

Terrorism and Counter-terrorism

Week 1 - Introduction, history and use of the word terrorism

Some facts and figures

US Department of State 2012:

- almost 7,000 terrorist attacks worldwide
- more than 11,000 deaths
- more than 21,000 injuries

Top countries hit by terrorism (from same source):

- Afghanistan: 2,632 deaths
- Iraq: 2,436 deaths
- Pakistan: 1,848 deaths
- Nigeria: 1,386 deaths
- Russia: 659 deaths

Other countries

- EU: 17 deaths
- USA: 10 deaths (zero on US territory)
- India: 231 deaths
- China: 15 deaths
- Brazil: 0

Still terrorism is high on political agenda, despite the relative small numbers of casualties in most countries.

History of Terrorism

- Terrorism is not new
- Assassins and the 11th century
- Anarchists: Propaganda of the deed, in 1870s, 1880s
- Many different groups, tactics, backgrounds, slogans

Waves in terrorism

Identified by David Rapoport. The four waves are:

1. Anarchists: 1880s
2. Anti-Colonial Wave: 1920s
3. New Left Wave: 1960s
4. Religious Wave: 1979-?

The First Wave: Anarchists

- started in Russia, spread to Europe, America, Asia
- doctrine of strategy of terror by Russian writers as Bakunin and Kropotkin
- new technologies and communication tools: telegraph, newspapers
- notorious: Narodnaya Volya, killed Russian tsar
- called themselves terrorists
- 1890s: golden age of assassination

The Second Wave: Anti-colonialists

- struggle for self-determination
- against British and French colonial rule (amongst others)
- guerrilla tactics (hit and run)
- called themselves 'freedom fighter', not terrorist
- example: IRA, FLN (Algeria), Irgun (militant Zionist against British rule)

The Third Wave: new Left Wave

- Vietnam War was big driver, especially in Western Europe and America
- Context of cold-war
- international terrorism: PLO
- tactics: hostage takings and hijackings
- main goal to get attention for a cause or free co-fighters, not to kill

The Fourth Wave: Religious Wave

- 1979 revolution in Iran
- 1979 USSR occupied Afghanistan
- 1979 storming and occupation of Grand Mosque in Mecca
- 1979 start of new era on muslim calendar
- Islamic, Sikh, Jewish, Christian were all used as motivation for terror
- **Modus operandi:**
 - assassinations
 - hostage takings
 - suicide bombings
- Hezbollah: fighting US and French military forces in Lebanon, suicide bomb attacks on military headquarters
- Al Qaeda

Use of the term 'Terrorism'

- 1901, shooting of **US President McKinley**: no mentioning of terrorism. "Shot twice by anarchist"
"Washington stunned by blow"

- different in languages

Defining terrorism

Four reasons why:

1. Terrorism is a "contested concept"
2. Linked to delegitimisation and criminalisation
3. Many types of "terrorism" with different forms and manifestations
4. Changes in meaning in more than 200 years of its existence

1. *Contested Concept*

- one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter

2. *Delegitimisation and criminalisation*

Adding political groups to the list of terrorist organisation, with far reaching consequences. This can be used as a political tool to get rid of an enemy group. Or asked to delist a certain group.

Hezbollah was added to the EU terrorist group in July 2013.

3. *Types of terrorism*

Categorisation by Europol:

1. Religiously inspired
2. Ethno-nationalist and separatist
3. Left-wing and anarchist
4. Right-wing
5. Single-issue

Why is 'state terrorism' not among the Europol categories?

4. *Changes in meaning*

- Semantic shift in 200 years
- *Terrorist* was not used in anti-government sense before late 19th early/20th century

Need for a definition

Why is it so important:

- arrive at successful **international cooperation**
- sharing data and extradition: **judicial measures**
- absence of definition is **invitation to abuse**, to deal with political opponents
- **Research**, make it possible to compare different reports

Kofi Annan tried, Secretary General of the Un (1997-2006) tried to achieve a consensus on the definition of terrorism. His attempt:

"Deliberate killing of civilians and non-combatants for political purposes."

Moral message: terrorism is unacceptable and unjustifiable

Rejected because:

- idea of foreign occupation and state terrorism as justification
- problem with "under all conditions"
- rejection against the idea that state could act in a terrorist way, the definition does not explicitly exclude states

We have international law, humanitarian law and the law of war. Rather label use and misuse of violence by states as war crimes or abuse of power. There are international legal instruments that we can use to fight war crimes, these instruments are missing in the field of terrorism.

Academic attempts

- 1988: Albert Jongman and Alex Schmid: collecting many definitions and out of these distilled 22 key components
- 2011: Alex Schmid updated the definition and following the same procedure came with a list of 12 key components

These 12 key components, it should:

1. say something about a **doctrine** and/or **practice** of violent action
2. refer to the **context** in which terrorism is employed as a tactic
3. contain the concept of **physical violence** or the threat thereof
4. say something about **threat-based communication** processes
5. mention that terrorism instills **fear**, dread, panic or more anxiety
6. say something about the **direct victims**
7. point at the fact that the **direct victims** are not the **ultimate target**
8. say something about the **perpetrators**
9. mention that terrorism is predominantly **political**
10. refer to the **intent** of acts of terrorism
11. contain the motivations to **engage** in terrorism
12. mention that terrorist acts form part of a **campaign** of violence

Essence of terrorism

- Agreement: many different elements
- Instrument or tactic to achieve certain goals
- Use of force is not its goal (or expressive terrorism, the violence itself is both method and goal)
- Fear as key component, spreading fear more important than spreading fear

High levels of fear in Netherlands, a country that does not experience a lot of terrorism. What happened:

- 2006, killing of Theo van Gogh
- 40% believed terrorism to be among most important problems
- one attack, one person, one victim
- a lot of fear from single action

Main target

Brian Jenkins 1975: "Terorists want a lot of people watching and not a lot of people dead"

Direct target are rarely the main target, it's more about the message to you and me.

The impact

- Kill a few, scare a million. We should try not to over-react.
- Media, politicians and other public figures play an important role
- Impact can sometimes be enormous - on society and relations between communities - on the economy

Week 2 - History of Terrorism Studies, disciplines & approaches, and key authors and centres

Recent 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

Week 3 - 5 Assumption on Terrorism

Five Assumptions

1. Terrorism is caused by poverty
2. Terrorists are crazy
3. Terrorism is increasingly lethal
4. Terrorism is predominantly anti-western
5. Terrorism is successful

First Assumption

The assumption that poverty triggers terrorism is almost as old as the first attempts to understand terrorism.

- mostly put forward by politicians and public figures
- stated by Colin Powell, US Secretary of State
- and by Desmond Tutu, Archbishop South Africa

Are they right are wrong? And why is it assumed?

- poverty leads to lack of opportunities
- anger towards people that are better off
- blaming government
- grievances
- violence as last resort to put something on the political agenda
- perceived correlation between poverty and terrorism, as terrorism occurs often in poor countries
- some left-wing terrorist groups claim to fight for the poor

Why does it matter?

- clear implications for counterterrorism
- if true, CT-efforts should be aimed at eradicating poverty
- allocating scarce resources, so spend it to fight the causes of terrorism

It is mainly politicians that make the claim. A causal link sounds reasonable.

Empirical evidence

Characteristics of some individual terrorists:

- Osama bin Laden: from rich Saudi family
- Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, so-called Christmas Day Bomber: tried to bomb a plane heading for Detroit in 2009. He was from a well-to-do Nigerian family and studied in London

- Anders Breivik
- Ulrike Meinhof (Rote Armee Fraktion): from good family
- Jihadi terrorists in Europe: mainly from migrants or migrants. From lower parts of society, but not poorer than other immigrants
- Terrorists in the developing world: certainly not poorer than their fellow citizens

Look at countries

High impact countries:

- Iraq
- Afghanistan
- India
- Russia
- Nigeria

World Bank, GDP per capita 2012:

- Iraq, upper middle income
- Pakistan: lower middle income
- Nigeria: lower middle income
- Russia: high income
- Afghanistan: in bottom. But 15 countries are left developed
- 10 poorest countries have low impact from terrorism, exception: Congo

And in the past?

- Left-wing terrorism in 1960s and 1970: Germany, Italy, Japan
- were and are among richest countries in the world

Conclusion

Both when looking at individuals and countries there seems to be no evidence for a direct link between poverty and terrorism

Academic evidence

- **James Piazza:** "Rooted in Poverty?: Terrorism, Poor Economic Development and Social Cleavages"
- **terrorism at a macro-level**
 - different definitions of poverty and different variables
 - example: low per capita income, high levels of illiteracy, low life expectancy, lack of employment opportunities
 - Conclusion: all these poverty-related variables could **not be linked to terrorism**
- **Alan Krueger and Jitka Maleckova:**

- link between poverty, education and terrorism
- focus on the militant wing of Hezbollah
- Conclusion: "Any connection between poverty, education and terrorism is indirect, complicated and probably quite weak."
- Response to political conditions and long-standing feelings of indignity and frustration
- little to do with economics

Myth

- No support for the idea of a direct link between poverty and terrorism
- indirect link: hard to prove