

## **Editorial note**

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*Social Cosmos* is a scientific journal composed by students of Von Humboldt College, the honours program of the department of social sciences at Utrecht University. Von Humboldt College challenges its students to both deepen and broaden their knowledge of and insights in the social sciences by crossing the disciplinary borders in this field of knowledge. For this issue this was done around the theme *Terrorism and Fear*. This theme was chosen because of its relevance and growing influence in everyday life. Since 9/11, the number of terrorist attacks has increased and created fearful societies. Eighteen students wrote a literature review on this subject.

Terrorism and fear can be approached from many different perspectives. Terrorism exists in a wide range of forms, has far-going consequences and instigates discussion about how to deal with it. For this reason, it was decided to divide this issue of *Social Cosmos* in four subthemes.

First, terrorism will be addressed from a wider perspective. In the first article, 'Perspectives on terrorism', Astrid Vredegoor addresses the issue of how to define terrorism. This is not easy, because its definition is influenced by one's position in an conflictsituation. Different definitions are described from different perspectives. Moreover, Vredegoor demonstrates how limited definitions influence public opinions about terrorism. The other two articles within this subtheme are about how terrorism arises, how it is maintained and what the underlying motivations of terrorists are. Dana Snellens takes suicide terrorism into consideration and tries to explain this problem by making use of the famous sociologist Durkheim's theory. Marjolein Camphuysen and Esther Vissers expand their view by taking the influence of the mass media coverage of terrorism into account. They conclude that the media benefit from the existence of terrorism.

The second subtheme provides information about the offenders of terrorism. The articles deal with what characterizes offenders, who they are and how they became one. How youth might become radicalized by the internet is assessed in the first article of this subtheme, written by Sanne Geeraerts. In contrast to terrorists in groups, Matthijs Nijboer looks at the lone wolf terrorist. Nijboer examines what drives individuals to operate by themselves. The last article in this subtheme, by Maartje Witlox, is on the increasing number of female terrorists. What are their motivations and do these differ from male terrorist's motivations? And do women have specific advantages when it comes to terrorism?

Direct and indirect victims of terrorism are the subject of the third subtheme. This theme contains six articles about the problems victims see themselves confronted with and how they should be treated. Nicky Jonkhout takes into account how post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) might develop within individuals who were exposed

to terrorist attacks. Moreover, he proposes a solution to how they should be treated. The second article, written by Anne Oorsouw, looks at another possible consequence of the exposure to a terrorist attack, namely depression, by addressing risk factors and immunizing factors. Elin Doeland does not examine a concrete consequence of terrorism, but takes the influence of constant threat on Israeli children and adolescents into consideration. Myrthe van Wietmarschen also examines the consequences of a terrorist attack for children. She compares Russian children who were held hostage in Beslan to American children who experienced the 9/11 attacks. The consequences of the 9/11 attacks are also reviewed by Cilia van de Ven. In contrast to the previous studies, she focuses on the impact of the attacks on the lives and mental health of Muslims in western countries. In the last article within this subtheme, Kiki Voerman does not specifically address the victims themselves, but discusses the general post-disaster guidelines and evidence-based psychotherapeutic interventions that have been introduced after the 9/11 attacks.

The fourth and final subtheme contains articles about government, policy and public opinion. Marianne Oenema offers information about interactions between terrorism and democracy. She addresses a paradox: to prevent terrorist attacks a country has to become a democracy, while at the same time democracies are at higher risk of suffering a terrorist attack. The next two articles are about counter-terrorism policies. Bram van Riezen and Karlijn Roex look into counter-terrorism policies which aim to prevent terrorist attacks. They compare counter-terrorism policies implemented by the Dutch and the British government. However, Eva Vriens concludes that counter-terrorism policies are focused too much on preventing terrorist attacks. As a consequence, the fear of terrorism among the public has increased. Vriens suggests the goal of counter-terrorism should be to reduce fear. In the last article, Roeliene van Es examines how the public opinion on security and civil liberties has changed after the 9/11 attacks.

These sixteen articles all have a unique vision on terrorism. Together, this issue aims to create an understanding of all sides of terrorism and fear as sufficient as possible.