

Echoes of Violence: The Far-Reaching Consequences of Global Terrorism

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Abstract:

In this analysis of terrorism, we attempt to understand how frequently violent acts occur in different parts of the world and how they have evolved historically. To achieve this, we need a clear and concise explanation of what constitutes terrorism and how it varies from other forms of violence. There is no official definition of terrorism because this circumstance involves a difficulty with subjectivity. The protracted debate and lack of consensus over a definition have prevented the UN from ever crafting a strong resolution combating international terrorism. The main problem is that it can be difficult to distinguish political violence and criminal behavior like terrorism from other forms of violence, such murder or hate crimes, non-state armed conflicts, state-based armed conflicts, and one-sided violence. Making the distinctions between these many types of violence could be difficult. It is also necessary for the criminal to be a non-state or sub national entity. As long as people with real or imagined grievances have the capacity to become radicalized, there will always be armed non-state actors who use violence to achieve their objectives. Since terrorism was likely one of the main objectives of US foreign policy, it garnered a lot of attention.

Keywords:

Terrorism, Violent, Strong Resolution, Combating, International Terrorism, Political Violence, Criminal Behavior.

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In this analysis of terrorism, we attempt to understand how frequently violent acts occur in different parts of the world and how they have evolved historically. To achieve this, we need a clear and concise explanation of what constitutes terrorism and how it varies from other forms of violence. There is no official definition of terrorism because this circumstance involves a difficulty with subjectivity. The protracted debate and lack of consensus over a definition have prevented the UN from ever crafting a strong resolution combating international terrorism. The main problem is that it can be difficult to distinguish political violence and criminal behavior like terrorism from other forms of violence, such murder or hate crimes, non-state armed conflicts, state-based armed conflicts, and one-sided violence. Making the distinctions between these many types of violence could be difficult. It is also necessary for the criminal to be a non-state or sub national entity. As long as people with real or imagined grievances have the capacity to become radicalized, there will always be armed non-state actors who use violence to achieve their objectives. Since terrorism was likely one of the main objectives of US foreign policy, it garnered a lot of attention.

In this review of terrorism, we make an effort to comprehend the frequency of violence activities is different worldwide and its historical development. In order to do this, we require a precise or unambiguous description to understand the nature of terrorism that how it differs from other types of violence. Not an easy case to do. Terrorism is described by the Oxford Dictionary as “the unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims.” We quickly come to the conclusion that this definition is arbitrary and broad. Since there is a subjectivity problem involved in this situation, there is absence of official definition of terrorism. The United Nations always unable to draft a adequate agreement against international terrorism due to the extensive debate and inability to agree on a definition.

The primary issue is that it can be challenging to discern between terrorism and other types of political violence and criminal activity, such as state-based armed conflict, non-state conflict, one-sided violence, and hate crime or murder. Differentiating between these many forms of violence may be challenging. In this article, we look at terrorism’s widely-accepted definitions. Differentiating between these many forms of violence may be challenging. In this article, we look at terrorism’s generally accepted definitions, as well as what makes it distinguish from all kinds of violence.

Over the past decade, an average of 8,352 people died annually due to terrorism, with fatalities increasing by 22% in 2023, the highest since 2017. The epicenter of terrorism has shifted from the Middle East to sub-Saharan Africa, particularly the Central Sahel, which now accounts for over half of all terrorism-

related deaths. In Pakistan, 2024 was the deadliest year for security forces in a decade, with 685 fatalities from 444 attacks, marking a 66% increase from 2023. Meanwhile, Western democracies saw a 55% decline in terrorism incidents, reaching a 15-year low, though the U.S. accounted for 76% of fatalities in these regions, mostly linked to individuals with far-right beliefs. While terrorism remains a serious issue in conflict-ridden areas, its global share of fatalities is relatively low. However, media portrayals continue to amplify public fear, with over 50% of people in many countries expressing anxiety about becoming victims, despite terrorism-related deaths remaining a small fraction of overall global mortality.

The Elements of Terrorism

The perpetrator, victim, method, and purpose of violent acts are typically categorized.³ Depending on the goals of the relevant agency, several definitions highlight various qualities. We mostly rely on information by the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) when reporting on terrorism, which is defined as “acts of violence by non-state actors, perpetrated against civilian populations, intended to cause fear, in order to achieve a political objective.”⁴ Open combat among rival militias, whether they are external entities, is prohibited and state-sponsored violence (state terrorism), are not included in its definition. In our definitions area, we provide a more complete explanation of GTD in addition to others like the UN’s.

Most definitions of terrorism have a few major differentiating characteristics, with some slight changes. The following requirements were based on the description provided in *Inside Terrorism* by Bruce Hoffman.⁵ For an act to be considered terrorism, it must be violent or violently threatening. As a result, terrorism does not include political opposition, activism, or nonviolent protest. However, there are several instances of governments stifling free speech abroad while pretending to be engaged in anti-terrorism initiatives. These instances of censorship are covered Human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have endorsed it.

Additionally, performing an act must be motivated by socially, politically, or economically considerations. For instance, the terrorist group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has accomplished apparent that one of its political objectives is the formation of a caliphate. Although it is questionable, Asset devastation, both private and public, is widely acknowledged in legal and statistical contexts as part of the definition of extremism.

In order for a behavior to be labeled as terrorism, it must be intended to affect people psychologically in addition to the immediate victim or target. A deed must be intended to incite fear because of “its shocking brutality, lack of discrimination, dramatic or symbolic quality, and disregard for the laws of war.”⁶

Terrorism also includes the targeting of noncombatants, neutrals, or randomly chosen individuals—typically, those who are not involved in any combat although this is an essential but inadequate component. According to the US State Department, “military personnel who at the time of the incident are unarmed and/or not on duty” is included in the definition of “noncombatant.” Attacks against forces or troops are likewise seen as terrorist acts by this group. When there are no live hostilities taking place acts carried out in open conflict where military animosity is present are therefore don’t considered acts of terrorism.

Terrorist acts must also be committed by a chain of command-equipped organization organized network of malice (whose personnel do not use uniforms or display identifying marks). a lone individual or a little group of people who are actively motivated by the goals or leaders of an established terrorist movement, or by all three of these. The perpetrator of the crime must also be a sub national or non-state entity. Different terms, such as “crimes against humanity” or “lopsided violence” are used to describe similar actions carried out by the armed forces of sovereign states.

Nine Misconceptions of Terrorism

- In Western democracies, there is a bigger risk from transnational terrorism than from domestic terrorism.
- Transnational terrorism poses a greater threat to Western democracies than domestic terrorism does.
- The MENA region has been the epicenter of terrorism for the entirety of the modern period.
- Effective counterterrorism strategies focus on the culprit, target, or style of terrorism in question.
- Terrorism is fueled by poverty.
- For nations harboring terrorist organizations, foreign aid is a successful counterterrorism strategy.
- More immigration inevitably means more domestic acts of international terrorism.
- Terrorism is decreased by advancing democracy.
- When terrorist attacks occur, they have macroeconomic repercussions for the nation.

Differentiating between terrorism and other types of violence-

By making some very basic distinctions based on the aforementioned standards, It’s possible to start separating terrorism from other types of violence:

- The term “homicide” describes violent acts carried out by non-state actors who perpetrate atrocities against civilians without being ideologically driven or without having a specific political, economic, or social objective;

- Acts of violence done by nefarious groups harming civilians that are simply inspired by a person's race, gender, and sexual preference or ability are referred to as "hate crimes," and they must not be part of a larger political or societal effort to sow fear;
- State-based armed conflict is defined as open warfare between opposing military forces when at least one of the sides involves a state's government;
- A non-state war is one in which none of the parties in the aforementioned scenario involve the government of a state;
- Governmental aggression against people is categorized as one-sided violence.⁸

Considerable Inferences from the 2024 Global Terrorism Index

- The severity of attacks has increased, with the average fatalities per attack rising by 56%, the highest in nearly a decade.
- Total deaths from terrorism increased by 22% in 2023, reaching 8,352—the highest since 2017.
- The Sahel region remains the most affected, accounting for 43% of all terrorism-related deaths, a 7% increase from the previous year.
- Burkina Faso saw almost 2,000 deaths from terrorism, nearly a quarter of the global total.
- The Islamic State (IS) and its affiliates continued to be the deadliest terrorist organizations, operating in 21 countries.
- Over 90% of terrorist attacks and 98% of terrorism-related deaths occurred in conflict zones.
- Attacks by unidentified jihadists caused a significant number of fatalities, especially in Africa.
- Western nations experienced a 68% reduction in terrorist attacks, reaching their lowest level since 2012.
- Political attacks in the West outnumbered religious attacks, with five political attacks for every one religious attack.
- Terrorism thrives in nations with weak governance, ecological instability, and changing climate conditions.
- Drone technology and advanced cyber tactics are increasingly used by terrorist groups, including IS, Boko Haram, and the Houthis.
- Terrorist activity is becoming more concentrated, with 119 countries reporting no terrorism-related deaths—the lowest since 2007.

- In sub-Saharan Africa, 48% of all terrorist fatalities worldwide occurred, highlighting the growing concentration of violence in the region.
- Terrorism-related deaths outside Afghanistan increased by 4%, while the Taliban's transformation into a state actor contributed to a 9% decrease in fatalities in Afghanistan.
- Terrorist organizations are leveraging modern technology, including GPS tracking, drones, and encrypted communication platforms, for enhanced operational efficiency.
- The rise in cyberterrorism, fueled by geopolitical tensions like the Ukraine conflict, is reversing progress in counterterrorism efforts.
- IS has overtaken the Taliban as the world's most hazardous terrorist organization, with an average of 15 deaths per incident in Niger.¹⁰

The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2024, published by the Institute for Economics & Peace, provides a comprehensive analysis of global terrorism trends. In 2023, deaths caused by terrorism increased by 22% to 8,352, the highest level since 2017. Despite a 22% decrease in the number of terrorist incidents to 3,350, the lethality of attacks rose, resulting in a 56% increase in the average number of people killed per attack. The epicenter of terrorism has shifted from the Middle East to the Central Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa, which now accounts for over half of all deaths from terrorism. Burkina Faso experienced a 68% increase in deaths despite a 17% decrease in attacks. In contrast, Iraq recorded a 99% decrease in deaths from terrorism since its peak in 2007, with 69 deaths in 2023. The impact of terrorism has become increasingly concentrated, with ten countries accounting for 87% of total terrorism-related deaths. Over 90% of terrorist attacks and 98% of terrorism deaths in 2023 occurred in conflict zones, underscoring the strong link between conflict and terrorism.

Updated Insights on Emerging Technologies and Terrorism (2024)

- Violent extremist organizations are increasingly leveraging advanced technologies for influence operations, recruitment, and financial transactions.
- The world is witnessing a shift toward post-organizational violent extremism, facilitated by social media and encrypted communication platforms. This decentralized model allows extremist content to spread instantly, leading to radicalization without traditional command structures.
- Lone-wolf attacks inspired by social media are on the rise globally, targeting people across different faiths, including recent jihadi attacks in Kashmir, Colombo, anti-Semitic crimes in Texas, and mosque shootings in Christchurch.

- Drones and UAVs are now a standard tool for terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, Da'esh, Boko Haram, and the Houthis, who use them for reconnaissance, targeted strikes, and even propaganda. Over 80 non-state actors worldwide are now capable of deploying drone technology for terrorism.
- Cryptocurrency, block chain, and online payment systems are increasingly being exploited to finance terrorism, enabling anonymous transactions that bypass traditional financial oversight.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) and 3D printing are being used for propaganda, deep fake content, and even manufacturing weapons and explosives, making counter-terrorism efforts more challenging.
- The misuse of emerging technologies requires urgent action, as extremist groups continue to evolve their digital tactics.
- The UN Security Council's Delhi Declaration (2022) was a step forward in countering the misuse of technology by terrorist groups. In 2024, global counterterrorism initiatives are focusing more on AI-driven threat detection, cybersecurity measures, and international cooperation to prevent tech-enabled radicalization and financing.

Consequences for India

- India has long faced terrorism, from Northeast insurgencies, LTTE, and Sikh separatism in the 1980s to the Islamization of insurgency in Kashmir. While some of these conflicts subsided, they never completely disappeared and could resurface under favorable socio-political conditions.
- Post-Article 370 repeal, Kashmir saw a decline in organized terror, but lone-wolf attacks and cross-border drone intrusions have surged, posing new security challenges.
- Punjab's socio-political landscape is shifting, with Sikh separatist sentiments resurfacing. Some factions of the Punjabi Sikh diaspora continue to push for a separate state, organizing "referendums" and gaining political influence internationally.
- Cross-border narco-terror networks are fueling increased drug consumption in Kashmir and Punjab, worsening internal security threats.
- Terrorist drone activity has surged, with India lacking sufficient counter-drone capabilities to mitigate the threat. Reports in 2023 and early 2024 suggest that Pakistani drones are frequently used for smuggling arms, narcotics, and explosives into India.

- The evolving situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan raises concerns that terrorist activities could spill over into Kashmir, especially as the Taliban consolidates power and Pakistan continues to grapple with internal instability.
- India must enhance counter-terrorism efforts, including drone defense systems, cyber intelligence, and international cooperation, to address these growing threats effectively.

Way Ahead

Terrorism remains a tool for grievance groups seeking to express political, religious, or ideological views against dominant powers. As long as radicalization persists, armed non-state actors will continue using violence to further their goals. Radical Salafi-inspired jihadist ideologies persist despite ideological and operational setbacks. These extremist beliefs influence other cultures, inspiring new forms of terrorism. The global focus on terrorism has shifted, especially as U.S. foreign policy priorities evolve. Today, terrorist organizations increasingly act as proxies in larger geopolitical conflicts, aligning themselves with state or non-state actors engaged in great power rivalries.

Countries must actively prevent radicalization by addressing both real and perceived grievances through counterterrorism efforts, social initiatives, and global cooperation. India maintains a firm stance against terrorism, refusing to differentiate between terrorists of any faith. It has consistently opposed state-sponsored terrorism, particularly in South Asia. India has a crucial role to play in global counterterrorism through its leadership in multilateral forums like the UN Security Council's Counterterrorism Committee (2021–2022) and its membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which promotes regional counterterrorism cooperation through the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS). Strengthening domestic security measures, enhancing cyber-intelligence capabilities, and bolstering international counterterrorism alliances will be critical for India's long-term strategy in combating terrorism and radicalization.¹⁷

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