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ISLAMIC MILITARY COUNTER TERRORISM COALITION

Book Review

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Global Terrorism Index 2108: Terrorism Declines, Yet Lingers

INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMICS & PEACE



Book Review

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Series of Terrorism Issues

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Introduction

Terrorism, as a phenomenon, is a major study and close investigation area for research centers that continue to issue reports and studies and organize workshops to analyze this phenomenon. One of the best scientific outcomes in this context is the Global Terrorism Index (GTR) report which is issued annually by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) covering 163 countries that represent %99.7 of global population. The index monitors terrorism outcomes, analyzes them quantitatively for the past 16 years at national and regional levels in the areas of security and economy and monitors and analyzes terrorist groups, their strategies, terrorist acts and development over time.

The index classifies each country on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 represents no impact of terrorism and 10 stands for the highest terrorism impact. The terrorism index is defined as “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation.”

The report gives a comprehensive summary of the trends and main global patterns of terrorism according to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) which is issued by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at Maryland University which covers over 170k terrorist acts between 1970 and 2017.

According to the methodology of the index, an act must have three standards to be classified as terrorist act:

- must be intentional - the result of a conscious calculation on the part of a perpetrator.
- must entail some level of violence or threat of violence - including property damage as well as violence against people
- the perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national actors. This database does not include acts of state terrorism.
- In START database, which monitors terrorist

acts since 1997, two of the following three factors must be identified to classify an act as an act of terrorism:

- the violent act was aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious or social goal.
- the violent act included evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate or convey some other message to a larger audience other than to intimidate victims.
- the violent act was outside the precepts of international humanitarian law.

In cases where there is insufficient information to make a definitive distinction about whether it is a terrorist incident within the confines of the definition, the database codes these incidents as ‘doubt terrorism proper’. In order to only count unambiguous incidents of terrorism, this study does not include doubted incidents.

Terrorism Recedes

According to the quantitative indicators of the report, the total number of deaths from terrorism declined for the third consecutive year, falling by 27 per cent to 18,814 deaths in 2017. This compares to 25,774 the year before. The number of deaths has now fallen 44 per cent from its peak in 2014. Iraq witnessed the largest fall in deaths by %56 in 2017 from 9,783 in 2016 to 4,271, which is the lowest registered number in Iraq since 2012.

The fall in the number of deaths is ascribed to the decreased number of terrorist attacks by %23 from 2016 to 2017. Initial data in 2018 indicate that this falling trend will continue.

Terrorism recession can be seen in a number of countries which improved on the indicator scale: 94 countries improved on the scale compared to 46 which deteriorated. The number of attacks also fell in 61 countries and the total deaths also fell down in 51 countries.

Although the number of deaths from terrorism is now at its lowest level since 2013, it is still a major global threat. Deaths remain substantially

higher than a decade ago, and are still nearly three times as high as the number recorded in 2001. Terrorism also remains a widespread problem, with 67 countries experiencing at least one death in 2017, and 19 countries recording over 100 deaths.

Europe witnessed best improvements and a noticeable decline in terrorist activity. In western Europe, death from terrorism fell by %15 from 168 in 2016 to 81 in 2017. This decline seems to ongoing in 2018. Between January and October 2018, Europe registered less than 10 deaths from terrorism. Despite that, the number of terrorist attacks rose to 282 in Europe in 2017 compared to 253 cases the previous year. Eight countries in western Europe were registered and one death at least because of terrorism in 2017, the highest number in the past 20 years.

These big declines in the numbers of deaths in Iraq and Syria, according to the report, can be ascribed to the continuous retreat of Da'esh, and the decline in the numbers of deaths its caused by %52 in 2017 after losing most lands under its control, and losing the ability to plan and orchestrate large scale terrorist acts, thanks to the enhanced anti-terrorism measures which work on the short term.

Angola and Spain witnessed the largest deterioration in the GTI 2018 due to the gas attack on Jehovah Witnesses meeting which caused 405 injuries in Angola in addition to the Barcelona attacks in august 2017.

Somalia and Egypt recorded the highest increase in deaths from terrorism in 2017. Al-Shabaab orchestrated the largest single attack in 2017 when it detonated a truck outside a hotel, killing 587 people. Egypt witnessed the second largest attack in 2017 when the Sinai Province of Islamic State under Da'esh mandate attacked Alrowdha Mosque in Sinai killing 311 and injuring 122 in one of the deadliest attacks in Egyptian history.

As Iraq and Syria witnessed a big decline in violence and terrorist activity in in the past two years, North Africa witnessed a terrorist activity as 9000 terrorist spread mostly in Libya and Algeria.

In Nigeria, violence increased involving the Fulani extremists in sync with decreasing killings by Boko Haram. In southeast Asia, Philippines and Myanmar saw the highest numbers of deaths in 2017 since 2002.

Terrorism Trends

Since the 911/, four different trends of global terrorism can be clearly seen: between 2002 and 2007, attacks increased steadily, accompanied by intensified violent conflict in Iraq which peaked in 2007, then steadily dropped with a %35 decline in resulting deaths between 2007 and 2011.

Between 2011 and 2014, global terrorism hiked much faster as deaths increased by %350 in just three years. This coincided with the failure of the Arab Spring, the progressing violent conflict in Iraq, the rise of Da'esh and the start of the Syrian civil war and the reemergence of Book Haram in Nigeria.

After 2014, global terrorism declined again and the consequent numbers of deaths as a result of globally coordinated anti-terrorism measures.

As the numbers of deaths fell during the past three years, the numbers of foiled attacks, which represented %8 of terrorist attacks in 2002, increased and stayed below %10 until 2012. And with the increase in the total number of attacks, the percentage of foiled attacks also increased and maintained this trend despite the decline in the total number of attacks. In 2017, no more than %20 of planned attacks succeeded, while the percentage was only %12 in 2014.

The Future of Terrorism

If political divisions, conflicts and civil wars were the prime movers of launching terrorist acts and recruiting new terrorist in Asia and Africa and other low social and economic development countries, there are other factors that tie strongly to terrorism in advanced countries such as alienation and involvement in internal conflict.

The numbers of returning foreign fighters

are expected to rise in the coming months. Estimations indicate that more than 40,000 foreign fighters joined Da'esh in Iraq and Syria since the beginning of 2013.

Despite the continuous decline in the impact of terrorism in the past three years, there are areas where the impact of terrorism will increase in the short term. The collapse of Da'esh in Iraq and Syria led the group to move elsewhere, especially to the Maghreb in Libya, Niger, and Mali and to southeast Asia. Nigeria witnessed the return of conflict last year when Fulani extremists launched several attacks in the past six months.

The danger of extremist right wing political terrorism in the Maghreb is on the rise. It caused so far 66 deaths as a result of 113 aggressions between 2013 and 2017, including 17 deaths and 47 aggressions in 2017 alone. In western Europe, 12 attacks were registered in the U.K., 6 in Sweden, and 2 in both Greece and France. In the U.S. 30 attacks were registered in 2017 which led to 16 deaths. Most attacks were launched by organizations holding right wing, white supremacist or anti-Islam ideologies.

There is growing evidence that people who have criminal backgrounds in western Europe could be prone to adopting extremist ideologies and recruitment by terrorist organizations, which worries countries in western Europe in light of the rising numbers of returning foreign fighters in the coming years after the fall of Da'esh in Iraq and Syria.

New research about the fast growth of Da'esh and the evolution of the "foreign fighters" phenomenon indicates that individuals with criminal backgrounds are not only prone to extremism, but also to being the terrorist organizations' favored recruits. Ten studies found that over %45 of recruits have criminal backgrounds. One study of Da'esh foreign fighters who came to Germany found that %66 of 778 foreign fighters have criminal backgrounds. Another study on those coming from the Netherlands found that %64 of 319 fighters have criminal backgrounds. The database of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence (ICSR) of what it called jihadists with criminal backgrounds

indicates that %67 of foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria have criminal backgrounds, of whom %38 were involved in terrorist acts in Europe, %57 spend time in prison and %18 were extremists in prison. Most were involved in misdemeanors or violent crimes or both.

For a better understanding of the main factors and motives behind of terrorism, the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), which issues the index, analyzed more than 5,000 different groups of data, indices, and surveys in numerous countries to identify the factors most attached to terrorism. The analysis showed many such factors, especially two which are exceptionally important: the presence of an armed conflict and wide violations of human rights. Conflict remains the prime mover of terrorism in most countries around the world. The top ten most affected countries according to the index share at least on conflict. Those countries witnessed %84 of deaths from terrorism in 2017. And if we add the countries that suffer high levels of political conflict, the number jumps to %99 (political terrorism includes killing outside judicial realms, torture and imprisonment without trial). Terrorist attacks in conflict-stricken countries are more deadly, and they cause an average death rate of 2.4 persons in one attack, compared to 0.84 in non-conflict countries in 2017.

In countries of high economic development, terrorism is related to other factors apart from conflict and human rights violations. Social alienation, lack of economic opportunity and participation in foreign conflicts are the main factors behind terrorist acts in western Europe, north America and other economically advanced countries.

Despite the numerous paths to extremism, there are some common factors that seem to be popular among individuals who resort to terrorism, such as when the main motive behind resorting to terrorism is the need for company, security, power, control and fulfillment. The group dynamisms form a bond, an identity and common goals, and enable the individuals to commit acts which usually they may never think of such as violent extremist acts.

The Economic Impact of Terrorism

In 2017, the global economic impact of terrorism reached \$ 52 billion, %42 less than what it was the year before. That was the third consecutive year of decline in terrorism economic losses which peaked in 2014 at \$ 108 billion. The economic impact in 2017 was less than half what we witnessed in 2014.

This report is considered extremely cautious as it only calculates quantitatively measurable and globally comparable costs and ignores the costs of fighting terrorism, violent extremism and the impact of redirecting public resources into security spending away from other activities. The report also does not calculate the long-term economic impact of terrorism because of tourism, commercial activity, production and investment.

The economic impact of terrorism includes the costs incurred by deaths, injuries of destruction of property caused by terrorism. Deaths from terrorism represented %72 of the global economic impact of terrorism.

Afghanistan was the most economically impacted country: terrorist acts represented %12.8 of its overall GDP. In Iraq came second at %10.8, Syria %5.8, Somalia %5 and Nigeria %2.6.

The economic impact of terrorism represents a small percentage of the total global cost of violence, standing at %0.4 in 2017, which translates into \$ 14.76 billion, and this is % 12.4 of the global GDP.

Terrorist Groups

It may not be easy to identify the most active terrorist groups or the most responsible for deaths because of their many branches and regional affiliations or because of other groups who adopt similar names. When this indicator uses the name "Da'esh", it means the group found in Iraq and Syria only and does not include the group's branch in Khorasan or Sinai despite the string connection between them.

Four terrorist groups, Da'esh, Taliban, Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, caused the most deaths. They killed 10632 people which is %56.5 of the total terrorism death in 2017. In 2012, the four groups were responsible for %32 of all deaths from terrorism. Except for Al-Shabaab, the other three groups suffered from a decline in potential and operations. In the past decade, we witnessed the highest rise in terrorist activity in the second half of the past century. These four groups were responsible for %44 of deaths from terrorism in that decade.

Da'esh

The group which was most active between 2015 and 2017 suffered great losses and a decline in their attacks. They lost %60 of the land that was under their control and %80 of their income that year.

Deaths from Da'esh terrorism declined by %52 from 9,150 in 2016 to 4350 in 2017, injuries by %57 and attacks by %22. The average death per attack rate also fell from 8 to 4.9.

Despite this decline, Da'esh remained active in ten countries in 2017 when it launched 286 attacks around the world in four major regions covering Asia, the Pacific, Europe, and Eurasia. %98 of Da'esh attacks and %98 of its victims were in the Middle East and North Africa, where, Iraq alone, witnessed %90 of its total terrorist attacks (254 attacks) and %81 of the number of deaths (1524 dead). Despite all that, the number of Da'esh victims in the Middle East and North Africa fell from 5930 to 4264 between 2016 and 2017. Deaths in attacks in Europe fell by %68 from 198 in 2016 to 64 in 2017. The group's attacks were mostly in the form of explosions that killed 2387 people. Taking hostages and assassinations represented %12 of the group's operations in 2017, killing 988 people. The group also targeted civilians in 479 terrorist attacks in 2017 compared to 663 in 2016.

Taliban

As of mid-2017, Taliban was estimated to be in control of %11 of Afghanistan's regions and in conflict with the government over another %29 of the country's region. The group maintains a very active presence in more than %70 of Afghani counties. The number of deaths caused by Taliban terrorism remained stable in 2017, yet the period between 2015 and 2017 witnessed higher levels of Taliban terrorism than the previous decade. %82 of deaths from Taliban attacks since 2002 happened in the past five years.

Unlike Da'esh, Taliban is active in only one country. All deaths they caused, which totaled 699 in 2017, were inside Afghanistan. Pakistani Taliban, however, was responsible for 233 deaths and 56 attacks in Pakistan in 2017.

Taliban shifted their focus from attacks on civilians to attacks to police and military, killing, in 2017, 2419 members compared to 1782 in 2016, and increased their attacks from 369 in 2016 to 386 in 2017.

On the other hand, the number of civilian victims of Taliban declined to 548 in 2017 compared to 1223 the previous year. Taliban attacks on civilians also declined from 254 in 2016 to 138 in 2017.

Armed aggressions and explosions were the most common types of attacks by Taliban standing at %54 of all its attacks. Despite the decline in the number of explosions by %18, the total deaths caused by these explosions increased by %17.

Al-Shabaab

The Somali Al-Shabaab drew global attention after their lethal attacks on Mogadishu and neighboring countries in Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda. Since 2007, the peace keeping forces of the African Union Mission to Somalia, (AMISOM), is fighting Al-Shabaab with the help of the U.S. and support of the U.N. in 2017, the first American troops were deployed in the area to launch air attacks on Al-Shabaab.

In 2017, Al-Shabaab outperformed Boko Haram as the most lethal terrorist group in Africa and Sub-Saharan for the first time since 2010, killing 1457 (%67 of whom were in Mogadishu) which stands for an increase by %93 compared to 2016, while the total number of attacks increased only by ten in 2017 compared to 2016 as a result of one attack that killed 588 people, ranking as the deadliest terrorist attack globally in 2017. The fragile political and security Somali establishments allowed Al-Shabaab to launch such lethal attacks, two of which were counted among the largest attacks in 2017. Al-Shabaab launched 17 attacks that killed around 10 or more per attack. The number of deaths in the explosion attacks was the highest in all four most destructive terrorist groups in the world.

Boko Haram

The "Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wal-Jihād" escalated their terrorist activity by %40 in 2017 and their victims by %15 compared to 2016. They launched 272 attacks killing 1254 people in 2017. These figures are barely %19 their victims in 2014, when they killed 6612. This can be ascribed to the divisions in the group and the Nigerian government's long-term strategy of dealing with Boko Haram and partners. Yet, the group is still the most active terrorist group in Nigeria.

Of all the deaths caused by Boko Haram in 2017, %82 were in Nigeria (in Borno and Adamawa) while the rest were in Cameroon and Niger. Boko Haram launched its ten deadliest attacks in 2017 in Nigeria, nine of which were in Borno.

Countries Most Impacted by Terrorism

Of the total 10 countries most impacted by terrorism in 2017, 8 countries were in the same classification in 2016 in addition to Lebanon and Turkey that soon left the list in favor of Egypt and the Philippines in 2017.

Despite the big decline in the deaths from terrorism in Iraq, no change has been perceived in the five most impacted countries. All these countries were classified among the five worst countries annually since 2013.

The impact of terrorism declined in 6 of the 10 most impacted countries while the other 4 witnessed a hike in terrorism, namely: Somalia, India, Egypt and the Philippines.

Conflict persisted as the prime mover of terrorist activity in the 10 most impacted countries where 8 countries were classified to be in a state of war and 2 (India & Egypt) were involved in several small-scale conflicts.

Iraq

Iraq ranked as number 1 most impacted country on the index. Despite the big drop in the number of deaths from 2016 to 2017, Iraq remains the most impacted country, a position it has maintained since 2014. The overall number of deaths from terrorism in Iraq dropped by %56 from 9783 in 2016 to 4271 in 2017, the least since 2012. The number of attacks dropped from 2969 in 2016 to 1956 in 2017. Da'esh was responsible for %83 of terrorism-related deaths in 2017 despite the %52 decline in the number of its victims in Iraq from 7368 in 2016 to 3554 in 2017.

Afghanistan

In 2017, Afghanistan was the country that registered the highest number of deaths from terrorism, removing Iraq from that position which it occupied since 2013 when it stood in the second place with a total of 4653 dead and 5015 wounded as a result of 1168 attacks. Despite a less than %1 rise in deaths in Afghanistan compared to the previous year, 2016 is still seen as the second deadliest years after 2015.

Taliban was responsible for %77 of terrorism victims and Khorasan Province group, a Da'esh affiliate, was the second most active terrorist group in Afghanistan. 2017 is regarded as the deadliest in history.

Kabul was the province that saw the highest death

rates between 2016 and 2017 which amounted to 424 and 549 respectively, followed by Helmand, Kandahar and Ghazna which witnessed 367, 360 and 325 deaths respectively.

Nigeria

Despite the drop in deaths from terrorism for the third consecutive year, Nigeria is the third most impacted country according to the index. In 2017, deaths from terrorism dropped by %16 compared to 2016, which, in turn, witnessed a %63 drop in the number of victims compared to 2015 which was lower than the rate in 2014 by %34. This proves the defectiveness of the terrorism combating process in Nigeria.

In 2017 in Nigeria, the number of deaths from terrorism reached 1532, the wounded 852 and attacks 411. Terrorism attacks are mainly committed by Boko Haram and Fulani extremists who are responsible for the %63 of the attacks and %88 of deaths in 2017. Initial data of 2018 indicates a major increase in violence committed by Fulani extremists.

Syria

In Syria, civil war killed and wounded thousands of victims. Yet, the index ranks Syria in fourth position in the list of most impacted countries because it does not count the victims of the regime and its allies among the victims of terrorism. With the drop of violence of the Syrian civil war, the numbers of deaths in 2017 fell by %48 to 961 compared to 2016. Da'esh was responsible for %63 of those deaths.

In 2017, four Syria governorates (Aleppo, Damascus, Deir-Ezzor, and Homs) witnessed %73 of the total consequent deaths. %60 of the total attacks took place in the first half of 2017 in those four governorates. The number of attacks in Syria dropped noticeably from 22 in 2016 to 9 in 2017.

Pakistan

In 2017, Pakistan registered the lowest number of terrorism-related deaths since 2006. Deaths dropped by %11 from 957 to 852 in 2016, which

is %64 lower than the peak of 2013. Pakistan ranked fifth on the list.

Pakistan's three most active terror groups, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TPP), the Khorasan Chapter of the Islamic State, and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi were responsible for %67 of all deaths in Pakistan in 2017 (570 deaths). The TTP and the Khorasan Chapter were both responsible for 233 deaths each, making them the deadliest groups in Pakistan. Deaths committed by TPP declined by 17 per cent from 2016, but were offset by increases in deaths by the Khorasan Chapter, which rose by 50 per cent and deaths by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which rose by 17 per cent.

Somalia

Somalia recorded the largest increase in terrorism globally in 2017. Deaths from terrorism rose by nearly 93 per cent, increasing from 762 in 2016 to 1,470 in 2017. The number of terrorist incidents also rose significantly, rising from 248 to 369, a 49 per cent increase. Terrorist activity in Somalia is dominated by Al-Shabaab, a group responsible for 92 per cent of all terror-related deaths in 2017. Al-Shabaab was also responsible for the world's deadliest terror attack in 2017, a truck bombing attack in Mogadishu that resulted in 588 deaths and more than 300 recorded injuries.

Yemen

Deaths from terrorism in Yemen fell by %41 between 2016 and 2017. Yemen has experienced a 75 per cent decline in deaths since they peaked in 2015, falling from 1,519 to 378.

The most active terror groups in Yemen are the Houthi Extremists, or Ansar Allah, Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic State affiliate Adan-Abyan Province of the Islamic State. Terrorism carried out by these three groups is concentrated primarily in the northwest and southwest of Yemen. Adan-Abyan Province of the Islamic State is primarily active in the southern coastal province of Adan, while AQAP is active in the provinces of Abyan and Lahij, and Ansar Allah in Taizz and Marib.

Egypt

Egypt had a resurgence in terrorist activity in 2017 after a significant fall in the previous year. Deaths from terrorism increased by 123 per cent to 655 deaths, slightly fewer than the peak in 2015 when 683 terrorism deaths were recorded. In 2017, Egypt had 169 terror incidents compared to 539 in 2015, highlighting the increased lethality of terror attacks in the country.

The Sinai Province of the Islamic State (ISIS-SP) was the deadliest group in Egypt and was responsible for the second deadliest attack globally in 2017. Also known as Wilayat Sinai, the Sinai Province of the Islamic State has targeted Egyptian security forces and soldiers²⁷, as well as mosques and churches of Egypt's Coptic Christian minority. In November 2017, ISIS-SP detonated explosives and opened fire against a mosque in Beir al-Abd, killing 311 and wounding an additional 127.

The North Sinai province was the region most impacted by terrorism, with 522 deaths in 2017, including 457 deaths committed by ISIS-SP.

Finally, we need to highlight some remarks about the report. Despite its statistical richness and accurate quantitative analysis of countries, regions and terrorist groups, the report lacks a qualitative analysis of the same caliber. Most qualitative interpretations of quantitative indices are rather rare and poor in terms of knowledge. In its interpretation of the decline of the rate of terrorist attacks in a given country or region, the report only refers local, regional and international efforts in combatting terrorism or to the divisions in terrorist ranks, which is unsubstantiated and does not rise to the ranks of thorough analyses that enrich experience. That is why the report lacks case studies that can be examined, analyzed for the benefit of decision makers.

The index does not provide any analysis of anti-terrorism policies adopted by countries, nor an estimation of governments' capabilities to develop security governance policies, methods of handling a terrorist act, or explanations of the rise in the number of victims of one terrorist act compared to another.





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