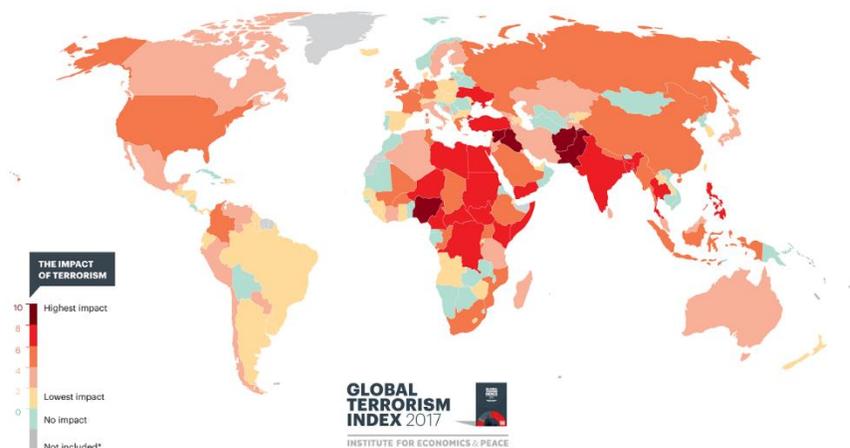


International Terrorism



History of terrorism

The earliest forms of terrorism dates back to the first-century CE, during the days of Judas and his Zealots. Their murder of Romans and Jews who collaborated with the Romans was done in

broad daylight in order to send the message that the Romans were not welcome in the Middle East.¹ Early terrorism was mainly religiously-motivated with groups like the Zealots-Sicarii, the Assassins—an 11th-century group who stabbed Muslim politicians and clerics who refused to codify their pure form of Islam; and the Thugees, a 17th-century Indian cult that ritually sacrificed unsuspecting victims as an offering to the Hindu god Kali. In many cases, these early forms of terrorism were motivated by a religious conviction and were done in order to satisfy some religious aim or a plan directed by god. However, even when religion was the prime motivator for such attacks, a political dimension could still exist. In the case of the Zealots, there was a religious interest in pushing the Romans out of the Middle East. In this way, religious and political aims often mixed together.

The word 'terrorism' as it is known today stems from the French phrase '*regime de la terreur*'—used to describe the political strategy of the French Revolutionaries in the 1790s of power consolidation and the protection of the government from dissent. This also marked a shift from terrorist acts being mainly religiously-motivated to being mainly ideologically-motivated. Whereas before the French revolution many acts of terrorism were motivated by a religious desire to purify a religious group or propagate a religion's messages or convictions, terrorism began to be motivated by primarily political concerns. The French Revolutionary government's state-sponsored terrorism was motivated by an effort to eliminate opponents to the revolutionary movement through violence and silence other opponents through a fear of potential violence. The acts followed Italian revolutionary Carlo Pisacane's theory on the 'propaganda of the deed,' in which terrorism was utilized as a means to deliver a message to a larger audience that drew attention to their cause.² This new era of terrorism was marked by the rise of nationalist groups like Narodnaya Volya, an opposition group to Imperial Russia's Tsarist regime in the 19th-century and even the Ku Klux Klan, who aimed to obstruct reconstruction efforts following the Confederate States of America's loss in the American Civil War.

¹ "Terrorism." *Our World in Data*. <https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism>.

² "ISIS Is Using the Media Against Itself." *The Atlantic*. <https://bit.ly/2Hj9Iq>.

Recent terrorism

This modern era of terrorism is characterized by the emergence of state-sponsored terrorism and the reemergence of religiously-motivated terrorism. State-sponsored terrorism pre-dates World War I and continues to this day. It most often manifests as political assassinations, such as that of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and is typically used by totalitarian and dictatorial regimes to further their political aims. Furthermore, following World War II, non-state actors have taken on terrorism as a means to achieve their political will. The United States National Intelligence Council defines non-state actors as actors or organizations that are not states and do not have any sovereignty.³ These can include multinational corporations, trade unions, non-governmental organizations, and terrorist groups. Nationalist and anti-colonial groups arose across the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Groups motivated by ethnic and ideological reasons swelled in the 1960s and 1970s including the Palestinian Liberation Organization, ETA, the Basque-separatist group, and the Provisional Irish Republican Army.

The 1980s brought about a revival of state-sponsored terrorism, mainly in the Middle East and North Africa, with states like Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Syria, using terrorism to achieve their goals. For example, the Libyan government funded and helped organize the Lockerbie airplane bombing, which killed 270 people in 1988.⁴ Despite the increase in state-sponsored terrorism, religiously-motivated terrorism reemerged as a major form of terrorism. These new religiously inspired terrorist movements included the sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway by the doomsday cult Aum Shinrikyo in 1995 and al-Qaeda's September 11th attacks. These religiously motivated attacks all used terrorism in an effort to bring about social change. Modern terrorism is further underlined by the realization by terrorist groups of the value in the media's new global stage, resulting in the choreography of such violent events in order to be viewed far beyond the center of conflict.⁵

Motivations behind terrorism

Reasons for terrorism

Taking an analytical look at terrorist motivations, terrorism occurs for a multitude of reasons, often overlapping and interacting with each other. However, these motives can be categorically sorted in a way that provides a background for why terrorist activity occurs. One subset of motives falls under geographical reasons, which can be further split into a local, regional, and global reach. Local reasons characterize groups that operate in a specific region for reasons related to the local political or social situation; regional reasons characterize groups that are motivated by the same factors and operate in several localized geographic regions; and global motives characterize groups that are motivated by the same factors or group of factors that lead to the rise of terrorism in different parts of the world. In

³ "Non-State Actors." *National Intelligence Council*.

https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/nonstate_actors_2007.pdf.

⁴ "Colonel Gaddafi 'ordered Lockerbie bombing'." *BBC*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-south-scotland-12552587>.

⁵ Burgess, M. (2015). A Brief History of Terrorism. Retrieved from <https://www.pogo.org/investigation/2015/02/brief-history-of-terrorism/#fn7>

addition, groups can be characterized by their ideological motivation, which are based on political, economic, social, religious, psychological, historical, or policy-related issues.

The publicity that terrorist groups and their ideologies gain from terror attacks are becoming a strong motivator for terrorism with the advent of social media and a global news media. A white supremacist terrorist used Facebook-live to stream his attack on several mosques in New Zealand in early 2019. This live-stream was shared nearly 200 times and was viewed by 4000 people before Facebook took it down.⁶ In addition, the individual published their manifesto and linked the attack to popular YouTube personalities, spreading his message of hate and ideology further. So far, social media companies have shown little interest or ability to quickly clampdown on such live streams and propaganda, helping terrorists and their ideology gain publicity, inspire further attacks, and even radicalize new adherents.

Conditions that Promote Terrorism

Furthermore, the reasons as to which terrorist activity spawns or escalates can be similarly categorized. Terrorism can be seen as a means to achieve certain goals or obtain certain gains, no matter the cost they come at. Moreover, the socio-economic state of nations and individuals, although not necessarily a catalyst to creating terrorism, also correlate to the prevalence of terrorist attitudes and actions. In states that are economically well-off and seen as bulwarks against terrorism, terrorism is much less likely to emanate as compared to states viewed as backwards in their economic development or with weak or failing governments. That is not to say that poor economic conditions are a cause for terrorism, as even affluent nations still face the threat; rather, the economy can be utilized as a means to stimulate terrorist attitudes and actions. Psychological factors, also, such as the 'us versus them' mentality or a feeling of injustice or oppression can cultivate terrorist attitudes and culminate into terrorism.⁷ Social media and the media play a large role in pushing an 'us versus them' dynamic. Terror attacks by Muslims receive 357% more coverage in the media, helping to push the idea that Muslims are responsible for all terror attacks.⁸

Modes of terrorism

Weapons of mass destruction

The threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) can be summarized by the acronym CBRN - chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons. Radiological and nuclear weapons constitute a looming threat to society, especially when in the hands of terrorist organizations. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), although recognized by most member states of the UN, lacks provisions that address the threat of nuclear proliferation in the hands of non-state actors.

⁶ "Facebook: New Zealand attack video viewed 4,000 times," *British Broadcasting Corporation*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-47620519>.

⁷ Wojciechowski, S. (2017). "Reasons of Contemporary Terrorism: An Analysis of Main Determinants." In Garrone, F. C., Kumbrián, R. D. T., & Sroka, A. (Eds.), *Radicalism and Terrorism in the 21st Century: Implications for Security* (pp. 49-70). Frankfurt am Main, DE: Peter Lang AG.

⁸ "Terror attacks by Muslims receive 357% more press attention, study finds." *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jul/20/muslim-terror-attacks-press-coverage-study>.

The largest threat comes from built-up and well-funded terrorist organizations, such as the Islamic State, who has specifically touted their vast financial networks and their interest in purchasing a nuclear weapon or materials. Additional risk from radiological and nuclear weapons attacks stems from the fact that over 40 countries have highly-enriched uranium and weapons-grade plutonium stockpiles, including countries located in terrorism hotspots. With poor funding and lack of political will to upgrade storage facilities in some of these states, security breaches remain to be a threat to nuclear proliferation by terrorists and other non-state actors. For instance, in November 2015, a theft from a site near Basra, Iraq left 10 grams of Iridium-192, a highly radioactive isotope, in a laptop-sized storage container unaccounted for.⁹

Furthermore, chemical and biological weapons in the hands of terrorists and non-state actors also continue to increase as a threat. Historical instances of chemical and biological weapons utilization by terrorists include al-Qaeda's use of crude chlorine bombs in 2006 and 2007 and, most notably, the 1995 Aum Shinrikyo Tokyo subway attack using sarin gas. The threat from chemical and biological weapons continues to expand due to advancements in the biotechnology and chemical engineering fields, as well as their respective lack of oversight. The utilization of rudimentary, everyday chemicals, such as chlorine and agricultural products that can be weaponized, has increased in prevalence. Also, the increasing amounts of facilities with access to biological pathogens and the emergence of available technologies, like genome editing kits, have heightened the chances terrorists can get their hands on the material and resources needed to create a biological weapon. Likewise, the availability of hidden sources on the internet and communications encryption technologies have disseminated information on chemical and biological warfare technologies.¹⁰ The spread of these technologies will make it increasingly easy for poorly funded or lone-wolf terrorists to engage in devastating terror attacks.

Cyberterrorism

Although not as deadly as other modes of terrorism, cyberterrorism, which is not to be confused with cyber-crime or Hacktivism groups, still poses a credible threat in an ever-changing, technologically-run society of today and the future. As with terrorism in the physical realm, cyberterrorism must have some ideological, political or religious motivation behind it. There are few cases of terrorist groups utilizing cyberterrorism as a means of violence exist, such as the Tamil Tigers attack of Sri Lankan embassy computers in 1998 and pro-Palestinian group Nightmare implementing a Distributed Denial of Service Attack (DDoS) attack on Israeli websites in 2012.¹¹ However, cyberterrorism is a looming threat based on the increased technologization and automation of modern society. Traditional processes, including critical infrastructure, have shifted to being automated through

⁹ "Weapons of Mass Destruction: Nuclear Terrorism and Nuclear Proliferation." *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 8(2), 17-23. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26369587>.

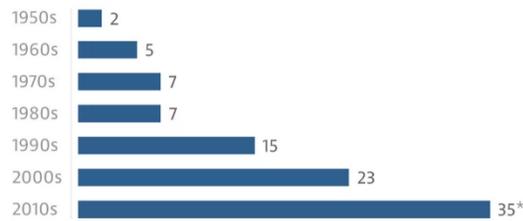
¹⁰ Frohwein, A. (2017). "The Evolving Chemical/Biological Terrorism Threat." <https://www.domesticpreparedness.com/resilience/the-evolving-chemical-biological-terrorism-threat/>.

¹¹ Littlefield, R. (2017). "Cyber Terrorism: understanding and preventing acts of terror within our cyber space." <https://littlefield.co/cyber-terrorism-understanding-and-preventing-acts-of-terror-within-our-cyber-space-26ae6d53cfbb>.

industrial control systems, which if not protected, can interrupt or even take down an entire society. Likewise, people and corporations are deeply dependent on their systems and data - another point of vulnerability for potential cyberattacks.¹²

Lone-wolf terrorism

Lone Wolf Attackers



*Includes Orlando and Dallas attackers

source: The American Lone Wolf Terrorism Database, by Ramon Spaaij and Mark Hamm

Lone-wolf attacks have been on the rise, a trend closely correlated with the increased use of social media as a means for terrorist organizations to spread their word. Although the frequency of lone wolf attacks remains low relative to other means of terrorism, studies have found that there has been up to a 400% increase in frequency of lone wolf attacks, depending on what country is being surveyed, from the 1970s to the past few years. More

recently, the numbers of lone wolf attacks have doubled from the period of 2011-2014 to the period of 2015-2016. Terrorist organizations, especially the Islamic State, do not often resort to lone-wolves as their main means of carrying out violence. However, as their centralized power and funds are dwindling, the strategy of inspiring lone-wolves to act under their name can improve morale of their fighters and potentially inspire new recruits to join. It can also be viewed that the inspiring of lone-wolves by terrorist organizations can be used as a strategy to change the political landscape of opposing nations, as these negative trends have the effect of deteriorating intergroup and societal relationships, vital for maintaining the rule of law and for counterterrorism measures.¹³

Impacts of terrorism

Psychological and social effects

Terrorism is an effective psychological tool in that it can instill fear in entire populations, while physically impacting a small set of people. These psychological effects can help generate social changes as well. There is a correlation between terrorist acts and an increase in the prevalence of traumatic stress-related symptoms, including post-traumatic stress disorder. This effect is more widespread than to just those who were victim to the attack or those who knew someone victim to the attack, as media coverage of attacks makes this phenomenon exponentially more widespread. In addition, societies affected by terrorism produce individuals that exercise more caution in daily life. The aftermath of a terrorist act also produces changes in the mindset of the society affected. Groups that are targeted by terrorists tend to have an increased sense of solidarity with the victims of terrorism. Additionally, the social beliefs and attitudes of people change; with there being an

¹² Metropoulos, E. & Platt, J. S. (2018). "Global Cyber Terrorism Incidents on the Rise."

<https://www.mmc.com/insights/publications/2018/nov/global-cyber-terrorism-incidents-on-the-rise.html>.

¹³ "Can lone wolves be stopped?" *Brookings*. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/03/15/can-lone-wolves-be-stopped/>.

increased reliance on stereotypes to define other groups and increase xenophobic and ethnocentric attitudes.¹⁴

Political effects

While acts of terrorism might not succeed in bringing about the reform terrorist organizations seek to implement, there still exists political change that plays in the favor of the terrorist organizations. A key trend in democratic countries is that after a terrorist attack there is a change in voting behavior of the populace in the nation(s) affected. After the 2004 Madrid train bombing, the PSOE party came to power and immediately withdrew Spanish troops from Spain, an ancillary goal of the terrorists who planned the bombing.¹⁵ These voting behaviors often turn towards increased support for more intolerant and exclusionist domestic and foreign policies as well as the curbing of civil liberties for the sake of national security. The new policies supported by the populace ultimately end up sowing divisions in intergroup relations and play into the hands of the terrorists by increasing recruitment of those who feel disenfranchised by the implementation of new policies.¹⁶

Economic effects

Terrorism also plays a role at reshaping the economies of afflicted nations, whether they are developed or are developing. For starters, the terrorist attack itself leaves behind physical destruction, easily measured economically by the reduction in productivity caused by the destruction of property and infrastructure or the death of workers. A terrorist attack can prove to be devastating to a nation's economy indirectly as well, as other secondary effects from attacks unfold. The 9/11 terror attacks reduced the United States' GDP growth by 0.5% and increased the unemployment rate by 0.11%.¹⁷ Terrorism hurts tourism, which can serve a large blow to those nations who have large tourism industries or others who rely on their tourism industry as a main facet of their economy. For developed nations, increased nationalist and exclusionary policies in response to terrorist attacks makes nations less willing to conduct international trade and business, as well as participate in foreign worker programs, reducing the potential output of their economy. These nations also often see increases in defense spending and security measures; this, in turn, takes money out of the economy and reduces their potential output.¹⁸ For developing nations, terrorism decreases the flow of foreign direct investment and trade and stunts economic growth, as these nations are viewed by others as more risky areas in which to conduct business.¹⁹

¹⁴ "Living with terror, not Living in Terror: The Impact of Chronic Terrorism on Israeli Society." *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 5(5-6). <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/living-with-terror/html>.

¹⁵ "Spain to pull Troops out 'as soon as possible'." *The Guardian*. <https://bit.ly/2kxxqub>.

¹⁶ Getmansky, A. & Zeitoff, T. (2015). Divide and Conquer - The Long-Term Political Effects of Terrorism. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/1jg3yeJ>.

¹⁷ "The Macroeconomic effects of 9/11." *Department of Homeland Security*. <https://bit.ly/2kpfh1N>.

¹⁸ Ross, S. (2019). "Top 5 Ways Terrorism Impacts the Economy." <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/markets/080216/top-5-ways-terrorism-impacts-economy.asp>.

¹⁹ "Trade and Terror: The Impact of Terrorism on Developing Countries." *The Regional Economist, Fourth Quarter 2017*. https://www.stlouisfed.org/~media/publications/regional-economist/2017/fourth_quarter_2017/terror-and-trade.pdf.

United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Resolution A/RES/60/288, known as the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, passed by consensus in the General Assembly in 2006, and reviewed and updated every two years, is the UN's policy-oriented solution to combating the international threat of terrorism. The four pillars of the Strategy are: addressing the conditions conducive to spread of terrorism, preventing and combating terrorism, building states' capacity and strengthening the role of the United Nations, and ensuring human rights and the rule of law are upheld in these efforts.²⁰ The most recent review to the Strategy, as part of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres plan to reform the UN's counter-terrorism structure, include the creation of the Office of Counter-Terrorism with Resolution A/RES/71/291 led by Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov in 2017 and the replacement of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force with the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact with its eight interagency working groups and partnerships with 36 UN entities and INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization, which aim to increase synergy and information-sharing to combat terrorism as well as address the evolving methods utilized by terrorist organizations.²¹ The Strategy and its revisions have addressed many issues, including upholding the rule of law while implementing counter-terrorism efforts, transparency and accountability, and improved dialogue between nations on strategies they have individually implemented and found successful.

Many drawbacks with the strategy exist as well, as critics feel it lacks to adequately address flagrant humanitarian rights violations and noncompliance with international humanitarian law disguised as counterterrorism measures, does not allow the civil society to easily engage in the Strategy's review, and fails to address certain issues due to disagreements between member states on topics like preventing violent extremism and identifying conditions and drivers to radicalization^[22].

The War on Terror

Colloquially known as the 'War on Terror,' the United States' response to the September 11th attacks consisted of a multifaceted strategy to combat terrorism. Some of the main facets of the United States' counterterrorism strategy were the increase in synergy of intelligence sharing, both domestically and internationally, the beefing up of security, and combat operations which targeted global terrorist threats. These components manifested in the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, which consolidated 22 separate agencies under a single department with a unified goal of protecting the United States homeland; international intelligence sharing agreements; the imposition of more stringent security measures in the aviation industry and at the border and other ports of entry; the implementation of biological attack preparedness measures; the freezing of terrorist funding; the

²⁰ "UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy." <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctif/en/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy>.

²¹ "United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism." <https://www.un.org/en/counterterrorism/>. & "Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact: Working Groups." *United Nations*. <https://bit.ly/2ICc7rG>.

²² Megally, H. (2018). "The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review." https://cic.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/the_un_global_counter-terrorism_strategy_review_august_2018.pdf.

major increase in Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Overseas Contingency Operations funding in order to support overseas military campaigns, amounting to \$2.407 trillion spent up to fiscal year 2020; and over 180,000 US troops and tens of thousands of NATO troops committed at its peak.²³

While some may be quick to point out its success in removing al-Qaeda and its Taliban counterparts from power in Afghanistan, most view this plan as a flop. Critics point to the fact that although al-Qaeda's main stronghold in Afghanistan may have been deconstructed when the United States and NATO forces invaded Afghanistan, it has slowly rebuilt. This is especially true during the years the Islamic State took the limelight as the leading global terrorist threat while al-Qaeda amassed tens of thousands of recruits throughout the Middle East and North Africa, such as in Syria, Yemen, and Somalia.²⁴ These critics attribute this reprisal of al-Qaeda to the lack of focus of the "War on Terror" on addressing the ideology they are up against and the radicalization of individuals to adopt these ideologies and inspire them to commit acts of terrorism.²⁵

The War on Terror also fails to address many facets of terrorism. The 'war' has done sparingly little to address the social, political, and economic factors that make terrorism an attractive option for many individuals in economically marginal and politically repressed regions. Additionally, the War on Terror does not address, in any sense, homegrown terrorist movements such as white supremacists.

Questions to ponder

- Does the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy do enough to address terrorism and its root causes?
- What role should the UN take in implementing counterterrorism measures, and what should be left up to its member states to partake individually?
- Does the more effective counterterrorism measure look at its root causes or take it at face value as a national security threat?
- How can the effects of terrorism be addressed?
- What can be done to address and make preparations for the evolution of terrorist strategies?

²³ "TERROR: War on Terror Update." *Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.cfr.org/background/terror-war-terror-update>. & "War on Terror Facts, Costs, and Timeline." *The Balance*. <https://www.thebalance.com/war-on-terror-facts-costs-timeline-3306300>.

²⁴ Beauchamp, Z. (2017). 16 years after 9/11, al-Qaeda is back. Retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/9/11/16288824/al-qaeda-isis-911>.

²⁵ Chellaney, B. (2019). The Global War on Terrorism Has Failed. Here's How to Win. Retrieved from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/11/the-global-war-on-terrorism-has-failed-heres-how-to-win/>.