2.1: History of Terrorism

Last week we discussed the definition of terrorism and the nature of the phenomenon. This week, we are looking into the study of terrorism and counterterrorism.

Here's a list of topics that we are going to discuss: The History of Terrorism studies and the disciplines and approaches. Scholars and different centers have produced many reports and studies that have been published in the last couple of decades. We are going to have a look at the names and faces of some of the key authors and where they conducted their studies. And we are looking at an important part and that is challenges and dilemmas. Doing social research in general is difficult, but studying terrorism is particularly difficult. Think about the problem of secrecy. And finally, we take a look at the current state of the art: What key authors, key scholars said about the quantity and quality of what has been produced in recent years.

In this video we are going to look at the History of Terrorism and counter-terrorism studies. Terrorism is not new, and the same holds for the study of this phenomenon. We are going to look at modern day terrorism. Meaning the terrorism that emerged in the late 1950s, early 1960''s.

What did they focus on in those days? They focused on, for instance, *Conflict Theory*. Why do people fight each other? Why do they use violence? Especially with the political science background they looked at the new phenomenon off recent decolonization, riots, violence. But also riots and violence in Western European cities and North American cities. So the political violence in general was studied either under the name *Terrorism Studies* or *Political Violence Studies*. The groups they looked at were anti-imperialist and revolutionary terrorist groups.

One of them was an organization called the Weather Underground that started on a campus in North America. It can be labeled as a Marxist, Leninist, left wing kind of Terrorism. In those days, I don't think they used that term. But it's definitely how we would label it now. And it's the start of a number of red terrorist groups that would dominate the news in the 1970s. '

The 1970's and 1980's saw more attention to *the modus operandi* of terrorist groups: the techniques, the methods they used to select targets. The targets of those days were a hijackings and hostage takings. Here are a few examples of red organizations that were active in these times. So, people with a Marxist, Leninist background, extremist Left groups. You see the logo of the *Rote Armee Fraktion*, which was active in Germany. If you want to know more about it, I can recommend to watch the movie "Der Baader Meinhof Komplex". A very interesting movie that shows you a bit of the context in which the group was operating those days and also the motivations of some of the individual members to join that struggle. And also a lot of violence that was connected to that group: the Baader Meinhof Komplex.

You also see a picture here of *Alberto Moro*: a politician in Italy who was taken hostage by the Red *Brigade* in Italy. Again, a source for a lot of filmmakers to make movies about, I can recommend "Buongiorno Notte", a very nice movie, that looks into the dilemmas also of those who were involved in taking,this man hostage. In the end I think this particular hostage taking was disastrous for many people including the Red Brigade itself.

The third picture is of the *Japanese Red Army*, an active group not only in Japan but they also stormed the French Embassy in the Netherlands in 1974, trying to press the release of one of their fighters. They actually managed to do so and they managed to get away with it, on a plane. In the end they managed to escape to Syria.

That international connection was also something of great interest to researchers in those days, the international dimension, the combination of the Japanese Red Army and Palestinian groups attacking in Europe or in Singapore. It was really very international in those days and of course researchers were very much interested in how this groups operated.

In the 1990's, as in previous decades, scholars focused mainly on the topics of those days: the groups that were active, the way they staged attacks and the way governments reacted to that. In the 1990s, these were the Nationalist Separatist Groups. Of course, they were active in the decades before that, but there was a lot of study on the *IRA (*the *Irish Republican Army*) fighting in the United Kingdom, and on the *ETA* (the Basque separatist group in Spain). But also on groups in India and Sri Lanka, the *Tamil Tigers* for instance.

Another type of terrorism that we are studying is what we call Islamist groups. It is a difficult term, but let me label it as Islamist groups, as most scholars did in those days. They were looking at, for instance, *Hamas, Hezbollah*, and the reaction of the Israeli and other authorities to new types of attacks, suicide attacks for instance.

There was also attention for the first time to a new group. Here you see a quote by the *CIA.* A quote that also appears in the report of the commission that looked into the terrorist attacks on 9/11. The quote is from that report. They are saying the CIA "noticed a recent stream of reports about bin Laden and something called al-Qaeda."

That was in 1995 and a few years later there was a lot more attention to Al Qaeda. That was after the attacks on the US Embassies in *Dar Es Salaam* and Nairobi in East Africa.

But in general the 1990s saw a decline in academic interest. We could not have known in those days that *Al Qaeda*, Islamist terrorism, and other types of terrorism would be so dominant in the last 12 years. In those days, there was a decline in interest. Fewer and fewer scholars were focusing on terrorism as an interesting subject to study.

Post 9/11

But 'something called Al Qaeda' received a lot more attention after the biggest terrorist attack ever. The ones on 11 September 2001 when almost 3000 people were killed.

That attack is also the starting point of an enormous growth in the field of terrorism and counterterrorism study. An enormous growth in terms of the number of scholars and experts that were looking into this phenomenon. Most of them today are post 9/11 researchers. I'm one of them. We also saw a number of new research centers being established.

The Center of Terrorism and Counter-terrorism at Leiden University is one of them. And we saw an enormous increase in training, policy advice and consultancy as governments wanted answers to all kinds of questions: Who is threatening us? Why? What can we do about it? How do we make sure that we don't do the wrong things and do the right things? All kinds of questions popped up. And scholars and research centers try to answer some of these questions and provide their services.

This resulted in an enormous growth of reports, books, articles and publications. Here you see two graphs.
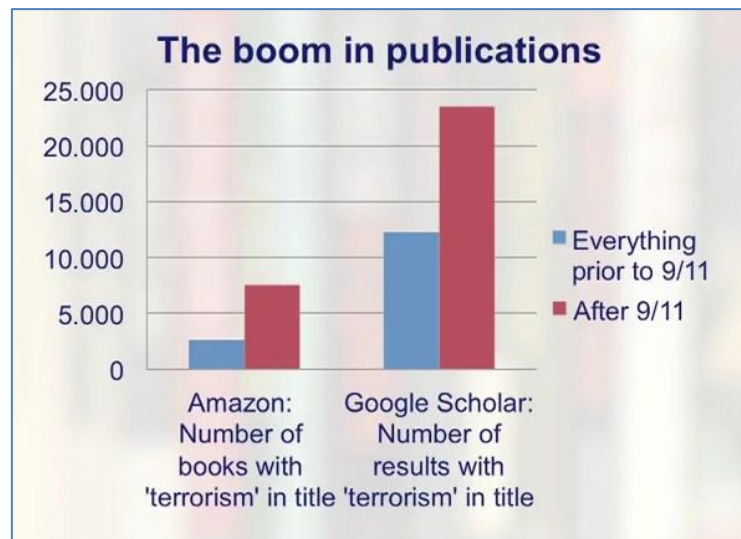
The first columns are a look at *Amazon (www.amazon.com):* The number of books with 'Terrorism' in the title. The number of titles is more than doubled after 9/11. On the left hand side (in blue) you see every title on terrorism published in the years before 9/11. That means an enormous growth in the number of publications and the same holds for more academic publications.

If you look at *Google scholar (www.scholar.google.com)* and the number of articles with 'Terrorism' in the title, those have more than doubled in 12 years time.

Summary

So what have we learned? We looked into the development of terrorism and counter-terrorism studies starting in the early 1960's with just a handful of scholars. Then a growth in the 1970's and 1980's and a decline in the 1990's which was followed by an enormous increase after the attacks of 9/11.

In the next video we are going to look at the various disciplines and approaches of research into terrorism and counter-terrorism.

2.2 Disciplines & Approaches

In the last video, we discussed the history of terrorism studies.

In this video we are going to look at the approaches and disciplines behind that term. I think it is safe to say that the phenomena of terrorism and counter-terrorism have been studied by a wide variety of scholarly disciplines. Here are just a few examples:

*Political science: Scholars in that field are very much interested in where terrorism fits in political systems, how it might be produced by political systems and how it influences that same system. What impact does terrorism have on political processes, on decision making, on how governments act or react to terrorist incidents?

*Military science and war-studies. The term says it all. They are mainly interested in the use of force, the use of the military to fight terrorism.

- Variety of disciplines
  - Political Science
  - Military Science
  - International Relations
  - Communication Studies
  - (Social) Psychology

*International Relations. Terrorism is   high on national political agendas, but also on the international one. Scholars in the field of international relations want to know who puts terrorism on the agenda and why and what impacts the fight against terrorism has on relationships between countries. Does it lead to cooperation, or more conflict? These are just a few questions they are interested in.

*Communication studies. Last week, we mentioned the fact that terrorism is a tool for terrorists to spread a message, to create fear, to have an impact on society. Our scholars in the field of communication studies want to know how this works: What is the role of the media? What circumstances influence whether or not a country is turned upside down by a terrorist attack. Or how can you limit the impact of terrorism on societies.

*Social psychology. It is of interest to people who study terrorism. There are quite a number of books which have 'the mind of the terrorist' in their title. We want to know what they think? How do they behave? Are they different from you and me, or not? Are they crazy or not? We will discuss that also later.

What are their characteristics, and what about group processes. Who radicalizes, and who not? How to de-radicalize persons. All these are issues that are of importance in the fight against terrorism and that are studied by people in the field of psychology and social psychology.

But there are many more disciplines that study the phenomena of terrorism and counterterrorism. Here is a blurb with a number of them, ranging from conflict studies to international law, public administration, police science, actually there are too many disciplines to mention them all. And there's no dominant one, but I should mention that many scholars have a background in political science.
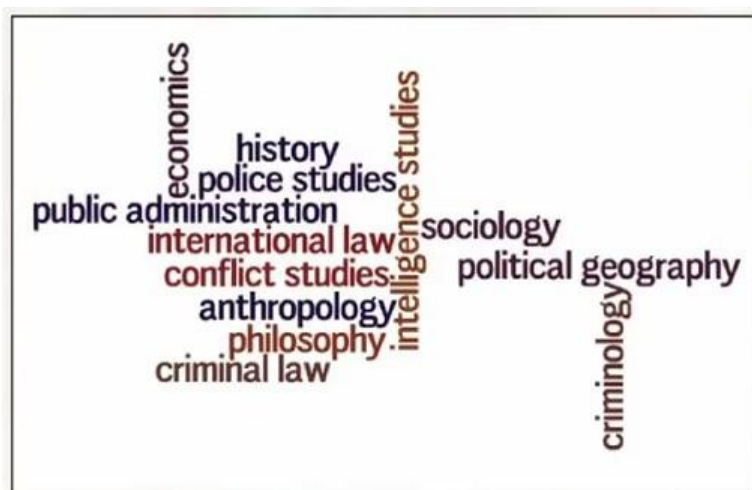
**How to study and understand terrorism and counterterrorism. 3 approaches:**

Where to start approaching this question? Are we going to look at the behavior of individuals? Or look at the larger picture, the world political system and how terrorism fits in? Do we start very small or look at something very big? Are we going to talk to people? Approach them? Try to interview of terrorist and people that fight terrorism?

- How to study terrorism?
  - Behaviour of individuals or world political system?
  - Talk to people or look at the facts?
  - Causes or effects of terrorism?

Or are we going to look at the facts? Are we going to get our data? Look at, for instance, archives? And are we going to look at the causes or the effects of terrorism? Just basic questions with different approaches, and each with different challenges and dilemmas, which we're going to focus on a little bit later.

There are many different <u>practical</u> approaches to study terrorism and counter-terrorism, but what about the <u>theoretical</u> ones? Currently there are three main approaches.

1. The first one is the <u>rational or instrumental approach</u>. This approach tries to understand terrorism and terrorists as rational actors or people that want to achieve certain political goals. Their terrorist activities, their attacks, are an instrument to that. Those are often the result of a cost-benefit-analysis. *Martha Crenshaw* was one of the early scholars that looked at terrorism as a rational act and looked at terrorists as rational actors.

   Martha Crenshaw

2. The second main theoretical approach is that of <u>social psychologists</u>. *Jerrold Post* is one of the leading authors in this field, and we already mentioned some of the questions he and his colleagues like to address which are basically focused on the thinking and acting of individuals and that of smaller groups. This is the main distinction with the rational or instrumental approach which focuses more on the wider political systems, political behavior and political processes.

3. The third main academic or theoretical approach is the <u>multi-causal approach</u>. I'm not sure if this is a well defined approach as most academics would fit in this category as there is wide spread understanding that terrorism is highly complex, and

   Jerrold M. Post

   that there is not one single explanation for terrorism. If you want to understand terrorism you will have to look at many different causes. I think I would fit in that category, I think we have to look in a wide variety of causes if we want to understand terrorism and counter-terrorism.
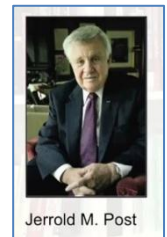
- Today's three main approaches
  - Rational or instrumental approach
  - (Socio-)psychological approach
  - Multicausal approach

Summary

To sum up, there are many different ways to study terrorism and counter terrorism. There are many different disciplines ranging from political science to police studies. And there are three main academic approaches: 1. the rational instrumental approach, 2. the social psychological approach, 3. multicausal approach.

Next time you read an article, try to find out the background of the author and the approach he or she takes in trying to understand terrorism.

In the next video, we're going to look at the key authors and key centers of terrorism studies.

2.3: Key Authors & Centers

In a previous video, I mentioned some of the leading authors in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism studies. In this video, we look at some other examples of key authors, very important centers and key journals in my area of expertise.

Key Authors

Here's a list of some of the most well known, most relevant, most often quoted authors in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism studies. Have a look at the list. What do you notice? Look at the first names, you see very few women among them: *Anne Speckhard, Jessica Stern, Martha Crenshaw* (we already mentioned her) and my colleague *Beatrice de Graaf*. We will come back to this later.

An interesting list of interesting people, and if you want to know more about them I have added a list of these people with their main publications in the readings.
(https://www.coursera.org/learn/terrorism/supplement/f4xMG/key-authors)

The key research centers include think-tanks, NGOs, and of course many academic institutes that focus on terrorism, counter-terrorism, radicalization etc. Here are just a few places where I think the most prestigious centers are based. That is in Washington DC and surrounding area. Think of the *University of Maryland*, just outside the Beltway and downtown Washington, *Rand Corporation* in Arlington. *Georgetown University*, also not really in downtown Washington, but Washington based centers are among the key centers in the field of terrorism studies. Same holds for London where you find quite a number of universities and think-tanks that focus on terrorism and counter-terrorism. One that has done so for quite a while is based in *St. Andrews*, all the way up in Scotland. If I had to pick one institute that is among the most prestigious ones, it would probably be St. Andrews. Outside Europe and America, you have an institute in Israel*: Herzliya* and one in Singapore, which I would count among the leading ones in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism studies.

- Washington DC
- London
- St Andrews
- Herzliya
- Singapore

I mentioned the enormous increase in terrorism studies and the establishment of many new centers after the attacks of 9/11, the *Centre of Terrorism and Counter Terrorism* of Leiden University is one of them. Together with the 'neighbors': the *International Centre for Counter Terrorism*, I believe that the Hague is one of the new institutes that also play a role in this field of study. The same holds for a number of institutes in Scandinavia: Oslo, Stockholm. In Spain there are expertise centers in Madrid and also more recent phenomenon is the *Centre of Excellence of NATO* on Terrorism in Ankara. In Australia you have important centers of knowledge in Melbourne, and I would also like to mention one centre in the United States that has produced very interesting results and much training to people working in the field of terrorism: the *Oklahoma Center for Terrorism Studies*, which was established after the attack by *Timothy McVeigh* in 1995, who blew up a building there, killing 150 people. One of the initiatives that came out of that attack was a center for excellence.

Where do you find the main academic output of these research centers and individual scholars? Of course increasingly on the Internet: Web blogs, etc. But good old journals are still important today, especially in the academic world. Here are the five leading ones in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism studies.

From left to right and from oldest to newest you see "studies in Conflict and Terrorism", next to it you find "Intelligence and National Security" and in the middle "Terrorism and Political Violence". Then the two other ones, you could say they are the most rebellious and the newest kid on the block: "Critical Studies On Terrorism" offers a forum for authors that have a different view on the study of terrorism, and maybe in particular on the way terrorism is dealt with by states. It is a more critical journal (as the title already suggests) The latest one, "Perspectives On Terrorism" is an open online journal offering a platform for many authors who can write and publish, but also readers who can freely access the studies that are published in this journal.

When I presented the list of authors in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism studies, I asked you if you noticed anything particular about that list. Look at this list projected on a map as well as that of the centers and the journals.

What do you see? Do you see something remarkable? What about this statement: "The study of terrorism and counter-terrorism is not only a male dominated discipline, but also a heavily western dominated discipline"? My next question would be: is this a problem and if so, why is this a problem?

How would I have answered that question? I do think that the study of terrorism and counter-terrorism is a male dominated, western dominated discipline. Look at the facts. Look at the map. Do I think this ia a problem? To some extent, yes. About male dominance I would like to give my dear friend and colleague *Dr. Beatrice de Graaf* the opportunity to say something, as she is the author of a very interesting book published in Dutch called "Dangerous Militant Women". She has an interesting opinion on this.

>> "Hi there, my name is Beatrice de Graaf. I'm a researcher at the *Centre for Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism* here in. I am an historian by training. Let us reflect a little bit about what Edwin Bakker said about male dominance in terrorism research. Is this true? Well, historically most of the academic, scientific disciplines in the world do have a male dominance, unfortunately enough, however, it might just be the guise that is in the terrorism research business, women are slightly on the march. There is some over-representation compared to other disciplines of female engaging in terrorism research. Take for example, *Martha Crenshaw*. She is one of the most famous terrorism researchers there is nowadays. She could be considered the 'godmother of terrorism research' from a historical perspective. She wrote a book: "Terrorism Context" which is still a seminal work for students to learn more about the histories, the origins of terrorism. And there are a number of other female researchers who interviewed, who worked with, female terrorists themselves, who wrote great, terrific books on female terrorism. For example, *Mia Bloom*, she wrote a book on the reasons why female engage in terrorism called "Bombshell". And there's another book by *Jessica Stern* on suicide terrorism. But there is also an important study of *Anne Speckhard* of women engaged in, for example in *Chechnya*, The Chechnyan war on terrorism. So, just to round this point up. There is, indeed, male dominance in the terrorism research, but women are on the march." >>

What about western dominance? I do think that is a problem. There are too few non-western scholars from Africa, Asia, Latin America and it has resulted in much attention to terrorism in the west or against the west a far less attention to terrorism elsewhere. If we look at the map of terrorist incidents worldwide we know that most terrorism takes place outside the western world.

What about the study of counter-terrorism? If we look at, for instance, Pakistan, there is much attention for counter-terrorism in Pakistan and how that can help us to increase safety and security in the western part of the world, but what about the impact it has on Pakistan? What about what terrorism does to Pakistan itself? There is much less attention to that.

Think about the statement about labeling terrorists. Here you see a picture of a man who killed a number of people in a cinema near Denver, and the statement says: "I shot 71 people and killed 12 of them. If I were a Muslim, they would call me a terrorist."

What do the makers of this statement want to show? What do they want to hint at? And do you agree with that? I am not sure. But I do think that western media, society, and scholars, might be a bit biased when it comes to labeling terrorism, especially when Muslims are involved.
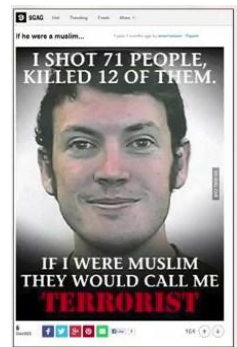
Summary

Summarizing this video: we have seen that most authors in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism studies are either based in North America or in Europe. This western bias has some negative implications for research and it is good to be aware of that. Hopefully this will change in the years to come.

In the next video, we discuss some of the practical challenges and dilemmas when doing research on terrorism and counter-terrorism.

2.4: Challenges & Dilemma's

Now we know more about the history of terrorism studies. The main disciplines and approaches, and we also mentioned a number of persons and institutes that researched terrorism and counterterrorism. I can assure you that all these scholars and experts find it difficult to study this phenomenon. Why is this the case? What challenges and dilemmas are they confronted with? Here is an overview of the main difficulties.:

- No generally accepted definition
- Subjective and politicised
- Small numbers
- Complex and ever-changing

- In video 1.4 we discussed the problem of definitions and why the lack of one is an obstacle in doing research on terrorism: For instance, comparative research. How can I compare your results of a study on terrorism with my results if we do not use the same definition? A lack of a definition is a problem in doing research.

- The second difficulty for research is the fact that terrorism is subjective and politicized. Think about researching counterterrorism. Then you have to rely on reports by governments, by agencies that deal with terrorism. Their vision on terrorism might be different than yours, and you have to be aware of the fact that there is a political agenda behind it. This has, of course, an impact on the usability of these kind of reports.

- Then there's the problem of small numbers. How can small numbers in terms of terrorism constitute a problem? Of course, we should be happy about the fact that in many parts of the world there isn't that much terrorism. But for researches it is difficult because it is easier to come up with very general statements and theories if the numbers are high. When you have a lot of cases you can say more precisely why people join terrorist groups or why they use a certain tool. This is not the case for terrorism, the numbers are low, but let's be happy about that.

- Number four on the list of main difficulties in doing research on terrorism and counterterrorism is the fact that these are very complex phenomena and that they are changing all the time. The terrorism and counterterrorism of today looks quite different from that of a couple of decades ago.

- But the most challenging problem in doing research on terrorism and counterterrorism, is secrecy. How to deal with the secrecy that surrounds both terrorism and counterterrorism? How can we learn about the actors involved? How to understand their motivations: Why they do things, how they organize things with all that secrecy that surrounds it. Think about the names of many of these actors. We have intelligence services but we mostly refer to them as secret services. The same holds for terrorists and terrorist

The problem of secrecy
- Interviewing people
- Participant observation
- Access to files and archives
- Ethical problems
- Reliability and validation

  organizations. They also sometimes have names that indicate secrecy. All that secrecy involved is an obstacle in doing research. For instance: how do you interview these people? What about the opportunities to do so, which is standard practice in social research? When you want to know more about people, you knock on their door and you ask if you can have an interview. This is very difficult in terrorism and counterterrorism studies. And what about participant observation, (meaning that you join a certain actor for a while, a counterterrorism agency or terrorist organization) because you want to know what's going on there. The chances that you will be allowed to do that are very, very small. The same holds for trying to get much information from the police and secret services. I tried to get access to files and archives, especially with very sensitive operational information. The chances that you will get access to this data is very small.

- And there are ethical problems. Even if you manage to get access to certain individuals or files, you run the risk of being blamed of being biased or too understanding. This mainly holds for having interviews with terrorists or alleged terrorists. People might think you are unethical. And the same holds for working with all kinds of police and intelligence organizations. There are a lot of groups of people who think you should not do that.

- This is related to the fifth problem: reliability and validation. If you interview these people, if you get access to their sources, they might try to fool you. They might give you their version of the truth, they might try to influence you, and it's very difficult, with all that secrecy involved, to validate the information you get.

Solutions

One scholar that managed to overcome the secrecy problem is *Jessica Stern*, a leading scholar from *Harvard* that tried to answer the question why religious militants kill. She wrote a book "Terror in the Name of God". And she thought that the only way to answer the question "why do these people kill?"was to talk to them. So she talked to prisoners around the globe that in the past wanted to be suicide terrorists or wanted to kill others in the name of God. She got access to these prisons. It was an enormous effort to gain the trust of these people and also the trust of prison authorities, and in the end she interviewed quite a few of them, showing that it is possible to overcome the problem of secrecy. I think it is one of the best efforts to try and understand the motivations of people to kill others in the name of God.

Jessica Stern
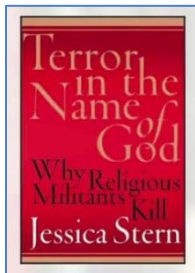
Here at the *Centre for Terrorism and Counterterrorism* of Leiden University, we have tried to talk to former terrorists and people who allegedly recruit for the jihad in Syria. We think this is important to try to do. At the same time we have good relationships with law enforcement, the police intelligence community, with the aim to better understand these actors. The secrecy involved in the work of these actors remains an enormous obstacle.

In sum, there are many difficulties and challenges, and I guess that secrecy is the most important one.

In the next video, we see what scholars and experts have produced despite these challenges.

2.5: Current state of the Art

In the previous session, we discussed the challenges and dilemmas when doing research on terrorism and counterterrorism. In an earlier video, we showed enormous increase in studies, centers and researches in the field of terrorism studies after 9/11.

But what insights has this boom produced? And the most important question, do we know much more about terrorism and counterterrorism than before 9/11?

Leading Scholars

The answers to these questions by some of the leading scholars in the field show a relatively critical attitude towards the products of the study of terrorism. But, in more recent statements, they seem to be rather positive about the kind of research that has been done in recent years.

Andrew Silke, for instance (who in 2004 wrote a very critical book about the results of terrorism studies in the immediate aftermath of 9/11) noticed in 2009 that the field of terrorism studies is beginning to stabilize from The biases in focus in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 and the war on terror. And *Magnus Ranstorp*, who is affiliated with the *Swedish National Defense College*, expressed the need for vigorous debate, critical self-reflexivity, and alternative analytical assumptions and approaches. The third quote is from *Alex Schmid*, who is a fellow at *the International Center for Counterterrorism* here in The Hague. He is rather positive about the latest developments. In 2011 he wrote that terrorism studies has never been in a better shape than now.

- Andrew Silke (2009): The field of terrorism studies is beginning to stabilise from the biases in focus in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 and the war on terror

- Magnus Ranstorp (2009): The need for vigorous debates, critical self-reflexivity and alternative analytical assumptions and approaches

- Alex Schmid (2011): Terrorism Studies has never been in better shape than now

Main characteristics

Looking at these statements, and having studied other works that look into the state of the art in my field of study, the following issues stand out. These are main characteristics including both strong points and weaker points:

- one of them is the <u>focus on niches</u>. A lot of terrorism researchers look into very specific types of terrorism or modus operandi. A good example is the interest in terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. A lot of books, articles and reports have been published about that. But this is not the most common type of terrorism. It's a worrisome development, but some say too much attention has been focused on this. Another example is *lone wolf terrorism*, *or lone operator terrorism*. Very interesting, many people remember the horrible attack in Norway by *Anders Breivik*. We want to know what motivates these people, why they do it. What can we do against it? But if we look at all incidents on terrorism, this is such a marginal phenomenon. It represents less than one percent of all attacks. Maybe it's only one-tenth of a percent. So we have to be careful. Do we devote a lot of attention to these very specific types of terrorism? However interesting they are, although we focus on the terrorism that most countries deal with every day.

- A second characteristic of the state-of-the-art of terrorism and counterterrorism studies is the fact that it's based on <u>the assumption that terrorism is a very big threat</u>, that terrorism constitutes of major attacks. And if we look at the facts we see that in most countries terrorism is not a big physical threat and that most terrorist attacks are not of the scale of 9/11, Bombay or other major events. An issue of concern is the characteristic that the state-of-the-art of terrorism studies is not focusing on comparative studies and that there's few theory testing. This is a problem. I'll come back to that later. Now we are going to do something about it. We are going to compare the theory and practice, something that needs to be done more according to many scholars in the field of terrorism studies.
- Next is the issue of the <u>selection bias to Western interests</u>. I have already given the example of Pakistan. Much attention is given to the threat posed by terrorism from Pakistan to the West, and much less attention how terrorism affects Pakistan, and Pakistani.
- Another characteristic <u>is the policy oriented nature of research</u>. I think that is a positive side the state-of-the-art of terrorism studies. There has been much research into questions that authorities have, governments have. How to deal with this threat? And much of the studies tried at least to give an answer to that by providing a studies to questions that are relevant, especially in the field of counterterrorism.

> - Main characteristics
>   - Focus on niches
>   - Based on assumption of big threat
>   - Few comparative studies & few theory testing
>   - Selection bias to western interests
>   - Policy oriented

And then, the fundamental question. Do we know much more about terrorism and counterterrorism than 12 years ago? I think the answer is yes. We do know much more. But, of course, there are un- and under-researched issues: topics that still need to be addressed. For a list of them, see the link to the journal prospectus on terrorism, which you find in the recommended readings. (https://www.coursera.org/learn/terrorism/supplement/f4xMG/key-authors)

Summary

To sum up, we do know more about terrorism. And academia think-tanks have produced interesting assumptions on causes, mechanisms and processes regarding terrorism and counterterrorism. But we also notice there's been a lack of theory testing and the testing of assumptions, and that's not a good thing. Why not? These assumptions are very often the basis of counterterrorism policies. So if the assumptions are right, this is a good thing. But if the assumptions are wrong, maybe our counterterrorism policies are wrong. So we need to test them.

And that is what we are going to do. We have selected five interesting assumptions, either because they are challenged or the opposite: they're very much trusted on the basis of policy making. Now these five assumptions are the following.

First is, terrorism is caused by poverty. Terrorists are crazy. Terrorism is increasingly lethal. And the last two are terrorism is predominantly anti-Western, and terrorism is successful.

Or is it? What about these assumptions? Are they true? Partly true? False? Or do we have to qualify them as myth? That's what we're discussing next week.