

## Week 2

# History of Terrorism

## 1960s

- Conflict theory
- Political violence
- "red" terrorist groups

## 1970s and 1980s

- focus on modus operandi (hijacking)
- international terrorism
- examples: RAF, Japanese Red Army, Red Brigade (Italy, killing of Aldo Moro)

## 1990s

- national separatist groups (Ireland, Sri Lanka)
- islamist groups, introducing suicide bombing
- occurrence of Al Queda (Bin Laden), bombing of US Embassy in Tanzania and Kenya
- decline in academic interest

## post 9/11, 2001

- enormous growth in scholars and experts
- new centres
- policy advice and consultancy in demand as response to 9/11
- growth in publications

# Disciplines and approaches

## Variety of disciplines

- political science
- military science
- international relations
- communication studies
- (social) psychology

And many more disciplines. Many scholars have background in political science.

## How to study terrorism?

- behaviour of individuals or world political systems?

- talk to people or look at facts?
- causes or effects of terrorism?

## Main approaches

1. Rational or instrumental approach (broad look)
2. (Socio) psychologists (individuals and groups)
3. Multicausal approach: complicated matter, you need to look at wide variety of aspects

## Main academic journals

- Studies in Conflict and Terrorism
- Intelligence and National Security
- Terrorism and Political Violence
- Critical Studies on Terrorism
- [Perspectives on Terrorism](#)

## Main difficulties

- no general accepted definition of terrorism: how to compare results of studies using different definitions?
- subjective and politicised
- small numbers: difficult to give high assurance for hypotheses
- complex and ever-changing
- Most important problem: **Secrecy**

Issues related to secrecy:

- interviewing people: talk
- participant observation: join
- access to files and archives: consult
- ethical problems: accusations of being one-sided, biased
- reliability and validation: how reliable, how to validate?

Researcher **Jessica Stern** managed to talk to imprisoned (former) terrorist. The book *Terror in the Name of God* is the result of many interviews she held with these prisoners.

## Main characteristics of current research on terrorism

- main focus on niches: lot of attention on incidents that relatively cause few damage and harm
- based on assumption terrorism is a big threat, but this is not true for (most) Western countries
- few comparative studies and few theory testing
- selection bias to western interests
- policy oriented nature: focus on how to deal with threats, what policies to implement