children who he acts to protect from a suicide bomb on the train, and in episode two, it is his children's school that is threatened by a terrorist bomb plot. It is his children who the politician Montague is prepared to put at risk, and who become the target of terrorist aggression. White children are the ultimate expression of

[49] Mondon, Aurelien, and Aaron Winter. 'Whiteness, populism and the racialisation of the working class in the United Kingdom and the United States.' *Identities* 26, no. 5 (2019): 510-528.
[50] Wojczewski, Thorsten. ' "Enemies of the people": Populism and the politics of (in) security.' *European Journal of International Security* 5, no. 1 (2020): 5-24.
[51] At time of writing there is press coverage of suggestions to reduce the dependence on 'foreign; workers in the NHS, and the need to attract attention to the 'white working class' children that have been underperforming in schools.

innocence here. It is quickly apparent that even when protecting the flawed government and British establishment as represented by Montague might be questionable, what Budd, as a representative of a good counter-terror operative, really works to protect is the truly innocent white British citizen. Narratively, this is made both urgent and necessary. It requires decisive (and violent) action on his part and on the part of the authorities. In episode two, when the school is threatened we see Budd racing to stop a bomb laden van driven by two unidentified terrorist henchmen. Both men are shot and killed, the need to do this is underscored by their intended target, the children playing in the school playground. Set against a ticking bomb it invokes an effective 'heart in mouth' response, as well as a more emotional play on the desperation of a father to protect his children. The idea that an Islamic terrorist threat remains against our innocent British children justifies the counter-terrorist violence, and ultimately succeeds (though three counter-terror officers are killed in the explosion, Montague defends her actions as successful as 'no school children were caught').

The position of children as the potential victims of Islamic terror returns us to the simplicity of good innocent victim and evil terrorist attacker, where some of that moral certainty has previously (as contained in Montague's mixed position) been lost. The subject of counter-terrorism measures are these innocent white children, not just flawed politicians. The particularly British articulation of whiteness here is done alongside/via class. The establishment position is rejected and problematised, leaving in its place a more genuine and straightforward white working class/ family position, as represented by Budd and his family, which has been damaged by the War in Afghanistan, but which can still be saved through counter-terror operations when performed by ordinary heroes.

The second way that victimhood functions here is in the way that Budd and his ex-comrade Apsted are positioned as victims of the war in Afghanistan. The emphasis on Budd's struggle with his life post military service permeates the plot and both his PTSD and fractured relationship with his wife is introduced in episode one, but nowhere is it more clearly articulated than in his interactions with former solder Apsted. He meets Apsted after an "anti-war Veterans Peace Group" meeting. In which Apsted criticises the War in Afghanistan as part of a circle of violence that created the terror threats it claims to be designed to combat. Although Apsted (as will be discussed in more detail below) is certainly not an 'innocent' victim because he perpetrates terrorist violence, there is an interesting point of reflection on the War in Afghanistan articulated here. If it were not for the war, Budd says to Apsted, "you'd still have a face, I'd still have a family". The war is critiqued from the point of view of the soldiers that were injured/ traumatised through their involvement. Here, the traumas of the war in Afghanistan are captured almost entirely through the impact it had on the white British soldiers involved. It is literally etched onto their bodies, in the scarred face of Apsted and the scarred body of Budd. At no point in the series do we see or hear from any Afghanis, nor do we see what events or violences Budd or Apsted undertook to leave them so damaged. Most of Budd's difficulty about the campaign seems to be about the death of fellow soldiers "I am one of the lucky ones." This is a story about counter-terror squarely articulated in terms of the white British experience in terms of the victims that it produces and protects.

Whiteness functions as a shorthand here for innocence, thereby helping to recapture a moral justification for counter-terror that has been lost. In the words of Schick and St. Denis:

> 'Goodness and innocence are talismans of one's superiority. The claim of innocence acts as both cause and effect: one is produced through innocence as superior; superiority is claimed as a sign of one's innocence'.[52]

The subjects of counter-terror are still articulated in racialised terms, and white superiority and innocence are shaped through one another. Though the racialised dynamic of this is often missed in accounts that focus on how the Muslim 'other' is discursively constituted through their guilt the reassertion is vital to both white superiority and counter-terror violence in the circular logic of white innocence. An 'ethical whiteness' is created and deployed in this narrative of counter-terror. The impact of the War on Terror on white British identity is writ upon Apsted and Budd. Through Apsted's demise and Budd's triumph, the plot works through these traumas in a way that roots their impact squarely in the white British experience. Importantly, as a narrative much of the guilt, uncertainty and the loss of innocence is given resolution. In this section I have shown how white innocence is re-established and redeployed in racialised and racializing logics of the war on terror. In the next section I consider how the narrative structure also provides opportunity for the resolution of white racial anxieties.

White heroes

Who our heroes and enemies are tells us about the wider cultural and political context from which they emerge, and they are therefore intertwined with constructions of threat, in/security and defence. This section uses the main character of Budd to draw out links between counter-terrorism, heroism and whiteness. The self-image of hero is vital to the ongoing legitimation of counter-terror violence, as the necessary violences of the 'good guys', whilst at the same time the hero ideal is the ultimate of expression of the white masculine ideal. As Endo Lodge says of her experience of popular culture; "When I was four, I asked my mum when I would turn white, because all of the good people on TV were white, and all the villains were black and brown."[53]

Budd, like most heroes on television that have come before him, is a white man. He is an ex-soldier, a father, muscle bound yet caring. His position of father-protector established in the opening scenes where he protects his children from the suicide bomb. He is troubled, and in his depiction of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (culminating in a suicide attempt) as well as the considerable emphasis on his failed marriage throughout the show underscores his personal problems. However, even these mental health difficulties are themselves a trope of the action drama; where the flawed hero, battles to overcome his own demons/past (from Rambo to Bond). A trope that helps to establish a narrative of redemption that finds increasing expression through PTSD. A trope that works here to reaffirm white British masculinity.

His character bio reads:

> A Helmand veteran, David hides the psychological scars from his time in the army behind a cool and forceful demeanour, but the cracks show at home, where he is separated from his beloved wife Vicky and their two children. Mistrustful of politicians, especially those who

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[52] Carol D Schick and Verna St. Denis. 'Troubling National Discourses in Anti-racist Curricular Planning' *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation* (2005): 308

[53] Reni Eddo Lodge, *Why I Am No Longer Speaking to White People About Race.* (London: Bloomsbury Circus, 2016), 46

voted in favour of the conflict in the Middle East, David is ambivalent about his 'step-up' to protect the Home Secretary – Julia Montague. Torn between dedication to his job and his political ideals, and prone to volatile behaviour, he must decide where his loyalties truly lie.[54]

Much of the research into the image of the hero in popular culture and its role in the social and political culture focuses on the American superhero. In this literature, Lawrence and Jewett considered how the image of the superhero recreates the American monomyth, which they define as:

> [a] community in a harmonious paradise is threatened by evil; normal institutions fail to contend with this threat; a selfless superhero emerges to renounce temptations and carry out the redemptive task; aided by fate, his decisive victory restores the community to its paradisiacal condition; the superhero then recedes into obscurity.[55]

Though the UK context national identity and self-image are different to the US, (and its particular tropes of exceptionalism) we see this narrative arc expressed in *Bodyguard*. What is of particular interest is the way that Budd's heroic actions can help to restore the community. Dawson has written about the deep relationship between masculinity and nation expressed through stories of soldier heroes in the context of the British empire, and this soldier figure has his natural corollary in the domestic feminine that he seeks to protect.[56] In his account, he highlights the importance of soldiering in stories of heroism, nationhood, adventure and empire, and Budd's status as veteran continues this particularly British cultural emphasis on soldiering. His whiteness here is normal, his position as hero, soldier and father is not complicated by his racial identity. Though his class occasionally acts as a barrier to his acceptance in Parliament, his race does not. His whiteness is expected and needs no explanation; whiteness is the accepted and expected racial profile of heroes in this space, familiar through centuries of cultural celebration of white soldiering in the UK.

Jeffords has argued that the bodies of action heroes come to stand in for the body politics.[57] Work on heroism often focuses on the masculinities that are constructed and what these masculinities do and mean for ideas of the nation. Carroll examined how particular representations of heroic masculinity in popular culture after 9/11 worked to respond to an (imagined) crisis in masculinity.[58] Similarly, it is important to emphasise how particular ideas of whiteness are also produced in the stories of heroism and how these also respond to the (imagined) crisis in whiteness.

Reading Budd as the embodiment of British politics and a white national identity, we see he has suffered both physically and mentally from his involvement with the War on Terror, and his relationships too have suffered. Through the mental damage inflicted on Budd, and the disturbance of his home life, we see how the home (read as homeland) has been damaged through war. He, like

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[54] BBC 'David Budd' available at
https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/profiles/4dc4mN6vY71kM0Sv7dfJ9Xf/david-budd
[55] John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero* (Grand Rapids MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 6.
[56] Dawson *Soldier Heroes.*
[57] Jeffords, *Hard Bodies.*
[58] Carroll, Hamilton. *Affirmative Reaction: New Formations of White Masculinity* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

many masculine heroes before him, can be read as an attempt to work through traumas of war.[59] His ultimate mastery of the situation offers a chance to narratively overcome these struggles, and to reposition himself and the nation on the side of good, as well as repairing the relationship with his family. That is to say, it works to rearticulate a white heroism damaged by its tarnished association with the War on Afghanistan.

This elision of home and homeland is a well-worn trope of popular culture.[60] It functions to make the threat against the nation legible as threat against the (innocent) home. In the Budd household we see that the home (as nation) has been corrupted by the War on Terror. He is (reluctantly) going through a divorce with his wife and has split custody of the children. Their safety continues to be put at risk. His ability to save his children/nation gives him opportunity for redemption – to reclaim the unity lost through the War in Afghanistan. In the final scenes, where Budd is suspected of being a terrorist, the police use his wife as negotiator, presuming he will not risk her safety. The suicide vest he wears is a literal threat with the potential to destroy the Budd family. The suicide vest figuratively represents Islamic terror and this scene dramatises the Islamic terror threat to the family unit. The narrative retelling, where the bad guy can be defeated, and the home can be saved offers redemption for Budd and the stability of the home/land itself. He diffuses the Islamic terror bomb he was forced to introduce to his family and in the final scene is travelling towards his parent's house with his whole family reunited.

Furthermore, in Budd we also encounter something of the 'white saviour' or anti-racist hero, a character identified in critical race scholarship who is implicated in black people's struggle for equality and who goes on to take considerable personal risk to challenge and ultimately prevail against racist white people.[61] This character is problematic because of the work it does to redeem white people from racism, whilst denying and obscuring black people and black agency in anti-racism struggles. Though he is not actively anti-racist (meaning he does not actively fight against racism) he is not overtly racist and is therefore distanced from the much-criticised racial profiling of much counter-terror activity. He shows compassion to Ali as a suicide bomber, indeed, risking his own life to protect her in episode one: "That gun is an MCX carbine, a bullet from that would go through the both of us, but I'm trusting they're not going to shoot one of their own." He protects the Muslim woman, even when she is a threat to his own safety. Budd, through his sympathy with Apsted's position is against the war on terror and continued breaches of civil liberty. Though he doesn't take up Apsted's appeal to 'stop it' ('it' being Montague and the survival or RIPA18) it is suggested that he too is against the legislation. There is a body of work that explores how the anti-racist hero operates to reclaim white innocence against histories of white supremacy.[62] When under question following the bomb that kills Montague, he is asked why he did not stop Tahir Mahmood, who is the police's

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[59] see Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard 'The imperial warrior in Hollywood: Rambo and beyond', *New Political Science* 30, no.4 (2008): 565-578; Susan Jeffords, 'Debriding Vietnam: The resurrection of the white American male' *Feminist Studies*, 14, no.3 (1988): 525-543 on Rambo and the Vietnam war.

[60] Russell Meeuf 'Collateral Damage terrorism, melodrama, and the action film on the eve of 9/11' *Jump Cut* 48, no.4 (2006).

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[62] First identified by Kelly J. Madison 'Legitimation Crisis and Containment: The "Anti-Racist-White-Hero" Film.' *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 16 no. 4 (1999): 399-416. See also Megan D. McFarlane 'Anti-Racist White Hero, the Sequel: Intersections of Race(ism), Gender, and Social Justice' *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 32, no. 2 (2015): 81-95.

prime suspect after the attack given that he went on stage carrying a briefcase shortly before the bomb explodes. Mahmood was a press relations assistant, and he was Muslim, which is flagged when in episode one colleagues suggest his appointment to Montague's team is done to soften Montague's image. Budd is asked why he let him onto the stage and did not search him. He answers:

> If I saw grounds for a stop and search I would have searched him, but he was a vetted government aide going about official business.

In this statement he shows that he was not guilty of racially profiled stop and searches. He is distanced from the assumptions that drive the police suspicion, and which ultimately prove to be wrong. I am not suggesting that he is a successful example of white allyship, indeed at most there is an interest convergence as he continues to work to protect the white majority. Budd is not exactly a saviour for the Muslim community, but he avoids and resists overt anti-Muslim racism. This 'colour blind' pursuit of counter-terror works to obscure the racialised and racialising actions of Budd and as present in counter-terror more widely. Therefore, Budd demonstrates a myth of a 'post-racial' counter-terror,[63] whereby "they admit the existence of racism, they deny its power to determine the success or failure of its victims."[64]

There is more to be considered in the 'absence' of racism in Budd's performance of counter-terror. He (and perhaps he alone in the drama) operates not from ego or political gain, but rather in a way that is about efficiently pursuing truth and justice. He is an effective officer working on behalf of a universal good; he is acting in a way that is neutral, fair, and 'just doing his job, ma'am'. This particular performance of whiteness has been described as the white alibi:

> One of the technologies of whiteness is its ability to project itself as its own alibi. In other words, Whites have built anti-racist understandings that construct the racist as always someone else, the problem residing elsewhere in other Whites. In some instances, this alibi is a white subject's former self.[65]

In *Bodyguard,* the government is the 'someone else' of racism, providing the alibi for Budd. Again the split between the normal (anti-racist) white hero is emphasised against a political elite and a bureaucracy that sees the 'ordinary Muslim' as threat and that is rendered incompetent through political infighting and corruption.

Hunter's work on whiteness in governance is helpful here to consider how we might see Budd and his performance of counter-terror in relation to a wider association of whiteness and the governing ideal. She suggests:

> The idea that some things are 'outside' of culture and some are 'inside' frames the (apparently) seamless alignment between whiteness and governance through which technical expertise is associated with 'good practice', prioritising technique, what 'works',

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[63] Sarah Daves, 'When the Truth Isn't Enough: Anti-Racist-White Hero Framework, Tokenism, and Postracism', *PURE Insights*: Vol. 8, Article 6 (2019).
[64] Jeffery L. Bineham, 'How The Blind Side Blinds Us: Postracism and the American Dream' *Southern Communication Journal* 80, 3 (2015): 233.
[65] Leonardo Zeus and Michalinos Zembylas, 'Whiteness as Technology of Affect: Implications for Educational Praxis', *Equity & Excellence in Education* 46, no.1 (2013): 151

over relationships or culture and therefore over (human) need. It is in this way that whiteness and governing institutional power become fused.[66]

It becomes apparent through my reading of *Bodyguard* that this is true of counter-terror as security governance. Seen in this frame, counter terrorism is deeply imbricated in whiteness and governance as security practice in a way that makes understanding the linkages and manifestations particularly important. It also shows how it is necessary to think through the cultural manifestation and articulation of ideals and activities that serve and result from a particular version of whiteness as so much more than a racial category, but rather as an effective and governance regime of counter-terror.

White terrorists

In a disturbance of the more familiar racialisation of the terrorist figure, the 'dangerous brown man', *Bodyguard* presents a white terrorist figure in Apsted. Here, I use this figure to consider how whiteness is simultaneously exposed and articulated against the racialised terrorist 'other'. Apsted's character bio reads:

> Since returning to the UK, Andy has become an activist for peace in the Middle East – he blames the British government for the war and for bringing the terror back to Britain in the form of Muslim radicals. Andy is the only person David feels he can turn to when things get tough. [67]

When it is discovered that he is plotting to kill Home Secretary Montague, and subsequently shoots himself after being caught by Budd, in some ways this disturbs a lot of the traditional stereotypes about who perpetrates terrorist violence. Arguably, this plotline then destabilises the ideas of white innocence that these stereotypes rely upon and repeat. This white terrorist character (who is increasingly emerging in popular culture more widely) is interesting because whiteness in this moment is thrown into sharp relief, uncommon for a racial identity that draws much privilege and power from being an unnoticed category.

However, Alsultany urges that we consider the racialised logics that still underpin these apparent disturbances to the traditional war on terror narratives.[68] Here we see a white terrorist, but his terrorism is still explained through its association with the Middle East. It Is not terrorism inspired by white supremacy or Islamophobia. Whiteness is still present in this characterisation and in the maintenance of the racialised understanding of terrorist violence (and thus counter-terror responses). This can be seen through contrasting Apsted character with Ali. She is shown to be the ultimate mastermind of most of the terrorist violence in the show. However, her depiction is markedly different to that of Apsted. This is revealed though contrasting the type of violence they perpetrate. Apsted aims to kill the politician Montague, involved in both parliamentary support for the War in Afghanistan and further counter-terror legislation. He also shoots her driver, but it is ultimately quite a targeted attack. Ali, however, aims to blow up a train full of civilians, and later, a

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[66] Shona Hunter, *Power, Politics and the Emotions: Impossible Governance*? (London: Routledge, 2015)
[67] BBC 'Andy Apsted'.
[68] Alsultany 'Arabs and Muslims'.

school full of children. Her successful assassination of Montague involves the death of several bystanders.

Secondly, it is revealed in how they explain their motivation. For Apsted:

> "We've got kids growing up over here and all they hear about what's being done to friends and relatives over there. Who can blame them if they want to push back? And when they push back our politicians act like its come from nowhere so they can pass new laws limiting our freedoms and hitting back against them and the cycle goes on."

For Ali:

> "Because I built the device. I built all the bombs. You all saw me as a poor oppressed Muslim woman. I am an engineer. I am a jihadi …for money to build more bombs and buy more guns and spread the truth to our brothers and sisters throughout the world. For the world to be convinced that we had put a sword through the heart of the British government."

Apsted has a more reasonable and benevolent justification for his violence. He is given a greater back story and a more just explanation for his violence. His violence needs more explanation, whereas with Ali, "I am a jihadi", is enough to do this work. Ali more thoroughly takes up an identity as terrorist, and whilst there is much more that could be written about the rearticulation of Islamophobic representations in terror (not least the reframing of Muslim women from victims of an Islamic patriarchy to jihadis themselves, and the relationship to the depiction and treatment of women returning from Syria, and involvement with ISIS, that these cultural moves are enmeshed with) than I can cover here, I argue that this contrast shows the ongoing power of whiteness. Whilst being white does not prohibit someone from committing terrorist violence, it is still dissociated from a terrorist *identity*. Though it is perhaps exposed through this plot, whiteness as a position of racial superiority is not fundamentally questioned or unpacked. White privilege affords a different viewpoint on violences and a continued link between the terrorist identity and the 'other'.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that *Bodyguard* relies upon and rearticulates particular ideas of whiteness in order to make sense of counter-terrorism. The story says much about what it means to be white by articulating this against the idea of the terrorist 'other', and through a particular progressive whiteness. The white hero protects white victims from brown terrorists. Yes, there are moments in the drama where race is encountered (both literally and figuratively), and racial prejudicing and profiling are made explicit, but in these moments little is done to disturb whiteness, instead, it is renewed. The racialisation of victims, heroes and villains helps to work through anxieties around race and counter-terrorism in a post 9/11 and post Afghanistan era. This article has shown how the racialised figure of the counter-terror hero, terrorist and victims work to establish racialised boundaries. Critically, though, this article also suggests that in Security Studies analysis and understanding of this process in the past has failed to pay adequate attention to this process of racialisation, because it is yet to confront whiteness as a racialised identity.

As Sabaratnam has shown, IR theory is "underpinned by a white-subject position". So too, *Bodyguard* is underpinned by a white subject position, and as such it rearticulates whiteness (in the

context of terror) for its audience.[69] Gabriel argues an analytic focus on whiteness turns our attention away from those groups invariably problematised in race relations discourse to enable an interrogation of those processes of racialisation themselves, and what they in turn enable.[70] Here, a focus on whiteness in the story of *Bodyguard* has exposed how whiteness and counter-terrorism are mutually constitutive - it is not an incidental relationship that can be 'overcome' as we move away from simplified good versus evil tropes of the War on Terror. Rather, the white subject is essential (and essentialised) in counter-terrorism stories. It is not only that counter-terror discourse has contained anti-Muslim racisms during the War on Terror, but that counter-terrorism discourse is animated by, and narrativises, ongoing white racial anxieties. Whilst it is important to see how stories of insecurity can also be seen as places where populist imaginaries interact with national identity, terror threats and racial identities.

To return to Gabriel's typology of whiteness, there are three mechanisms at work: first, normative whiteness, which may not be explicitly racist, but which contains implicitly racialist values, aesthetics and forms of inclusion and exclusion, as apparent through the ongoing reliance on the exclusion of the Muslim terrorist in a redemptive narrative of whiteness.[71] The analytical value of this is in the exposure of race as an organising logic of counter-terror; the ongoing symbiosis of counter-terror and racialisation to articulate not only the 'other', but the 'self'. The second mechanism, ontological whiteness, is about the privileges that are "bestowed on those commonly assumed to be 'white'". In *Bodyguard,* these are expressed through both the experiences of Budd as the hero, but also through the privileges that even Apsted, as a terrorist figure, is afforded narratively. This matters because it shows that whiteness supersedes the terrorism discourse, (re)deploying and (re) inscribing an innocence that is essential to white subjectivity. And finally, there is progressive whiteness, which "condemns white pride and normative versions of whiteness yet, in which 'whites' continue to dominate both ideologically and organisationally." This describes *Bodyguard*'s incomplete disturbance of stereotypes and the potential that this presents a (white) audience to be positioned as distinct from straightforward racist views and discourse of terrorism, but which still represents terrorism entirely through a white frame of reference, and which seeks, ultimately, to secure white people and whiteness itself.

What *Bodyguard* does is provide the white alibi to counter-terrorism, where the audience of *Bodyguard* can distance themselves from the racism of the War on Terror without having to interrogate the ongoing racist and racialising binaries that lie at its core. It presents, in Moon's words an 'ethical whiteness' upon which counter-terror can be remade.[72] I have also made wider links between terrorism as an expression of and opportunity to work through racial paranoia and anxieties. The figures of *Bodyguard* also provide an opportunity to reassert a white innocence that has been only further eroded by counter-terror activities and recent foreign policy decisions. Counter-terror discourse is fuel for, and fuelled by, racial anxieties in complex ways that are worthy of more prolonged scholarly attention.

Pathos and action in the show animate the emotions necessary to establishing white collective identity. The dramatic narrative creates a fear of the terrorist 'other', and love for the innocent

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[69] Sabarantam 'IR theory white?'
[70] Gabriel, 'Whitewash'
[71] Ibid.
[72] Moon, Ethical Whiteness.

home/land. This close reading of *Bodyguard* asks that we consider the more complex ways in which whiteness is rearticulated in security cultures, beyond overt expressions of white superiority and active racisms, but through a centralised white norm that is rarely exposed or interrogated.

> Discussing racism is not the same thing as discussing 'black identity'. Discussing racisms is about discussing white identity. It's about white anxiety. It's about asking why whiteness has this reflexive need to define itself against immigrant bogey monster in order to feel comfortable, safe and secure.[73]

Bodyguard reproduces British whiteness at the same time as offering a critique of practices of counter-terrorism. It is important to be aware of these double-moves and alert to the ways that they can mar our own critical scholarship if we fail to engage with the processes and practices of whiteness as both racialised identity and organising logic in security discourse. That is not to say that criticism of counter-terror and terror cannot be anti-racist, but that they are not necessarily so.

It is important to also recognise that annunciation is not denunciation, and I do not want to suggest that simply calling out the relationship of whiteness is sufficient to undo its pernicious effects. However, I want to expose the deeply affective and effective mutual constitution of whiteness and counter-terrorism in order to move to a critique of the racialisation of counter-terror practices that are not just about calling out the anti-Muslim racism expressed in some of its contemporary manifestations, but a more fundamental recognition that counter-terrorism is itself a process of racialisation and boundary setting inseparable from whiteness. This initial foray into the linkages aims to contribute to the growing body of work in Security Studies and IR that recognises and calls out whiteness as a central identity and idea that makes much security discourse and practice possible. I argue that through analysing security, culture, and whiteness together, we can better unpack and unpick the way that terrorism acts as the figure of racial anxiety made real, and therefore undo the way that whiteness as a universal good supports the performance of counter-terror violence.

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[73]Eddo-Lodge *White people about race.*

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