



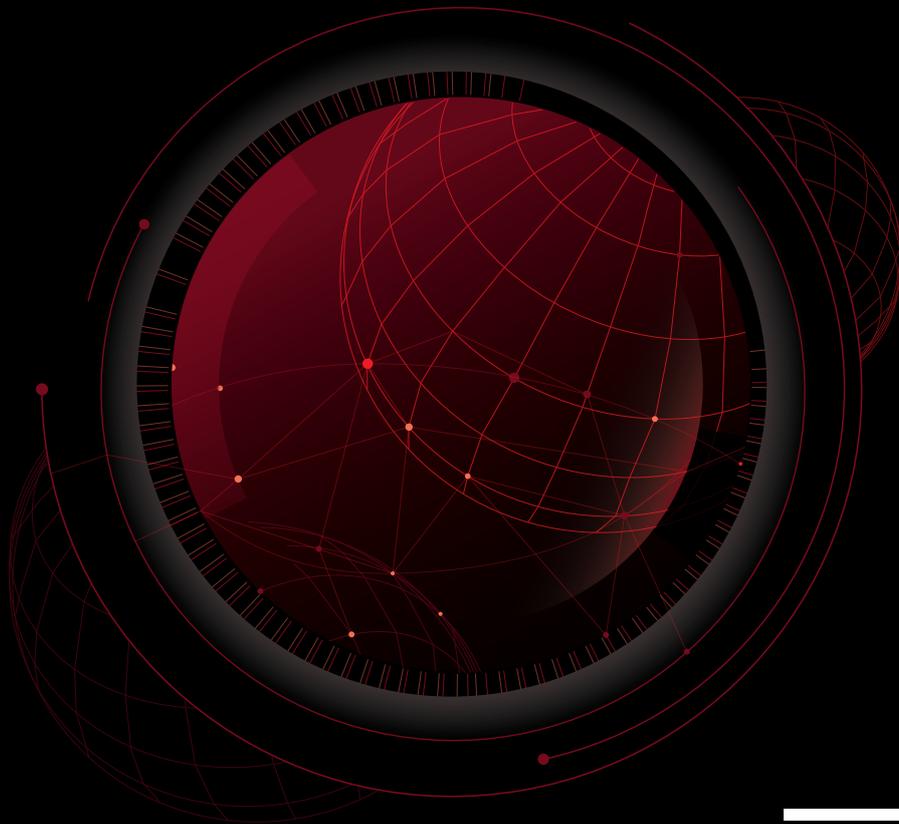
GLOBAL TERRORISM INDEX 2024

○ Global
Results

○ Trends in
Terrorism

○ Properties
of Terrorism

○ Terrorism and Organised
Crime in the Sahel





Quantifying Peace and its Benefits

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The GTI uses Dragonfly's TerrorismTracker database, which contains detailed and structured event records of every terrorist incident reported in open sources since January 2007. Dragonfly is a leading risk intelligence and data company that specialises in global security, geopolitics, crises and instability.

TerrorismTracker is the most comprehensive, current and methodologically robust dedicated open-source terrorism incidents database available. It is widely used for professional applications in countering terrorism, by law enforcement, government, military, in the private sector, in academia, and among insurers.

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Executive Summary

This is the eleventh edition of the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), which provides a comprehensive summary of the key global trends and patterns in terrorism since 2012. The GTI report is produced by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), using data from Dragonfly's *TerrorismTracker* database and other sources.

In 2023, deaths from terrorism increased by 22 per cent to 8,352 deaths and are now at their highest level since 2017, although they remain 23 per cent lower than at their peak in 2015. Excluding the October 7th Hamas attack, deaths would have still been up by five per cent.

Whilst the number of deaths increased, the number of incidents fell, with total attacks dropping by 22 per cent to 3,350 in 2023. Pakistan recorded the most incidents of any country, with 490 attacks recorded. The rise in deaths but fall in number of incidents shows how terrorism is becoming more concentrated and more lethal. The number of countries recording a death from terrorism fell to 41, considerably lower than the peak of 57 countries recorded in 2015 and the 44 recorded in 2022.

By far the largest single terrorist attack that occurred in 2023 was the October 7th attack by Hamas-led militants in Israel. This attack killed 1,200 people, and was the largest single terrorist attack since 9/11, and one of the largest terrorist attacks in history. The consequences of this attack have been immense and are still unfolding, with an estimated 25,000 Palestinians killed by Israel's retaliatory military response as of February 2024.

Although Israel suffered the largest terrorist attack in 2023, it was not the country most impacted by terrorism. Burkina Faso is now ranked first on the GTI. In the 13 years that the GTI covers, it is the first time a country other than Afghanistan or Iraq has been top of the index. Almost 2,000 people were killed in terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso from 258 incidents, accounting for nearly a quarter of all terrorist deaths globally. The impact of terrorism in Burkina Faso has increased every year since 2014, with terrorism also surging in its neighbours, Mali and Niger. In Burkina Faso in 2023, deaths from terrorism were up 68 per cent, even though attacks decreased by 17 per cent.

The most notable improvements in terrorism occurred in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iraq was ranked outside of the worst ten countries in the index for the first time, with less than a hundred deaths from terrorism recorded in 2023. Total deaths have fallen 99 per cent since their peak in 2007, with incidents falling 90 per cent. Afghanistan has also seen a significant improvement in the impact of terrorism, with deaths and incidents falling 84 per cent and 75 per cent respectively since 2007. The GTI does not include acts of state repression and violence by state actors and as such, acts committed by the Taliban are no longer included in the scope of the report since the group's ascension to power. The deadliest terrorist groups in the world in 2022 were Islamic State (IS) and its affiliates, followed by Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), Hamas, and al-Shabaab.

IS remained the deadliest terrorist group globally for the ninth consecutive year, recording both the highest number of attacks and deaths from terrorism. Although the group is still highly active, its impact has been falling for almost all of those nine years. Deaths attributed to the group and its affiliates - Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISK), Islamic State - Sinai Province (ISS), Islamic State – Sahel and Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) - fell by 17 per cent over the last year to 1,636, the lowest number since 2014. The group carried out attacks in 20 countries in 2023, down from 30 countries in 2020.

Terrorism had been falling or remaining steady for several years prior to 2023, with substantial falls from 2015 to 2019 followed by several years of minor fluctuations. However, the last 12 months saw the largest percentage increase in terrorism since the inception of the GTI, even as total attacks fell considerably. This dynamic reflects an intensification of terrorism, with fewer attacks committed by fewer groups while causing a larger number of fatalities. The number of active terrorist groups has also fallen considerably over the past 15 years, with 66 groups recording at least one attack last year, compared to 141 active groups in 2009. This increase in the intensity of terrorism has driven a rise in the lethality rate of terrorist attacks to just under 2.5 fatalities per attack, compared to 1.6 in 2022, the highest level since 2015.

Violent conflict remains the primary driver of terrorism, with over 90 per cent of attacks and 98 per cent of terrorism deaths in 2023 taking place in countries in conflict. All ten countries most impacted by terrorism in 2022 were also involved in an armed conflict. The intensity of terrorism in conflict is also much higher than in non-conflict countries, with an average of 2.7 fatalities per attack compared to 0.48 fatalities.

Terrorism in the West has fallen to its lowest level in 15 years. There were 23 attacks recorded in the West in 2023, a 55 per cent drop from the prior year, and considerably lower than the peak of 176 attacks that was recorded in 2017. Sixteen of those attacks occurred in the United States, with only five countries in the West recording any attacks at all, and only Belgium and the US recording any deaths. Total deaths in the West fell by 22 per cent to 21 fatalities. Both political and religiously motivated attacks fell in the West. Of the seven attacks recorded in the US in 2023, five were linked to individuals with far-right sympathies or connections.

Although terrorism has fallen in the West, there are still concerns about a possible resurgence in 2024. The October 7th attacks, and their aftermath, have greatly increased political tensions in Europe, with German police disrupting planned terrorist attacks on Jewish institutions. There are also concerns over an increase in politically related violence, with record numbers of countries set to go to the polls in 2024.

Regionally, the impact of terrorism is far higher in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia than any other regions in the world. These three regions accounted for 94 per cent of deaths from terrorism in 2023, with sub-Saharan Africa alone accounting for just under 59 per cent of all fatalities.

The epicentre of terrorism has now conclusively shifted out of the Middle East and into the Central Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa. There were just under four thousand deaths from terrorism in the Sahel in 2023, or 47 per cent of the total. The increase in terrorism in the Sahel over the past 15 years has been dramatic, with deaths rising 2,860 per cent, and incidents rising 1,266 per cent over this period. Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger account for most of the terrorism deaths in the region. All three face uncertain futures, having suffered from coups, weak governance, and fragile relations with neighbouring countries, exemplified by their recent withdrawal from ECOWAS.

In OECD member countries, socio-economic factors such as youth unemployment, military expenditure, lack of confidence in the press and lower inequality-adjusted life expectancy, correlate significantly with the GTI. In non-OECD countries, factors such as a history of internal violence, internal conflict, friction with neighbouring countries, and corruption were more significantly correlated with the GTI than in OECD countries.

There is a strong correlation between organised crime and terrorism, and this link is clearest in the central Sahel region. As terrorist groups like JNIM have expanded their territorial control in the region, there has been a surge in kidnappings, ransom demands, and attacks on gold mining operations. Terrorist groups integrate organised criminal operations by co-opting illicit economies, taxing both criminal and unregulated legal enterprises, and providing security for criminal groups and the transportation of illicit goods.



Terrorism is not the deadliest form of violence in the world. Armed conflict results in nine times more fatalities than terrorism, homicide accounts for over 45 times more, and deaths from suicide are 72 times higher. However, terrorism is unique as its unpredictability and high casualty rates lead to significant emotional and psychological impacts, which can in turn lead to significant social and geopolitical repercussions.

Looking forward, the prospects for 2024 are uncertain. The conflict in Gaza has heightened the possibility of terror attacks in the MENA region, and in states perceived as supportive of Israel or with large Jewish populations. Meanwhile, the ongoing deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel may result in further increases in conflict and terrorist activity.

Key Findings

1 Results

- ▶ Deaths from terrorism rose to 8,352 in 2023, a 22 per cent increase from the prior year.
- ▶ The number of terrorist attacks decreased to 3,350 in 2023, a reduction of 23 per cent from the 4,321 attacks in 2022.
- ▶ Terrorism deaths fell by 519 in Afghanistan in 2023, an 81 per cent improvement. This is the first year since 2019 that Afghanistan has not been the country most impacted by terrorism.
- ▶ Terrorism attacks became more deadly in 2023 with 2.5 deaths per attack compared to 1.6 in 2022.
- ▶ Iraq is no longer amongst the ten countries most impacted by terrorism, with total deaths falling 65 per cent in the past year. Prior to 2023, Iraq had been ranked in the top ten every year since the inception of the index.
- ▶ Burkina Faso became the country with the highest impact from terrorism for the first time, with deaths from terrorism increasing by 68 per cent to 1,907. A quarter of all terrorism deaths occurring globally were in Burkina Faso.
- ▶ Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the most impacted region by terrorism in 2023 followed by the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).
- ▶ Within sub-Saharan Africa, the Sahel is the most affected region, accounting for almost half of all deaths from terrorism and 26 per cent of attacks in 2023. Five of the ten countries most impacted by terrorism are in the Sahel region.
- ▶ Israel had the largest increase in terrorism deaths, increasing from 24 to 1,210 deaths. The attack in Israel by Hamas was the single largest terrorist attack since the inception of the GTI, the biggest since 9/11 and one of the largest terrorist attacks in history.
- ▶ Islamic State (IS) and its affiliates remained the world's deadliest terrorist group in 2023, despite deaths attributed to the group and its affiliates declining by 17 per cent from 1,963 to 1,636 deaths.
- ▶ The four terrorist groups responsible for the most deaths in 2023 were Islamic State (IS), Hamas, Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) and Al-Shabaab.
- ▶ Of the 3,350 terrorist attacks recorded in 2023, 54 per cent were attributed to a group. This compares to 48 per cent in 2022 and 45 per cent in 2021. The countries with the highest number of attacks not attributed to a group were Myanmar, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Pakistan.
- ▶ IS in Syria is the most active it has been in ten years, with attacks rising by 4 per cent to 224 in 2023.
- ▶ Conflict remains the primary driver of terrorist activity. Over 90 per cent of terror attacks in 2023 occurred in conflict zones.

2 Trends

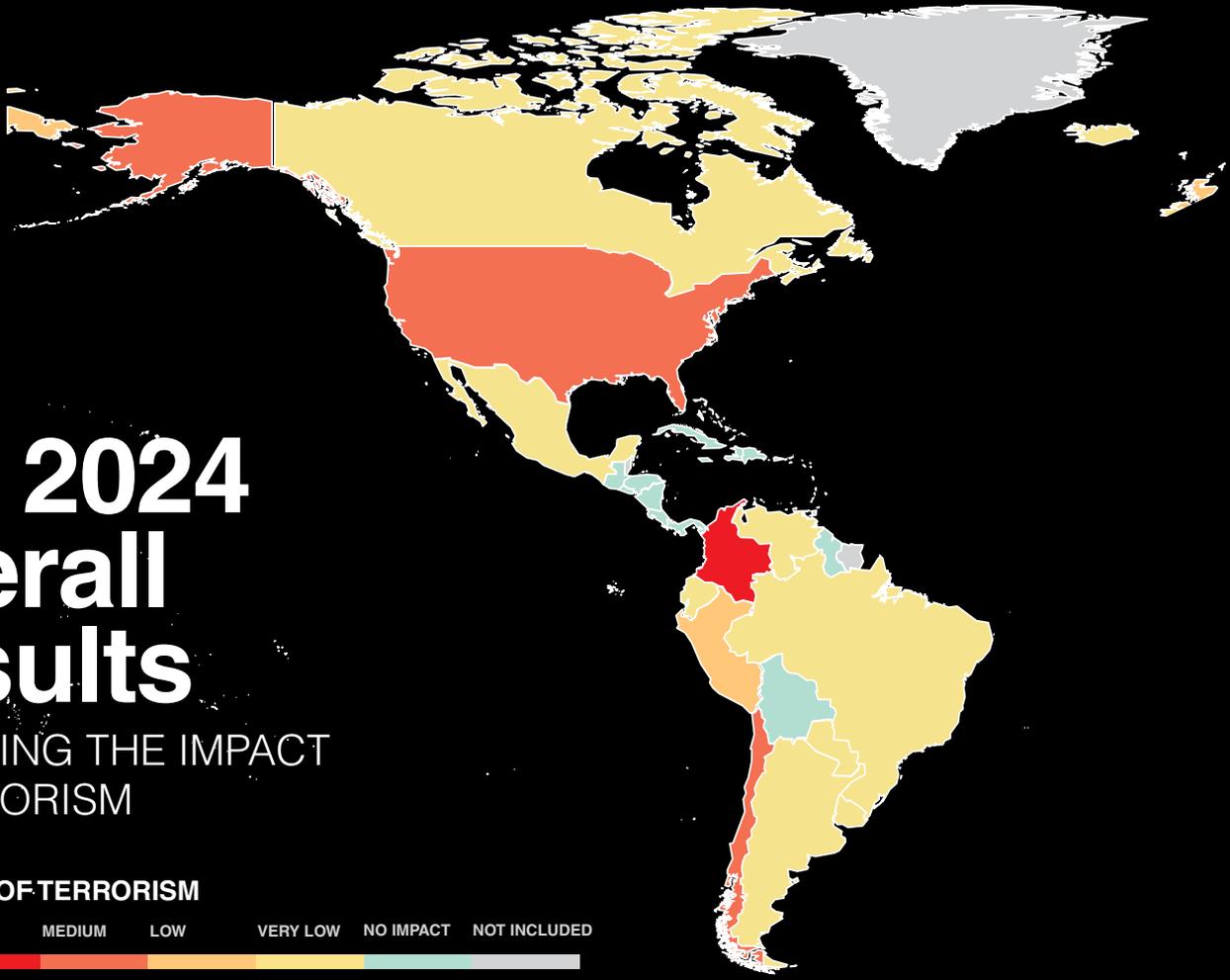
- ▶ Deaths from terrorism are now at their highest level since 2017. However, they are still almost 25 per cent lower than at their peak in 2015.
- ▶ The largest falls in terrorism since 2007 have occurred in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Nigeria.
- ▶ In Iraq, total deaths from terrorism have fallen 99 per cent since 2007.
- ▶ The epicentre of terrorism has shifted from the Middle East and North Africa into sub-Saharan Africa, concentrated largely in the Sahel region. This region now accounts for almost half of all deaths from terrorism globally.
- ▶ Terrorism has become more concentrated over the past decade. The number of countries recording at least one death from terrorism fell to 41 in 2023, down from 44 in 2022 and 57 in 2015.
- ▶ In the West, terrorist incidents dropped to their lowest level since 2007, down by 55 per cent from 2022, with 23 attacks and 21 deaths recorded in 2023. Attacks in the west peaked in 2017 with 176 attacks recorded in that year.
- ▶ South Asia has the highest regional average impact from terrorism, although it improved over the past year.
- ▶ Over the past decade the average impact of terrorism has only increased in two regions: North America and sub-Saharan Africa. Every other region has recorded a decrease in the average impact since 2013.
- ▶ Total deaths from terrorism are now considerably higher in sub-Saharan Africa than any other region. Sub-Saharan Africa has recorded the most deaths from terrorism for the past seven years.
- ▶ Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia have far more deaths from terrorism than any other regions. Collectively they accounted for just under 94 per cent of deaths from terrorism in 2023.
- ▶ In 2023, 98 per cent of terrorism deaths occurred in countries experiencing some level of conflict. Most of these occurred in countries at war, but the number of deaths in countries involved in minor conflicts has been steadily rising.
- ▶ In the US since 2007, there have been 60 politically motivated attacks compared to 14 religiously motivated attacks. Five out of seven attacks in 2023 were linked to people with far-right sympathies or connections.

3 Properties of Terrorism

- ▶ Terrorism kills far fewer people than other forms of violence. Armed conflict kills nine times as many people as terrorism, and homicide kills over 45 times as many people.
- ▶ Terrorism is a unique threat not because it kills the most people, but because it has the greatest potential psychological and social impact. For example, after the October 7th attacks in Israel, support for the peace process and two-state solution collapsed, and rates of worry, sadness, and stress all more than doubled.
- ▶ The impact of large scale terrorist attacks is compounded when they are unexpected. The attack in Israel was a considerable statistical outlier, with no previous attack in the country claiming more than 50 lives.
- ▶ Deaths from terrorism are not evenly distributed across attacks. Eighty per cent of deaths from terrorism occurred from the top 18 per cent of attacks.
- ▶ Deaths from terrorism at the group level are even more unevenly distributed. Just 11 terrorist groups were responsible for 80 per cent of all deaths from terrorism since 2007.
- ▶ Most terrorist groups do not last very long. Of the 139 groups that were active in 2007, just 25 were still active in 2023. Over 44 per cent of groups last two years or less.
- ▶ Terrorist groups that disband are not being replaced with new groups at the same rate. The total number of active terrorist groups has fallen 51 per cent since 2007. This fall was almost identical for political, religious, and nationalist terrorist groups.
- ▶ Terrorism is correlated with measures of both negative peace, such as the Global Peace Index, and Positive Peace. All three GPI domains and seven of the eight PPI pillars correlate with the Global Terrorism Index.
- ▶ The drivers of terrorism vary in strength between highly economically developed and developing countries. In the OECD, internal conflict is only weakly linked to terrorism, whilst outside of the OECD it is the strongest predictor.
- ▶ For Positive Peace, *Acceptance of the Rights of Others* had the strongest correlation for both OECD and non-OECD countries.

4 Terrorism and Organised Crime in the Sahel

- ▶ Terrorist groups and organised crime organisations usually interact in three ways: they can coexist, cooperate, or converge into a single group.
- ▶ Terrorist groups are more likely to engage directly in criminal activity than cooperate with organised crime.
- ▶ There is a clear correlation between the impact of terrorism and the level of organised criminal activity. This correlation is particularly strong in certain areas, like the Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa.
- ▶ The nexus between organised crime and terrorism in the Sahel is characterised by activities such as cattle and livestock rustling, artisanal gold mining, drug trafficking, kidnapping, and ransom demands.
- ▶ Terrorist groups integrate organised criminal operations by co-opting illicit economies, taxing both criminal and unregulated legal enterprises, and providing security for criminal groups and the transportation of illicit goods.
- ▶ Areas with contested territorial control typically experience higher levels of violence, including terror attacks.
- ▶ Terrorist organisations like JNIM in the Sahel often increase violent attacks, kidnappings, and ransom activities during phases of territorial expansion or competition. Once they establish control, these activities usually decrease.
- ▶ For example, in Mali, cattle rustling has significantly increased due to escalating conflict and a campaign by IS-Sahel in late 2022 to expand their territory.
- ▶ In Burkina Faso, gold mining has been a major factor in JNIM's expansion as they seek to extend influence into gold mining regions.
- ▶ Kidnapping has surged in the Sahel, with incidents increasing from 78 in 2017 to over 1,000 in 2023.



GTI 2024 Overall Results

MEASURING THE IMPACT
OF TERRORISM

THE IMPACT OF TERRORISM



RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK CHANGE	RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK CHANGE	RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK CHANGE
1	Burkina Faso	8.571	↑ 1	28	Thailand	4.219	↓ 5	55	Spain	1.669	↑ 5
2	Israel	8.143	↑ 24	29	Türkiye	4.168	↓ 8	56	Lebanon	1.562	↓ 5
3	Mali	7.998	↑ 1	30	United States of America	4.141	↓ 1	57	Australia	1.475	↓ 2
4	Pakistan	7.916	↑ 3	31	Indonesia	3.993	↓ 7	58	Italy	1.447	↓ 4
5	Syria	7.890	↔	32	Bangladesh	3.317	↑ 14	59	Central African Republic	1.445	↓ 2
6	Afghanistan	7.825	↓ 5	33	Sri Lanka	3.072	↓ 2	60	Saudi Arabia	1.366	↑ 5
7	Somalia	7.814	↓ 4	34	Greece	3.028	↓ 1	61	Argentina	1.274	↓ 3
8	Nigeria	7.575	↔	35	Russia	3.016	↑ 8	62	Ethiopia	1.272	↓ 3
9	Myanmar	7.536	↔	36	Tunisia	2.914	↑ 4	63	Kosovo	1.218	↑ 28
10	Niger	7.274	↔	37	Germany	2.782	↓ 2	64	Japan	1.189	↔
11	Iraq	7.078	↓ 5	38	France	2.647	↓ 4	65	Venezuela	1.174	↓ 13
12	Cameroon	6.98	↓ 1	39	Libya	2.469	↓ 7	66	Slovakia	1.092	↓ 5
13	Democratic Republic of the Congo	6.514	↑ 1	40	Burundi	2.434	↓ 4	67	Mexico	1.04	↑ 1
14	India	6.324	↓ 1	41	United Kingdom	2.373	↑ 3	68	Austria	0.953	↓ 5
15	Mozambique	6.267	↓ 3	42	Tanzania	2.267	↓ 3	69	Tajikistan	0.871	↓ 16
16	Colombia	6.188	↓ 1	43	Angola	2.254	↑ 48	70	Sweden	0.735	↓ 4
17	Chile	5.679	↓ 1	44	Algeria	2.197	↓ 6	71	Switzerland	0.627	↓ 4
18	Kenya	5.616	↑ 1	45	Nepal	2.163	↓ 8	72	Cyprus	0.616	↑ 3
19	Philippines	5.383	↓ 1	46	Côte d'Ivoire	2.06	↓ 5	73	China	0.582	↑ 21
20	Egypt	5.221	↓ 3	47	Peru	2.045	↓ 6	74	Netherlands	0.577	↓ 4
21	Chad	4.987	↓ 1	48	Djibouti	2.035	↓ 3	75	Jordan	0.455	↓ 4
22	Palestine	4.966	↑ 6	49	Brazil	1.988	↓ 2	=76	Armenia	0.423	↑ 18
23	Yemen	4.951	↓ 1	50	New Zealand	1.947	↓ 2	=76	Uzbekistan	0.423	↓ 4
24	Benin	4.898	↑ 3	51	Belgium	1.904	↑ 11	78	Paraguay	0.241	↓ 5
25	Togo	4.67	↑ 5	52	Canada	1.753	↑ 4	=79	United Arab Emirates	0.233	↓ 2
26	Iran	4.464	↓ 1	53	Norway	1.747	↓ 3	=79	Iceland	0.233	↓ 2
27	Uganda	4.377	↑ 22	54	Ukraine	1.686	↑ 20	81	Malaysia	0.192	↓ 5



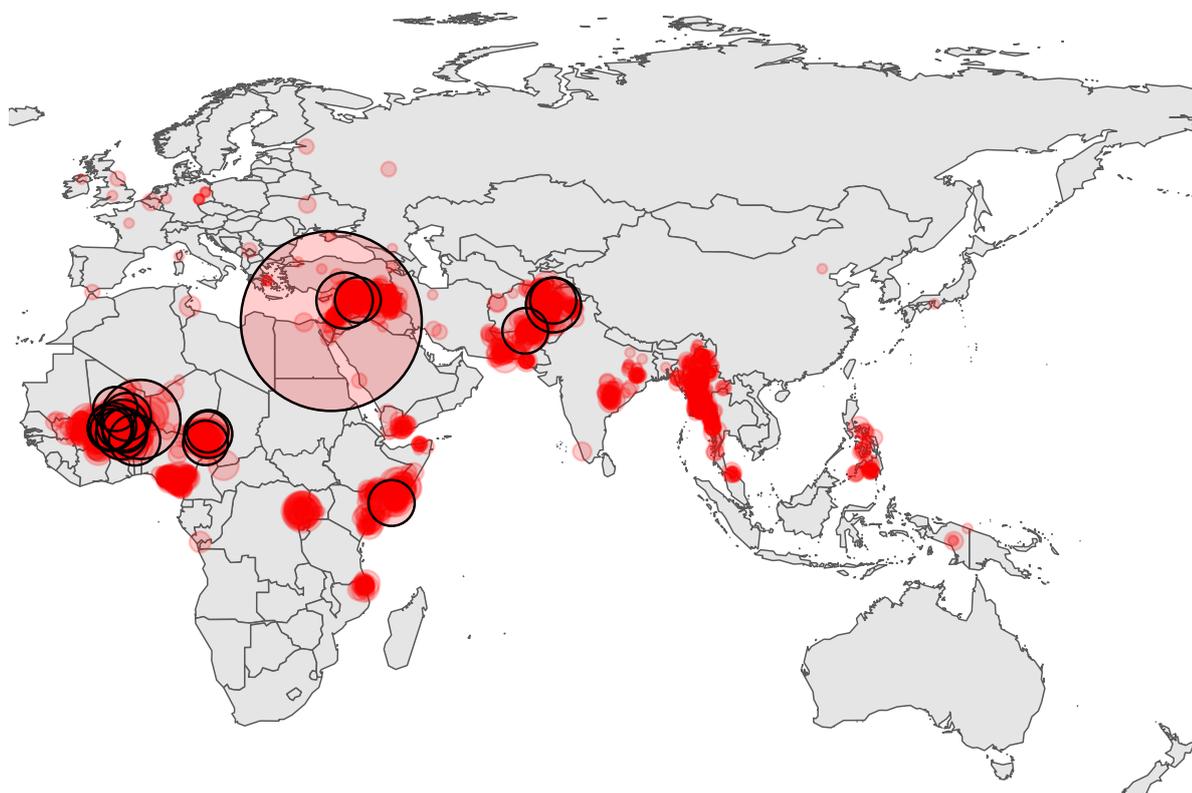
20 Deadliest Attacks

The 20 most fatal terrorist attacks in 2023

● All attacks in 2023 scaled by number of fatalities

○ Worst attacks in 2023

					DESCRIPTION
1	COUNTRY ISRAEL	PROVINCE HADAROM	DEATHS		Over 1,000 Palestinian militants from Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other Palestinian armed groups infiltrated the Gaza Israel border on vehicles through border crossings and breached fences, and attacked Israeli communities around the Gaza Strip with gunfire, explosives and bladed weapons on the morning of 7 October.
	DATE 7/10/2023	GROUP HAMAS	1,200		
2	COUNTRY NIGER	PROVINCE TILLABÉRI	DEATHS		Gunmen killed at least 200 soldiers and wounded at least 34 others in an ambush on four military columns at Tassilatane, Fillingue department, Tillabéri region on 16 November. No group had claimed responsibility at the time of writing, but local media outlets reported that the attack was a joint operation by Greater Sahara Province of Islamic State (IS) and Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM).
	DATE 16/11/2023	GROUP JNIM	200		
3	COUNTRY SYRIA	REGION HOMS	DEATHS		Several explosive-laden drones killed possibly as many as 100 soldiers and civilians and wounded at least 240 others in an attack on a military college graduation ceremony at the Homs Military Academy, Homs, Homs Governorate on 5 October. No group had claimed responsibility at the time of writing, but jihadists and anti-regime groups operate in the area.
	DATE 5/10/2023	GROUP SEPARATIST/NATIONALIST (UNDETERMINED)	89		
4	COUNTRY PAKISTAN	PROVINCE KHYBER-PAKHTUNKHWA	DEATHS		A suicide bomber killed at least 84 people and wounded at least 200 others at the Police Lines Mosque, Peshawar, Peshawar district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province at around 1340hrs on 30 January. Several hundred police officers were reportedly at the scene when the bomb exploded. No group had claimed the attack at the time of writing, but based on the target and location, Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was probably responsible.
	DATE 30/1/2023	GROUP TEHRIK-E-TALIBAN PAKISTAN (TTP)	84		
5	COUNTRY BURKINA FASO	PROVINCE SAHEL	DEATHS		Gunmen killed at least 71 soldiers, injured three, and abducted an unconfirmed number in an ambush on the Oursi and Deou axis, Oudalan province, Sahel region on 17 February. Security forces claimed that they killed 160 assailants in counter-offensive operations. The Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility.
	DATE 17/2/2023	GROUP ISLAMIC STATE (IS)	71		
6	COUNTRY BURKINA FASO	REGION EST	DEATHS		Gunmen killed at least 60 civilians in an attack on Partiaga, Tapoa province, Est region on the night of 26 February. The assailants set fire to the town hall, the gendarmerie post, telephone poles and other structures. No group had claimed responsibility for the attack at the time of writing, but a local social media outlet said that Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) was probably responsible.
	DATE 26/2/2023	GROUP JNIM	70		
7	COUNTRY BURKINA FASO	REGION CENTRE-NORD	DEATHS		Gunmen killed at least 70 civilians in Zaongo, Namentenga province, Centre-Nord region on the evening of 5 November. No group had claimed responsibility at the time of writing, but jihadists operate in the area. The European Union called for an investigation into the killings after some suggestions that state-linked groups may have been responsible.
	DATE 5/11/2023	GROUP JIHADIST (UNDETERMINED)	70		
8	COUNTRY MALI	REGION GAO	DEATHS		Fighters of Islamic State (IS) and Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) clashed near Tin Fadimata village, Gao cercle, Gao region on the night of 1 March. At the time of writing, there was no information on the number of casualties and on who started the fighting, but JNIM claimed to have killed at least 60 IS fighters.
	DATE 1/3/2023	GROUP ISLAMIC STATE (IS)	60		
9	COUNTRY NIGERIA	PROVINCE BORNO	DEATHS		Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) gunmen attacked Boko Haram fighters near Lake Chad in Borno state at around 1200hrs on 19 August. Boko Haram retaliated, and 100 fighters were killed between the sides. Boko Haram reportedly lost more fighters than ISWA.
	DATE 19/8/2023	GROUP ISLAMIC STATE WEST AFRICA (ISWA)	60		
10	COUNTRY BURKINA FASO	PROVINCE NORD	DEATHS		Gunmen killed at least 60 soldiers and wounded at least a dozen others in an attack on military barracks in Souli, Solle department, Loroum province, Nord region at around 1100hrs on 24 December. No group had claimed responsibility at the time of writing, but local media outlets reported that Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) was responsible.
	DATE 24/12/2023	GROUP JNIM	60		



					DESCRIPTION	
11	COUNTRY	SOMALIA	PROVINCE	SHABEELLAHA HOOSE	DEATHS	Gunmen attacked an African Union army base housing Ugandan soldiers with firearms, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), suicide bombers and other explosive devices in Bulo Marer, Lower Shabelle region, South West state at around 0500hrs on 26 May. Security forces shot back in retaliatory fire. The Ugandan president said that at least 54 soldiers had died. These numbers had not been confirmed by the African Union or the Somali government. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility.
	DATE	26/5/2023	GROUP	AL-SHABAAB	54	
12	COUNTRY	PAKISTAN	REGION	FEDERALLY ADMINISTERED TRIBAL AR	DEATHS	A suicide bomber killed at least 54 people and wounded 200 at a political rally organised by the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) party in Khar, Bajaur district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province at around 1700hrs on 30 July. Police said that the assailant detonated the explosive close to the event stage. Islamic State - Khorasan Province claimed responsibility.
	DATE	30/7/2023	GROUP	ISLAMIC STATE - KHORASAN PROVINCE	54	
13	COUNTRY	SYRIA	REGION	HOMS	DEATHS	Gunmen on motorcycles killed at least 46 civilians collecting truffles and seven soldiers, and wounded an unconfirmed number in the Al-Dabyat area southeast of Al-Sukhnah, Tadmur district, Homs governorate on the evening of 17 February. Seven of the attackers reportedly died from retaliation firing. No group had claimed responsibility at the time of writing, but according to local media outlets, Islamic State (IS) was responsible. Certain media outlets opposed to the Syrian regime said however that Fatemiyoun, an Iran-affiliated militia, was responsible.
	DATE	17/2/2023	GROUP	SHIA MILITIA (UNDEFINED)	53	
14	COUNTRY	BURKINA FASO	REGION	NORD	DEATHS	Gunmen killed 17 soldiers and 36 volontaires pour la defense de la patrie (VDP) and wounded at least another 30 in an attack on a military unit in Koumbri, Yatenga province, Nord region on 4 September. Security forces said they killed and wounded several dozen of the attackers. Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslemeen (JNIM) claimed responsibility.
	DATE	4/9/2023	GROUP	JNIM	53	
15	COUNTRY	PAKISTAN	CITY	BALUCHISTAN	DEATHS	A suicide bomber killed at least 53 people including a police officer and wounded at least dozens of others when they detonated themselves near Madina Masjid in Mastung, Balochistan province on 29 September. The assailant targeted worshippers who were gathering for a procession to celebrate the birth of the Prophet Mohammad. No group had claimed the attack at the time of writing, but jihadists and separatists operate in the area.
	DATE	29/9/2023	GROUP	JIHADIST (UNDETERMINED)	53	
16	COUNTRY	NIGERIA	REGION	BORNO	DEATHS	Gunmen killed around 50 Boko Haram fighters and their families in Sambisa forest, Bama local government area, Borno state on 5 July. No group had claimed responsibility for the attack at the time of writing, but local media outlets said Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) was responsible.
	DATE	5/7/2023	GROUP	ISLAMIC STATE WEST AFRICA (ISWA)	50	
17	COUNTRY	BURKINA FASO	REGION	EST	DEATHS	A clash between two militant groups killed at least 50 in Ganta village, Bani area, Gnagna province, Est region on 24 October. One of the armed groups had killed 20 civilians in the village the previous day. No group had claimed responsibility at the time of writing, but local media outlets said that the Greater Sahara Province of Islamic State (IS) and Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslemeen (JNIM) were responsible.
	DATE	24/10/2023	GROUP	ISLAMIC STATE (IS)	50	
18	COUNTRY	MALI	CITY	TIMBUKTU	DEATHS	Assailants using rockets killed at least 49 civilians in an attack on a river boat near Abakoira, Gourma-Rharous cercle, Tombouctou region on the morning of 7 September. The authorities said Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslemeen (JNIM) was responsible.
	DATE	7/9/2023	GROUP	JNIM	49	
19	COUNTRY	NIGERIA	REGION	BORNO	DEATHS	Gunmen on canoes attacked alleged Boko Haram militants in the area of Duguri, Kukawa local government area, Borno state on 24 August. At least 41 militants died during the fighting. No group had claimed responsibility at the time of writing, but local media outlets said Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) was responsible.
	DATE	24/8/2023	GROUP	ISLAMIC STATE WEST AFRICA (ISWA)	41	
20	COUNTRY	BURKINA FASO	REGION	NORD	DEATHS	Gunmen killed 40 soldiers and members of Volontaires pour la defense de la patrie (VDP) and wounded another 33 in an ambush in the village of Aorema, Yatenga province, Nord region at around 1600hrs on 15 April. No group had claimed responsibility at the time of writing, but jihadists operate in the area.
	DATE	15/4/2023	GROUP	JIHADIST (UNDETERMINED)	40	

22% ↑

Deaths from terrorism rose to 8,352 in 2023, a 22 per cent increase from the prior year.

2.5

Terrorism attacks became more deadly in 2023 with 2.5 deaths per attack compared to 1.6 in 2022.

23% ↓

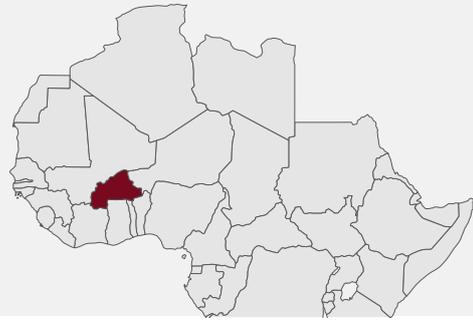
The number of terrorist attacks decreased to 3,350 in 2023, a reduction of 23 per cent from the 4,321 attacks in 2022.

26%



Within sub-Saharan Africa, the Sahel is the most affected region, accounting for almost half of all deaths from terrorism and 26 per cent of attacks in 2023.

Burkina Faso became the country with the highest impact from terrorism for the first time, with deaths from terrorism increasing by 68 per cent to 1,907. A quarter of all terrorism deaths occurring globally were in Burkina Faso.



519

Terrorism deaths fell by 519 in Afghanistan in 2023, an 81 per cent improvement. This is the first year since 2019 that Afghanistan has not been the country most impacted by terrorism.

54%



Of the 3,350 terrorist attacks recorded in 2023, 54 per cent were attributed to a group.

The countries with the highest number of attacks not attributed to a group were Myanmar, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Pakistan.

90%

Conflict remains the primary driver of terrorist activity. Over 90 per cent of terror attacks in 2023 occurred in conflict zones.

Terrorism Deaths

Israel had the largest increase in terrorism deaths, increasing from 24 to 1,210 deaths. The attack in Israel by Hamas was the largest single terrorist attack since the inception of the GTI, the biggest since 9/11 and one of the largest terrorist attacks in history.

Terrorist Groups

4% ↑

IS in Syria is the most active it has been in ten years, with attacks rising by 4 per cent to 224 in 2023.



The four terrorist groups responsible for the most deaths in 2023 were Islamic State (IS), Hamas, Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimen (JNIM) and Al-Shabaab.

1 Results

Terrorism in 2023

There was a surge in highly lethal terrorist attacks in many countries in 2023, even as the total level of terrorist activity fell. Terrorism deaths increased by 22 per cent to 8,352 fatalities, and deaths from terrorism are now at the highest level since 2017. However, the total number of terrorist attacks fell 22 per cent to 3,350, which was the fewest number of incidents recorded since 2009. The number of countries that experienced at least one terrorist attack also fell from 60 in 2022 to 50 in 2023. The increased lethality of the attacks can be attributed to larger and more sophisticated attacks and is especially evident amongst fighting between various Islamic militant groups, including Boko Haram, IS and JMIN.

The primary driver of the increase in terrorism deaths was the terrorist attack committed by Hamas in Israel in October. This was the single largest terrorist attack since the inception of the index in 2007, and the largest since 9/11. The attack and the subsequent Israeli response have had significant repercussions that threaten to destabilise the Middle East. However, even if this attack was excluded from the index, global terrorism deaths still would have seen a small increase.

Afghanistan experienced a sharp decrease in the impact of terrorism, with deaths falling by 81 per cent to 119 in 2023. This marks the first time since the inception of the index that fewer than 500 deaths from terrorism were recorded in the country. Iraq experienced a similar decrease, recording just 69 deaths in 2023 compared to 197 in 2022, which resulted in it being ranked outside the ten countries most impacted by terrorism for the first time.

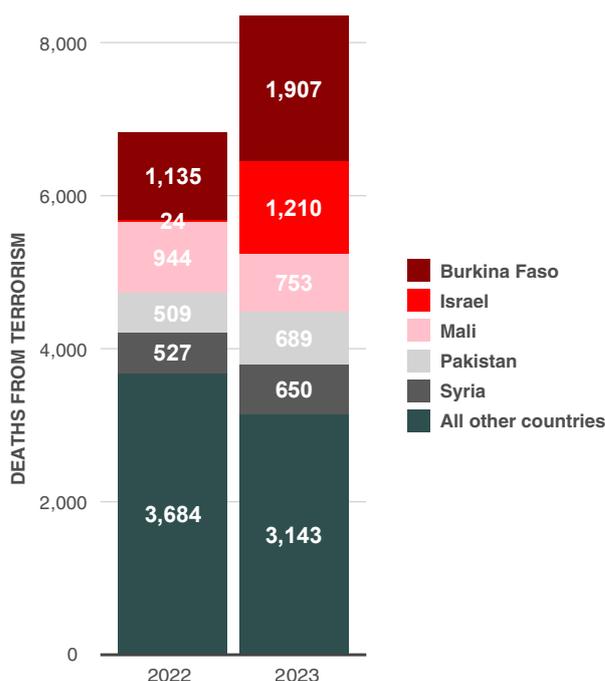
Sub-Saharan Africa recorded the most deaths of any region for the seventh consecutive year, with an increase of 21 per cent compared to 2022. However, most of the impact of terrorism in the region is concentrated in the Central Sahel. Five of the ten countries most impacted by terrorism are in the Sahel region. 2023 was also the first year that a country in sub-Saharan Africa was at the top of the GTI, with Burkina Faso recording a 68 per cent increase in deaths over the past year. There is some indication that terrorist activity in the Sahel is beginning to spread into neighbouring countries, as Benin and Togo each recorded more than 40 deaths from terrorism for the first time.

Figure 1.1 shows the distribution of deaths for the five countries recording the most terrorism deaths in 2023. Mali was the only one of these countries to record a fall in deaths over the past year.

FIGURE 1.1

Total terrorism deaths by country, 2022–2023

Total terrorism deaths increased by 22 per cent from 2022 to 2023.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

Burkina Faso recorded the highest number of deaths from terrorism for the second consecutive year, with 1,907 deaths recorded in 2023. It now accounts for nearly a quarter of all deaths from terrorism globally. The increasing intensity of terrorism in Burkina Faso is shown in the increased lethality of attacks, with over seven deaths per attack in 2023, compared to under four deaths per attack in the previous year.

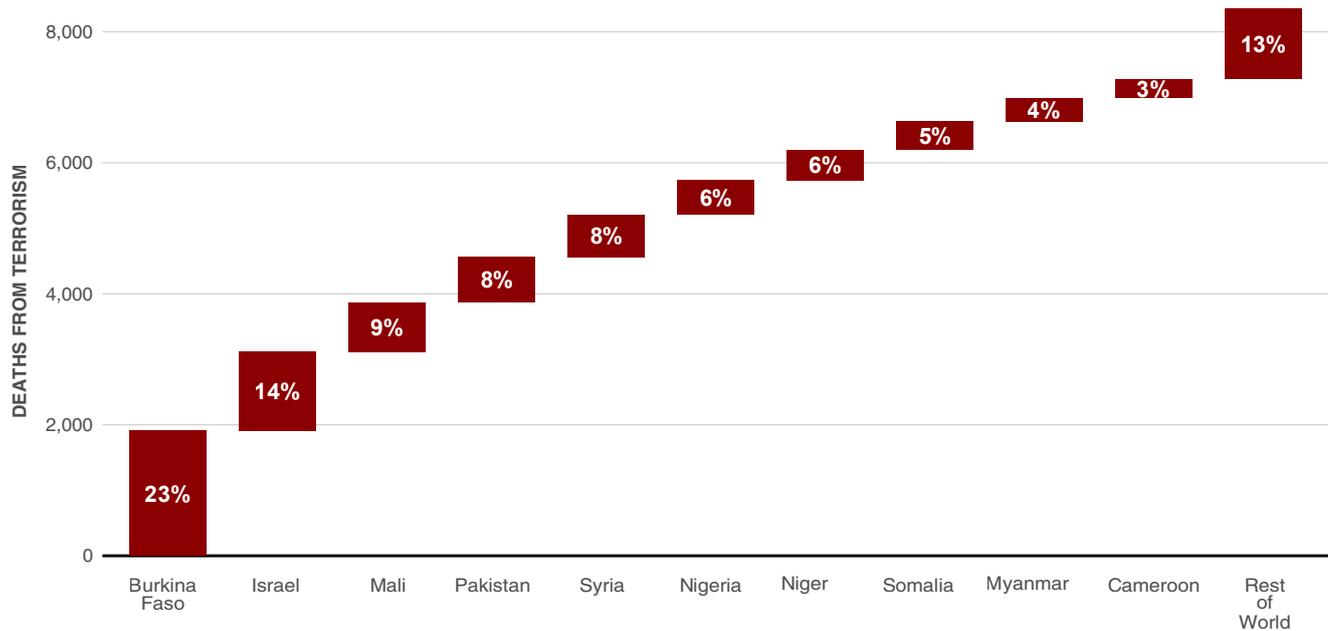
The Sahel region recorded just under four thousand deaths from terrorism, equivalent to 47 per cent of the global total, with 26 per cent of all attacks in 2023 occurring in the region.

Terrorist activity remains highly concentrated in a small number of countries, as shown in Figure 1.2. Just ten countries accounted for 87 per cent of all terrorism deaths in 2023. This concentration of terrorist activity has intensified over the past decade, with the number of countries recording at least one death from terrorism falling from 57 in 2015 to 41 in 2023.

FIGURE 1.2

Distribution of deaths from terrorism by country, 2023

Ten countries accounted for 87 per cent of deaths from terrorism.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

INCREASES AND DECREASES IN TERRORISM

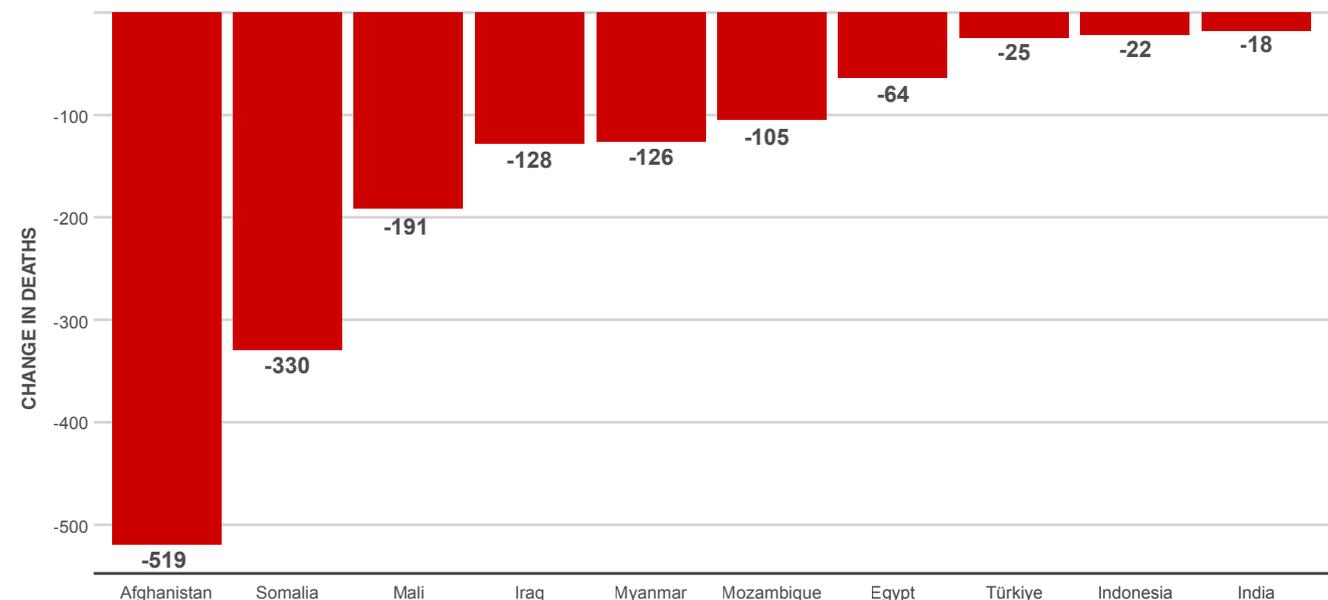
Figure 1.3 shows the countries that experienced the largest decreases in terrorism deaths in 2023. Afghanistan and Somalia experienced the two largest falls. Deaths in Afghanistan fell by 81 per cent in 2023. The fall in terrorism deaths has been consistent after the Taliban takeover, following the fall of Kabul in August 2021. As the Taliban is now the state actor in

Afghanistan, their attacks fall outside the scope of the GTI's definition of terrorism. In line with this definition, state purges and acts of state repression are excluded from incidents included in the GTI, but are captured in other measures such as the *Political Terror Scale* indicator that is included in the Global Peace Index.

FIGURE 1.3

Largest decreases in deaths from terrorism, 2022–2023

Afghanistan had the largest decrease in deaths for the second year in a row.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

Mali recorded the third largest decrease, with deaths falling by 20 per cent in 2023 to a total of 753 deaths. The improvement was driven by a 42 per cent decrease in deaths attributed to Islamic State (IS). IS has doubled its territory in Mali, with its only competition in some areas of the country being Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM). JNIM activity in Mali increased in 2023, from 38 attacks and 121 deaths to 76 and 263 respectively.

Figure 1.4 highlights the countries with the largest increases in terrorism deaths in 2023. Israel recorded the largest increase, with deaths rising from 24 in 2022 to 1,210 in 2023. This is the first year that Israel has had more than 1,000 deaths from terrorism.

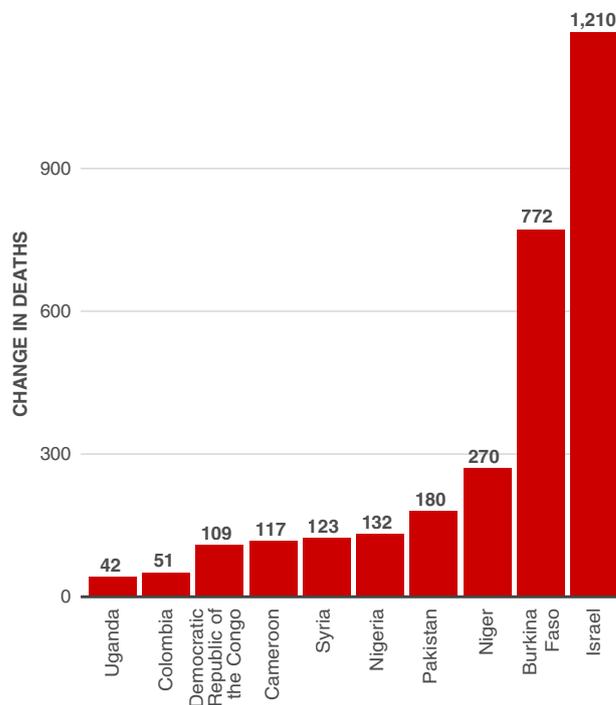
Burkina Faso recorded the second largest increase, with deaths rising by 68 per cent from the prior year. The country continues to struggle to maintain stability following two military coups in 2022, exacerbating the already fragile political environment. Burkina Faso recorded more deaths since the January 2022 coup than in the seven years prior combined.

TERRORIST GROUPS

The four terrorist groups responsible for the most deaths in 2023 were Islamic State (IS), Hamas, Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) and Al-Shabaab. The trend in deaths for these groups is shown in Figure 1.5. These four groups were responsible for 4,443 terrorism deaths, or over 75 per cent of deaths that were attributed to a specific group. In 2014 these four groups were responsible for less than 25 per cent of terrorism deaths that were attributed to a group, highlighting the large global shifts in terrorism over the past decade.

FIGURE 1.4
Largest increases in deaths from terrorism, 2022–2023

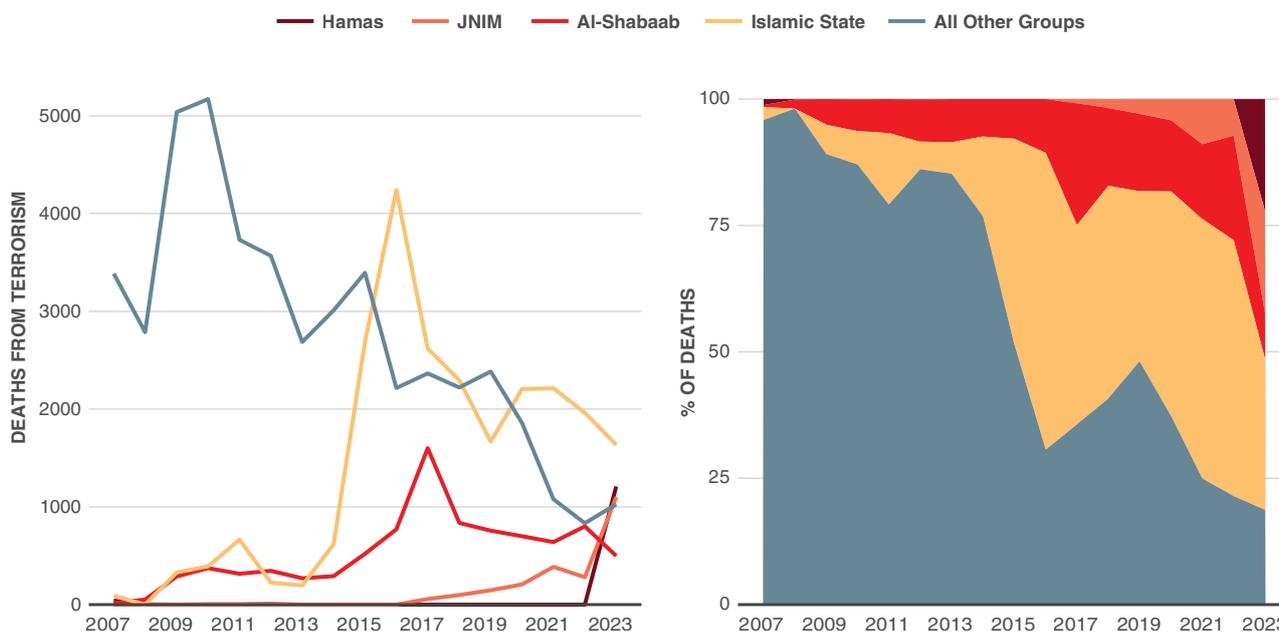
Terrorism deaths in Israel rose by over 1,000 deaths in 2023.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

FIGURE 1.5
Attributed attacks by terrorist groups, 2007 to 2023

Islamic State was the deadliest terrorist group of 2023.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

Determining which terrorist groups are the most active and responsible for the most deaths can be difficult, as many groups have regional affiliates and other groups work in partnership or partially under the same command. Terror groups often do not take responsibility for attacks, making attribution challenging, particularly in areas with high levels of active conflict.

Of the 3,350 terrorist attacks recorded in 2023, 54 per cent were attributed to a group. This compares to 48 per cent in 2022 and 45 per cent in 2021. The countries with the highest number of attacks not attributed to a group were Myanmar, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Pakistan. Attacks that cause large numbers of casualties in conflict environments, as well as attacks causing very few deaths, tend to remain anonymous. At one end of the spectrum, terrorist groups have little incentive to claim minor acts of violence that could be seen as failures. At the other, terror groups that inflict the most carnage can fear a backlash from the government and the local population, hampering their recruitment efforts and causing increased counter insurgency efforts against them.¹

For this report, IEP includes chapters and provinces of terrorist groups that are specifically affiliated under the same organisational name. For example, Islamic State (IS) refers to Islamic State, also known as Daesh, as well as their affiliated chapters, such as the Khorasan Chapter and Islamic State West Africa. When specifically referring to the affiliate group, the chapter name will be used.

Islamic State (IS)

Islamic State (IS) was the deadliest terror group of 2023 and was responsible for 1,636 deaths from terrorism. However, the group's activity has declined since its peak in 2016, and over the past year deaths attributed to the group fell 17 per cent.

IS is a Sunni extremist group which formed as an Al-Qaeda affiliate in Iraq and Syria in 1999.² Following the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, IS participated in the Iraqi insurgency. In 2014, the group declared itself a worldwide caliphate.³ IS primarily adheres to a global jihadist ideology, following an anti-Western interpretation of Islam and promotes violence against those who do not align with their ideology, including other forms of Islam.

The original aim of IS was to establish a Salafist-oriented Islamic state spanning Iraq, Syria and other areas of the Levant,⁴ then expanded into other parts of the world through affiliate groups to promote their ideology, including Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISK) in Afghanistan and Pakistan and later the Islamic State West Africa (ISWA), which operates in the Sahel region. IS and its affiliates exploited tensions between Sunni and Shia Muslims in Iraq and Syria, using Sunni disenfranchisement to capture and consolidate its control over areas of Iraq and Syria. IS adopted similar tactics in the Sahel, taking advantage of political instability and local grievances as a means of recruiting followers.

However, the group has increased its focus on insurgency outside of the Levant through affiliates, particularly the Sahel

region of sub-Saharan Africa.⁵ This is especially evident in recent years, with IS ascendant in areas of Mali and Niger driven by the security vacuum created by the withdrawal of UN and French military forces.⁶

Changes since 2022

Islamic State (IS) remained the world's deadliest terrorist group in 2023, despite deaths attributed to the group and its affiliates falling by 17 per cent.

In this report, IS is comprised of Islamic State, Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISK), Islamic State Sinai Province (IS-SP), Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Islamic State West Africa (ISWA). Attacks by IS and its affiliates represented 14 per cent of all attacks globally in 2023. However, the real number is likely to be much higher, as a high percentage of attacks are not attributed to any group, and frequently occur in regions where IS operates. Despite this, IS attacks fell from 717 in 2022 to 470 in 2023, a decrease of 35 per cent. IS attacks and deaths are now at their lowest level since 2018.

In 2023, IS attacks occurred in six of nine GTI regions: Asia-Pacific, Europe, MENA, sub-Saharan Africa, Russia and Eurasia and South Asia.

The country most affected by IS terrorist attacks was Syria, recording 224 attacks in 2023, an increase from 152 attacks in 2022. Syria also recorded the most deaths from IS attacks, with a quarter of all deaths caused by IS occurring in Syria. Elsewhere, IS maintained its level of terrorist activity in Nigeria with approximately the same number of attacks, however these attacks resulted in more terrorism deaths which increased by 27 per cent to 276 from 218 in 2022.

The deadliest attack attributed to IS in 2023 was an ambush on four military columns in the Sahel region of Burkina Faso in February 2023. Gunmen killed at least 71 soldiers with security forces claiming they killed 160 assailants in counter-offensive operations.⁷ It is also the fifth deadliest attack attributed to any terror group in 2023.

IS claimed responsibility for a double suicide bombing that killed at least 84 people during a procession marking the anniversary of the death of the senior Revolutionary Guards commander Qassem Suleimani in Iran in January 2024.⁸ This attack took place after the data collection deadline for this year's GTI but will be fully incorporated in next year's index.

In October 2023, IS also claimed its first attack in Europe in two years, resulting in two deaths. A gunman killed two Swedish civilians and wounded a Belgian taxi driver in an attack in Brussels. IS claimed responsibility for the attack, however officials stated there were no indications the suspect was a member of a network.⁹

IS continues to commit attacks in South Asia, although on a smaller scale than in previous years. IS was responsible for 39 attacks and 148 deaths in the region in 2023, a significant decline compared to the 149 attacks and 506 deaths in 2022. IS

activity has also fallen in MENA to the lowest level since 2013, with attacks and deaths falling by 24 and 29 per cent respectively over the past year.

Tactics favoured by Islamic State

The most common target for IS attacks continues to be the military, representing half of all IS attacks and 35 per cent of deaths in 2023. Civilians were the next most common target, representing 28 per cent of all IS victims in 2023.

Armed attacks continue to be IS' favoured tactic for the fifth consecutive year, followed by explosive attacks. In 2023, there were 331 armed attacks resulting in 1,156 deaths, compared with 431 attacks and 1,312 deaths from the prior year. The lethality rate from IS armed attacks is at the highest level since 2017, at on average 3.5 deaths per attack in 2023 compared to three the year prior.

Hamas

Hamas was the second deadliest terror group in 2023 and was responsible for nine terrorist attacks that resulted in 1,209 deaths. Almost all of these deaths came as a result of the events of October 7th, in which Hamas-led militants carried out multiple incursions into Israel, carrying out rockets attacks, armed assaults, and kidnappings that resulted in 1,200 deaths, over 4,500 injuries, and 250 people being taken hostage. This was one of only four recorded terrorist attacks since 1970 that resulted in more than a thousand fatalities, and was the most fatalities in a single attack since 9/11.

Hamas is an Islamist militant group and political organisation primarily active in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Founded in 1987 during the First Intifada, it seeks the establishment of an Islamic state in the historical region of Palestine. Hamas is designated as a terrorist organisation by several countries, including the United States, Israel, and the European Union. Hamas gained political prominence after winning the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections. The group's military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, has been responsible for numerous attacks, including suicide bombings and rocket launches, primarily targeting Israeli civilians and military personnel.

Following its election victory, tensions with the rival Fatah party escalated, leading to violent clashes and Hamas's eventual seizure of control in the Gaza Strip in 2007. This event resulted in a political split, with the Palestinian Authority governing the West Bank and Hamas ruling the Gaza Strip.

Changes since 2022

Hamas had only one recorded terrorist attack in 2022, an armed attack which resulted in a single fatality. The group's activity increased considerably in 2023, with eight recorded terrorist incidents, seven of which resulted in nine fatalities with the October 7th attack resulting in 1,200 fatalities. Hamas was relatively inactive as a terrorist organisation in the five years

before the October 7th attacks, with only 14 attacks and one fatality recorded between 2015 and 2022. Prior to 2023, the group's most active year was 2007, when it was responsible for 35 incidents and 42 deaths from terrorism.

Tactics favoured by Hamas

The scope of the October 7th attacks required a high level of preparation, sophistication, and secrecy in the preceding months. During the operations, Hamas militants focused on disrupting communications to prevent the IDF from quickly responding to the attacks. Additionally, Hamas leveraged modern technology, such as body-worn cameras, and strategically timed its attacks to coincide with significant dates.

Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslemeen (JNIM)

Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslemeen (JNIM) was the third deadliest terrorist group in 2023, with 1,099 deaths and 112 attacks being attributed to the group. However, it is likely that the actual number of deaths for which the group was responsible is much higher, given the number of unclaimed attacks in the region in which it operates. 2023 was the first time the group was responsible for more than a thousand deaths from terrorism in a single year.

JNIM was formed in 2017 in the Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa as a coalition of Salafi-jihadist insurgent groups, including Ansar Dine, the Macina Liberation Front, Al-Mourabitoun and the Saharan branch of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.¹⁰ Since its emergence, JNIM has expanded across the Central Sahel, committing acts of violence against civilians, local security forces and counter-terrorism operations, comprised of international militaries and UN peacekeepers¹¹ JNIM claims its aims are to incite Muslims to oppose oppression, expel occupying powers from the Sahel region and implement Islamic governance. JNIM's leaders have declared its enemies to be France and other countries assisting France.¹²

JNIM has successfully exploited local grievances with governments, and economic and social conditions, particularly in northern and central Mali to bolster recruitment.¹³ Counterterrorism efforts against JNIM have included the now defunct France's Operation Barkhane, formed in 2014 with the aim of expelling insurgent groups from five countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. With Western troops now largely withdrawn from the region, JNIM has continued its violent campaign across the Sahel.¹⁴ JNIM continues to expand territory under its control in Burkina Faso and Mali. While IS-Sahel is present in Burkina Faso, JNIM is the dominant terror group. The government of Burkina Faso is estimated to only control about 60 per cent of its territory as of 2022, with further losses in the year since. It is highly likely JNIM control a large amount of the territory not held by government forces.¹⁵

Changes since 2022

Terrorism-related deaths attributed to JNIM are now at their highest level since their emergence in 2017, with 1,099 deaths recorded in 2023. This is an almost fourfold increase compared to the 281 deaths recorded in 2022. Terrorism-related incidents increased by 45 per cent to 112 attacks compared to the prior year. As a result, JNIM's lethality rate increased to its highest level, with attacks by the group killing 9.8 people per attack in 2023, compared to 3.6 people per attack in 2022.

Of the 1,099 deaths attributed to JNIM in 2023, around 56 per cent occurred in Burkina Faso, while 24 per cent occurred in Mali. JNIM continues its campaign to expand its activities outside of the Sahel, carrying out attacks in Togo for the second consecutive year. A further three JNIM attacks were recorded in Niger resulting in 208 deaths, the most deaths by JNIM ever recorded in the country. This included JNIM's deadliest attack of 2023, when gunmen killed at least 200 soldiers in an ambush on four military columns in Tillaberi in November. No group claimed responsibility for the attack, however local media outlets reported that the attack was a joint operation by IS and JNIM.¹⁶

JNIM's activity in Mali surged in 2023, with attacks and deaths doubling compared to the year prior. Most of the terrorist attacks in Mali in 2023 were directed at the military, with soldiers also comprising most casualties. Civilians were the next most targeted group by JNIM in Mali, with 82 civilians killed across ten attacks in 2023.

JNIM's activity in Burkina Faso became much deadlier in 2023, with deaths rising fivefold even as the number of attacks remained static. JNIM was responsible for 616 deaths from terrorism in Burkina Faso last year. This rise in deaths is noticeable in almost every region of the country, but was particularly high in the Nord and Centre-Nord regions, where deaths increased by over 1,700 per cent and 600 per cent respectively in a single year.

Tactics favoured by JNIM

As JNIM largely operates within existing conflict zones, most of its attacks are targeted against the military. Attacks against the military accounted for just under half of all JNIM terrorist incidents, and over 52 per cent of deaths in 2023. However, the largest increase in targeted deaths occurred amongst the civilian population, with the number of civilian casualties from JNIM attacks rising from 111 in 2022, to 416 in 2023.

Armed attacks continue to be the deadliest form of attack by JNIM, accounting for 82 per cent of all deaths by the group. Deaths from armed attacks have increased over threefold since 2022, from 233 deaths to 902 deaths in 2023.

Al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab was the fourth deadliest terrorist group in 2023, with 227 attacks and 499 deaths being attributed to the group in 2023. This is the ninth consecutive year that the group has

been responsible for more than 400 deaths from terrorism and more than 100 attacks in a given year.

Al-Shabaab is a Salafist militant group active in East Africa. It first emerged in a battle over Somalia's capital in the summer of 2006. As an Al Qaeda affiliate based in Somalia and Kenya, al-Shabaab pursues Islamist statehood aspirations in Somalia. Al-Shabaab was estimated to have between 7,000 and 9,000 fighters in 2019. It gained global recognition following several deadly attacks concentrated around the capital city of Mogadishu, as well as attacks in the neighbouring states of Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda in the 2000s. African Union peacekeeping forces known as the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) have been fighting al-Shabaab since 2007 with the help of US and United Nations (UN) support. In August 2022, the Somali government announced a renewed offensive against Al-Shabaab. The operation has made significant progress in recapturing territory held by Al-Shabaab for a decade or more.¹⁷

Despite initial advancements, the Somali government faced notable setbacks in the latter part of 2023. These challenges led to Somalia's request to the United Nations for a three-month postponement of the planned withdrawal of 3,000 African Union peacekeepers. The request was prompted by an attack that compelled security forces to withdraw from recently captured towns.¹⁸

Changes since 2022

In 2023, terrorism deaths attributed to Al-Shabaab fell from 800 in 2022 to 499 in 2023, a decline of almost 38 per cent. Of the 499 deaths attributed to Al-Shabaab in 2023, 86 per cent occurred in Somalia and the remaining 14 per cent occurred in Kenya. Al-Shabaab was responsible for 70 deaths in Kenya in 2023, the most since 2019. Government-led counterterrorism operations in Somalia has led to a surge of Al-Shabaab militants crossing into Kenya, compounded by a lack of law enforcement personnel along the border. Changes to Kenya's security leadership have exacerbated the situation, leading to a security gap that militants are exploiting to conduct attacks.¹⁹

The total number of attacks attributed to Al-Shabaab mirrored the trend in deaths, falling by almost a third to 227 attacks in 2023.

Deaths in Somalia almost halved in 2023, driven by the success of the Somali government and allied forces' operations. This was especially evident in regions such as Banaadir and Shabeellaha Dhexe, with deaths from Al-Shabaab attacks falling by 76 and 89 per cent respectively between 2022 and 2023. The former region is of particular importance as Banaadir contains the nation's capital, Mogadishu, which has long been the epicentre of terrorist activity by Al-Shabaab. Shabeellaha Hoose and Hiiraan overtook Banaadir as the regions with the most Al-Shabaab deaths, recording 133 and 117 deaths respectively in 2023. Al-Shabaab's deadliest attack of 2023 occurred in Shabeellaha Hoose when gunmen attacked an African Union army base with firearms and explosives, resulting in the deaths of 54 soldiers.²⁰

In Kenya terrorism deaths attributed to Al-Shabaab increased

from 58 to 70 deaths in 2023. Most Al-Shabaab deaths in Kenya in 2023 occurred in the Lamu district close to the Somali border which recorded 26 deaths in 2023, ten more than the year prior. This was followed by Garissa and Mandera counties, which collectively recorded 37 deaths. Both of the deadliest Al-Shabaab attacks in Kenya in 2023 involved roadside bombings, one targeting soldiers in Lamu and the other targeting police in Garissa. Ten people were killed in each attack. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for both attacks.²¹

Tactics favoured by Al-Shabaab

The highest proportion of al-Shabaab attacks in 2023 were directed at the military at 41 per cent, followed by civilians at 22 per cent of attacks.

Al-Shabaab have consistently utilised bombings and armed assaults as its main modes of attack. Nearly 69 per cent of terrorism deaths attributed to Al-Shabaab in 2023 were the result of bombings, while armed assaults accounted for a further 25 per cent of deaths.

10

Ten Countries Most Impacted by Terrorism

Table 1.1 highlights the ten countries most impacted by terrorism in the 2023 GTI, and how their ranks have changed since 2011. There has been considerable variation in these countries over this period. Only four of the ten countries in 2023 were ranked in the ten most affected in 2011.

The GTI is a composite measure that uses a weighted average of incidents, deaths, injuries, and hostages taken in terrorist attacks. It also uses a five-year weighted lag to take into account the lingering effects that terrorist attacks can have on a country's psyche. For a more detailed description of the index, please see the methodology section in Appendix C.

This year marks the first that Iraq does not appear amongst the ten countries most impacted by terrorism since the inception of the GTI. By contrast, this is the first year that Israel has been ranked in the ten most impacted, with its previous highest rank being 18th in 2012.

Burkina Faso was the most impacted country, followed by Israel, and then Mali. This is the highest ranking on the index for all

three of these countries. Afghanistan fell to sixth place on the index. This is the first time since 2018 that Afghanistan was not the country most impacted by terrorism, and the first time it was not ranked in the five most impacted countries since the inception of the index.

Pakistan moved up three places to fourth on the Index, its worst place since 2016. Syria remained static at fifth place, while Nigeria, Myanmar and Niger retained their respective eighth, ninth and tenth places from the prior year. Somalia improved four places to seventh.

Pakistan, Nigeria, and Somalia have been the countries most consistently impacted by terrorism since 2011, with all three countries never having been ranked outside the worst ten.

The countries with the largest deteriorations in rank since 2011 were all located in the Central Sahel region: Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. This reflects a significant shift in the epicentre of terrorism, as all three of these countries were ranked outside of the 20 countries most impacted by terrorism in 2011.

TABLE 1.1

Ten countries most impacted by terrorism, GTI ranks 2011–2023

Burkina Faso recorded the highest impact of terrorism for the first year.

Country	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Burkina Faso	114	113	111	110	52	30	21	15	7	6	4	2	1
Israel	22	18	22	23	29	31	33	31	34	34	35	26	2
Mali	40	22	19	21	16	13	10	9	8	7	7	4	3
Pakistan	2	2	2	2	4	4	5	5	5	8	9	7	4
Syria	19	4	4	5	6	7	7	8	6	5	6	5	5
Afghanistan	3	3	3	4	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	6
Somalia	5	7	7	7	8	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	7
Nigeria	8	5	5	3	2	2	4	4	4	4	5	8	8
Myanmar	17	20	23	29	41	43	40	42	23	24	10	9	9
Niger	50	60	45	34	19	19	18	19	14	12	8	10	10

Source: IEP

10 COUNTRIES MOST IMPACTED BY TERRORISM

Burkina Faso

GTI RANK

1

GTI SCORE

8.571

1,907  DEAD442  INJURED258  INCIDENTS

In 2023, Burkina Faso surpassed Afghanistan as the country most impacted by terrorism. Deaths from terrorism have increased successively each year since 2014 when no deaths were recorded. Deaths surged from 1,135 in 2022 to 1,907 in 2023, a 68 per cent increase, despite a nearly 16 per cent decline in the number of attacks last year. This is the second consecutive year that over a thousand people were killed in terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso. The increase in deaths coincided with an increased frequency of civilians being targeted, with civilians now comprising over half of victims.

Northwestern Burkina Faso, near the country's borders with Niger and Mali, experienced the most terror attacks, accounting for almost half of all attacks in 2023. Of the country's 1,907 deaths in 2023, 1,000 occurred along the Niger border in Centre-Nord and Est. Burkina Faso's deadliest attack of 2023 occurred in this area. In February, at least 71 soldiers were killed in the ambush. Security forces claimed to have killed 160 assailants in the fight, with IS claiming responsibility for the attack.²² This was the fifth deadliest attack in the world in 2023.

Civilians were the most targeted group for the fifth consecutive year, accounting for 1,132 deaths or over 59 per cent of all terror-related deaths in the country. This is an increase of more than 56 per cent when compared to the year prior, when 725 civilians were killed.

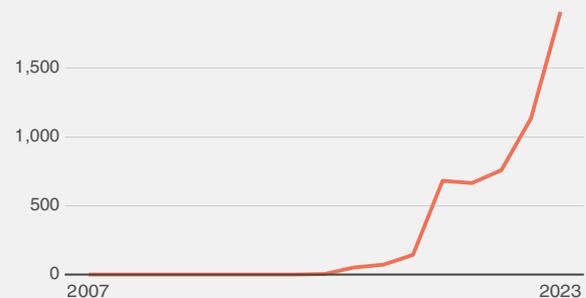
Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) continues to be the most prominent terrorist group in Burkina Faso, although attacks remained static over the period, deaths increased almost fivefold, from 134 in 2022 to 616 in 2023. This resulted in a rise in the lethality of their attacks in Burkina Faso, averaging nearly 20 deaths per attack, a significant increase from 3.9 deaths per attack in 2022.

Islamic State (IS) also increased its activity in Burkina Faso, claiming responsibility for seven attacks compared to two in the previous year. Although the overall number of IS attacks in the country remains relatively low, deaths did increase significantly, surpassing 100 for the first time with 174 deaths attributed to the group.

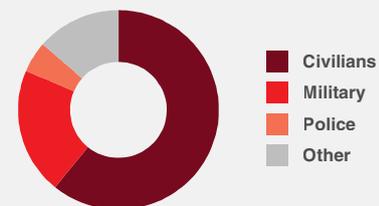
It is highly likely that the number of deaths both groups were responsible for is significantly higher, as 85 per cent of attacks and 59 per cent of deaths in the country were attributed to unknown jihadist groups. This puts Burkina Faso amongst the countries with the highest rate of unclaimed terrorist attacks and deaths globally.

Burkina Faso's deterioration in 2024 GTI mirrors its poor performance in the 2023 Global Peace Index with the country

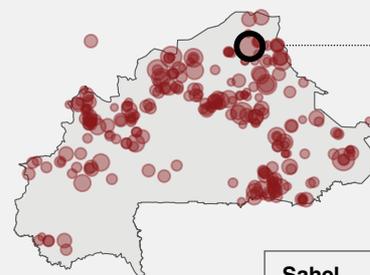
5,422 deaths from terrorism since 2007



Attack Targets in 2023



Worst attacks



Sahel

Gunmen killed at least 71 soldiers, injured three, and abducted an unconfirmed number in an ambush on the Oursi and Deou axis, Oudalan province, Sahel region on 17 February. Security forces claimed that they killed 160 assailants in counter-offensive operations. The Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility.

recording the largest deterioration in peacefulness in sub-Saharan Africa. The formation of the Alliance of Sahel States, a collaboration between Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, represents the regions effort to combat terrorism. In January 2024, this alliance withdrew from ECOWAS. Alliance formed after the French and UN troop withdrawals. Given the successive years of escalating violence Burkina Faso and the uncertain political situation the country is likely to experience further increases in terrorism.²³

10 COUNTRIES MOST IMPACTED BY TERRORISM

Israel

GTI RANK
2

GTI SCORE
8.143

1,210  DEAD
4,537  INJURED
20  INCIDENTS

Deaths from terrorism in Israel reached their highest ever level in 2023, with 1,210 people killed and 4,537 injured from 20 terrorist attacks. Almost all of these occurred in a single day, when Hamas-led militants launched a series of coordinated attacks that killed an estimated 1,200 people. This was the single largest terrorist attack since the inception of the GTI, the largest since 9/11 and one of the largest terrorist attacks in history. It is one of only four terrorist attacks recorded in which more than a thousand people were killed.

On October 7, 2023, a series of coordinated terrorist attacks was launched by Hamas, along with other Palestinian armed groups like Palestinian Islamic Jihad, PRC, PFLP, and DFLP. The series of events, known as Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, marked a major incursion into Israeli territory. Two-hundred and fifty Israelis were taken hostage, and as of January 2024, an estimated 132 hostages remain in Gaza.²⁴

In response, the Israeli military launched a major counter-offensive in Gaza. This included the Israeli security cabinet's decision to dismantle the military and governmental capabilities of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad and halting the supply of essential resources to the Gaza Strip, including restricting fuel, food and water. This has led to international calls for a ceasefire as the prospect of malnutrition and starvation increased.

A significant military offensive into Gaza was initiated, aimed at destroying enemy forces and restoring security. Estimates as of January 2024 indicate that over 25,000 Palestinians have been killed as a result of Israel's military response to the October 7th attacks, with estimates that over 16,000 of the fatalities were women and children.

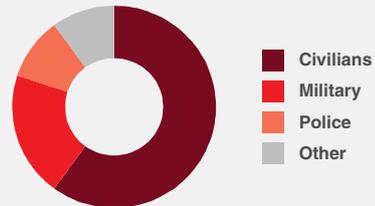
Although the October 7th attacks were unprecedented, the security situation in Israel has been deteriorating for years prior to the attacks. There were over 3,000 instances of communal violence in Israel and Palestine in 2022, compared to fewer than 500 in 2016. Over 40 people had been killed in settler-related violence in 2023 prior to the attacks, and media sentiment data revealed that tensions between Israel and Palestine were at record highs.

The risk of further destabilisation in the Middle East region as the result of the October 7th attacks remains high. There are fears that the conflict in Gaza is expanding and drawing in other countries in the region. Hezbollah has fired rockets from Lebanon into Israel in response to the conflict, with Israel conducting air strikes in retaliation. Elsewhere in the region, Houthis in Yemen have attacked more than two dozen ships off the coast of Yemen since November 19, 2023, while US bases

1,312 deaths from terrorism since 2007



Attack Targets in 2023



Worst attacks



Hadarom

Over 1,000 Palestinian militants from Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other Palestinian armed groups infiltrated the Gaza-Israel border on vehicles through border crossings and breached fences, and attacked Israeli communities around the Gaza Strip with gunfire, explosives and bladed weapons on the morning of 7 October. The targeted locations in Israel's South district included Be'eri, Erez, Karam Abu Salem, Kfar Aza, Kissufim, Magen, Nahal Oz, Netiv Haasara, Netivot, Nir Oz, Nir Yitzhak, Ofakim, Re'im, Sderot, Sufa, Urim, Yad Mordechai, Yated, Zikim, and others.

have been attacked in Iraq resulting in retaliatory airstrikes. The Houthis say they are targeting ships which are Israeli-owned, flagged or operated, or which are heading to Israeli ports. The UK and US have responded with air strikes against military targets in Yemen, with the US government also responding by designating the Houthis as a 'specially designated terrorist group'.²⁵

10 COUNTRIES MOST IMPACTED BY TERRORISM

Mali

GTI RANK

3

GTI SCORE

7.998

753  DEAD390  INJURED253  INCIDENTS

Terrorism deaths in Mali fell in 2023 after seven consecutive years of increases. Mali recorded 753 deaths from 253 attacks, a seven per cent drop in attacks and a 20 per cent drop in deaths compared to the previous year. Despite falling levels of terrorism, extremists continue to exploit the ongoing instability in Mali. The country continues to struggle to restore civilian rule following the 2021 coup, which has been compounded by the loss of French and UN military support.²⁵ Unlike most other countries in the region, more deaths occurred in attacks targeting civilians than the military, with civilians accounting for 45 per cent of deaths, compared to 35 per cent for the military.

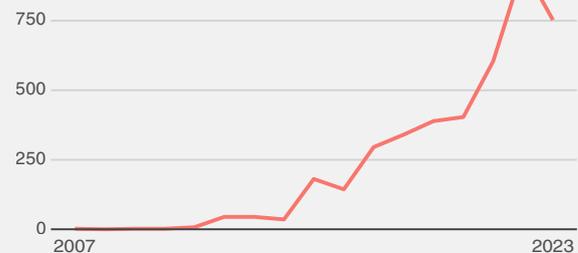
Mali's border with Burkina Faso and Niger continues to be the area most impact impacted by terrorism, with 60 per cent of attacks occurring in this region. However, terrorism appears to be spreading towards Mali's western provinces, with deaths in the Koulikoro and Segou regions increasing significantly in 2023. The Gao region, which shares a border with both Niger and Burkina Faso, recorded the most deaths in 2023 at 255, although this is almost half the fatalities recorded in the region in 2022. Deaths in Mopti mirrored this trend, falling from 311 to 235 in 2023. Reports suggest that the Malian military and Wagner Group forces from Russia maintain a presence in western Malian regions such as Koulikoro and Segou, however violence is rising in these areas as militants battle with security forces.²⁶

JNIM continues to be the most prominent group in Mali, with deaths attributed to the group more than doubling in 2023. Last year saw the highest number of JNIM attacks and deaths ever recorded in Mali, with 76 attacks and 263 deaths. As JNIM's activity in Mali has increased, IS activity has declined, with attacks and deaths falling by a third and 42 per cent respectively in 2023. However, 47 per cent of Mali's total deaths for the year were caused by undetermined jihadist groups, which are likely to be unclaimed attacks by either JNIM or IS militants.

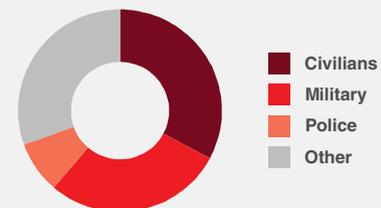
Attacks targeting military personnel comprised almost 56 per cent of JNIM's total deaths in Mali in 2023. Armed assaults involving firearms were the favoured tactic of JNIM in 2023, with these attacks accounting for 67 per cent of JNIM attacks in the country.

Despite ongoing improvements, Mali continues to face a significant threat from terrorism. The 2021 military coup and subsequent involvement of Russian Wagner mercenaries has exacerbated tensions between Mali and its international partners, including the Economic Community of West African

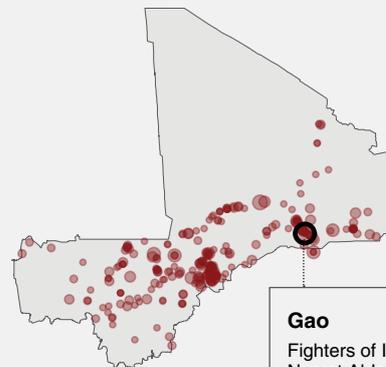
4,195 deaths from terrorism since 2007



Attack Targets in 2023



Worst attacks



Gao

Fighters of Islamic State (IS) and Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) clashed near Tin Fadimata village, Gao cercle, Gao region on the night of 1 March. At the time of writing, there was no information on the number of casualties and on who started the fighting, but JNIM claimed to have killed at least 60 IS fighters.

States (ECOWAS). ECOWAS continues to advocate for a return to democratic governance in Mali.

In 2023, Mali formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) alongside Burkina Faso and Niger, aiming to strengthen security, political, and economic cooperation. However, details about the AES's strategies and plans are scarce, and the potential impact of this alliance on the persistent threat of jihadist violence in the region remains uncertain.²⁷

10 COUNTRIES MOST IMPACTED BY TERRORISM

Pakistan

GTI RANK
4

GTI SCORE
7.916

689 DEAD
1,173 INJURED
490 INCIDENTS

The impact of terrorism increased significantly in Pakistan, with the number of deaths from terrorist attacks rising by 35 per cent over the past year to 689. This is the fourth consecutive year where an increase in terrorism deaths has been recorded and the second largest year-on-year increase in the last decade. This trend was mirrored by a rise in the number of terror attacks, which increased by 34 per cent to 490 in 2023.

Pakistan has experienced a significant rise in terrorism since the Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan. Militant groups operating from Afghanistan have intensified their attacks, particularly along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.²⁸ The provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been heavily affected, with these border areas accounting for 93 per cent of terrorist attacks and 96 per cent of the terrorism-related deaths in Pakistan in 2023.

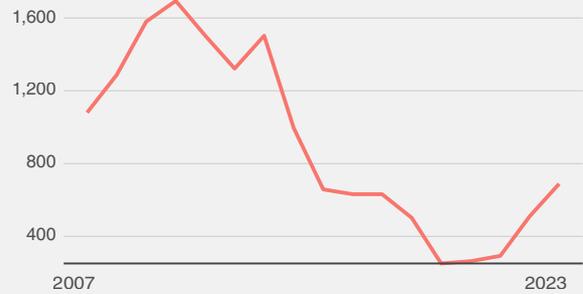
Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) surpassed the Balochistan Liberation Army as the deadliest terrorist organisation in Pakistan. TTP were responsible for 42 per cent of terror-related deaths in Pakistan in 2023. In 2023, TTP carried out 210 attacks, resulting in 288 deaths, an increase of 42 per cent in deaths from the 130 attacks in the preceding year. This is the most active that the group has been in a decade.

TTP were responsible for Pakistan's deadliest terrorist attack of 2023, when a suicide bomber killed at least 84 people and wounded a further 200 at a mosque in Peshwar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in January 2023. The mosque is located inside a high-security compound that includes the headquarters of the police force and counterterrorism department. It is likely that police officers were the primary target of the attack. While no group claimed responsibility for the attack, based on the target and location, TTP were most likely responsible.²⁹

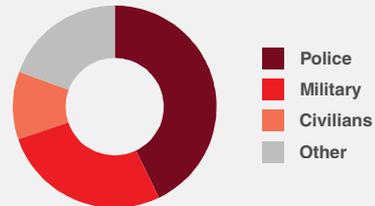
Baloch militant groups such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) continue to capitalise on ongoing instability, with attacks by these groups almost tripling, from 43 in 2022 to 110 in 2023. Deaths also increased, rising from 74 to 83, the highest total in almost two decades. The Baloch insurgency's growth is fuelled by the government's inability to address demands for sovereignty.³⁰

Pakistan maintains that Afghanistan's sheltering of militants is the cause of increased violence, a claim denied by the Taliban. The situation escalated when Pakistan expelled over 1.5 million Afghans for allegedly lacking proper documentation in October 2023. The persistent instability within Pakistan, alongside growing tensions with Afghanistan, suggests that the surge in terrorism is likely to persist.³¹

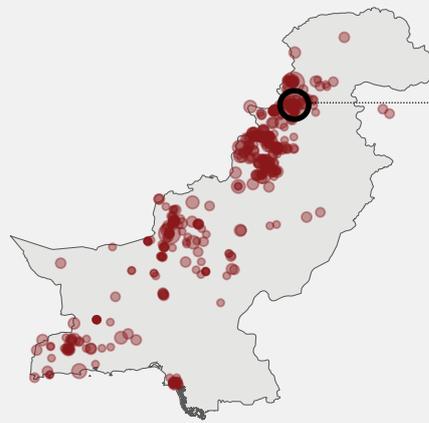
15,391 deaths from terrorism since 2007



Attack Targets in 2023



Worst attacks



Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa

A suicide bomber killed at least 84 people and wounded at least 200 others at the Police Lines Mosque, Peshawar, Peshawar district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province at around 1340hrs on 30 January. Several hundred police officers were reportedly at the scene when the bomb exploded. No group had claimed the attack at the time of writing, but based on the target and location, Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was probably responsible.

10 COUNTRIES MOST IMPACTED BY TERRORISM

Syria

GTI RANK

5

GTI SCORE

7.89

650  DEAD767  INJURED320  INCIDENTS

There has been a worrying resurgence in terrorist activity in Syria over the past year. Deaths from terrorism rose by 23 per cent to 650, and the number of attacks also rose by 22 per cent to 320 incidents in 2023. Deaths from terrorism are now at their highest level since 2013, during the middle of the Syrian civil war.

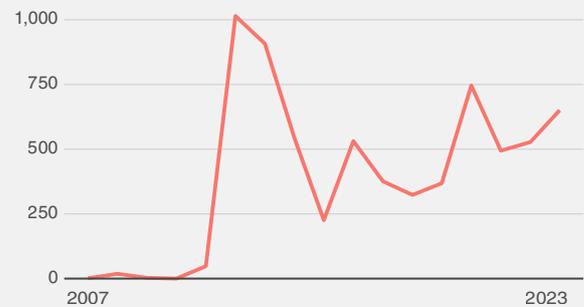
Syria's deadliest terror attack of 2023 was a drone attack on a military college graduation ceremony at the Homs Military Academy that killed at least 89 soldiers and injured 240 others. No group had claimed responsibility at the time of writing, but jihadists and anti-regime groups operate in the area.³² This attack was also the third deadliest attack globally in 2023.

The eastern border governorates were the areas most affected by terrorism in 2023, with 63 per cent of attacks occurring in Deir ez-Zor and Homs governorates, both of which share a border with Iraq. Terrorist incidents rose by 60 per cent in these regions. Following the attack at the military academy, Homs overtook Deir ez-Zor as the governorate with the most deaths, with 214 deaths in Homs compared to 184 deaths in Deir ez-Zor.

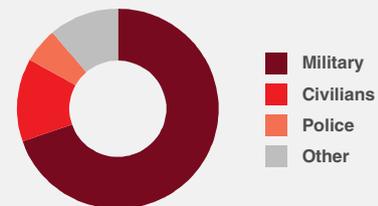
IS remained the deadliest terrorist group in Syria, a position it has held for a decade. IS was responsible for 65 per cent of total deaths and 70 per cent of incidents. While deaths attributed to IS remained static, attacks rose by 47 per cent to 224 attacks in 2023, the most IS attacks recorded in Syria in the past ten years. IS continues to shift its focus from targeting civilians to targeting military personnel, who comprised 76 per cent of IS casualties in 2023.

IS maintains a strong presence in Syria, despite losing control of all territory in the country and shifting its propaganda focus to activities in sub-Saharan Africa.³³ IS may be adopting a low-profile strategy in MENA, possibly biding its time until attention shifts elsewhere or anticipating a potential US withdrawal before contemplating a full resurgence. Despite the uncertainty about the group's intentions, the increase in attacks and deaths underscores that the threat of IS endures in Syria.³⁴

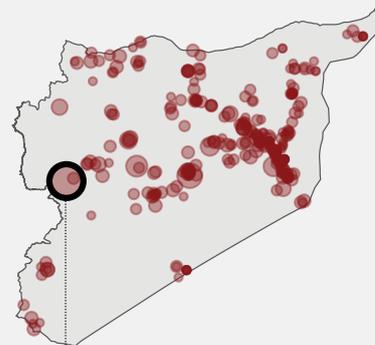
6,778 deaths from terrorism since 2007



Attack Targets in 2023



Worst attacks



Homs

Several explosive-laden drones killed at least 100 soldiers and civilians and wounded at least 240 others in an attack on a military college graduation ceremony at the Homs Military Academy, Homs, Homs governorate on 5 October. No group had claimed responsibility at the time of writing, but jihadists and anti-regime groups operate in the area.

10 COUNTRIES MOST IMPACTED BY TERRORISM

Afghanistan

GTI RANK
6

GTI SCORE
7.825

119  DEAD
229  INJURED
67  INCIDENTS

Terrorism in Afghanistan has fallen significantly over the past year. It is no longer the country most impacted by terrorism, a position it had held since 2018, and is ranked outside the five most impacted countries for the first time since the inception of the index. Afghanistan recorded 119 deaths from terrorism in 2023, a fall of 81 per cent compared to the previous year.

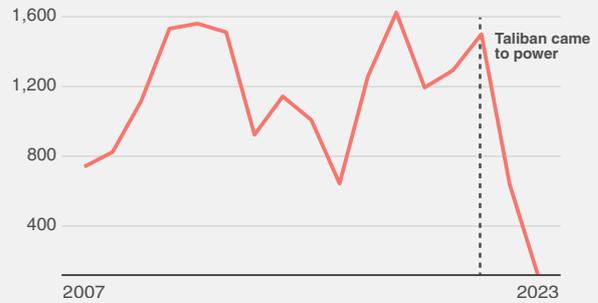
The number of terror attacks also fell, with total incidents dropping by 71 per cent. This year marks the lowest year of terror activity in Afghanistan in the last two decades. While the impact of terrorism has decreased significantly, it does not mean peace has been fully restored in Afghanistan. The GTI does not include acts of state repression and violence by state actors and, as such, acts committed by the Taliban are no longer included in the scope of the report. There have been widespread reports of repression and violence towards civilians, the media, former government officials, and human rights officials.³⁵

Terrorism is largely confined to the northern provinces, with Kabul and Takhar recording the most terror attacks in 2023. The highest number of deaths from terrorism occurred in Kabul province with most of these deaths resulting from attacks by the Khorasan Chapter of Islamic State. Although Kabul remained the province most affected by terrorism for the tenth consecutive year, the number of deaths is at its lowest level recorded, with 52 deaths resulting from 22 attacks in 2023, compared to 217 deaths and 68 attacks in the previous year. The number of suicide bombing has also decreased significantly, with only seven suicide bombings recorded in 2023 compared to 46 a decade ago.

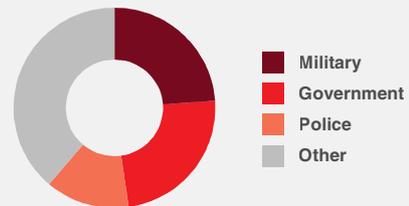
The Khorasan Chapter of Islamic State (ISK) continues to be the most active terrorist group in Afghanistan, responsible for 17 incidents and 73 deaths in 2023, which is over 61 per cent of total deaths in the country for the year. Despite this, deaths from ISK attacks fell by 83 per cent in 2023. ISK was responsible for the country's deadliest attack of the year, occurring when a bomb killed at least 15 people including two Taliban officials during a funeral service for a Taliban governor in Badakhshan province. The funeral service was commemorating a Taliban governor killed in a suicide bombing claimed by ISK two days prior. ISK also claimed responsibility for the funeral bombing.³⁶

Established in 2015, ISK has consistently opposed the Taliban, viewing it as a rival both strategically and ideologically. ISK has repeatedly denounced the Taliban's efforts to form an emirate based on national boundaries, which directly opposes ISK's vision of a global caliphate.³⁷ The Taliban, while publicly committing to the 2020 Doha Agreement to prevent terrorist

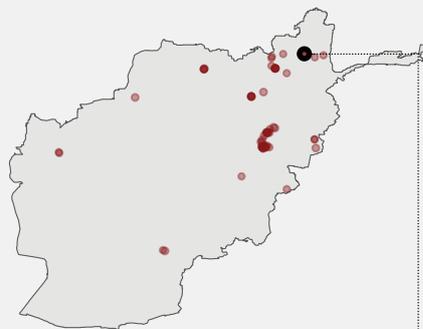
18,624 deaths from terrorism since 2007



Attack Targets in 2023



Worst attacks



Badakhshan

A bomb of unconfirmed type killed two Taliban officials, at least 13 civilians and wounded at least 30 others when it detonated during a funeral service for a Taliban governor at the Nabawi Mosque in Fayzabad, Fayzabad district, Badakhshan province at around 1100hrs on 8 June. The funeral service was commemorating a Taliban governor killed in a suicide bombing claimed by Islamic State - Khorasan Province on 6 June. Islamic State - Khorasan Province also claimed responsibility for the funeral bombing.

operations from Afghan territory, including those by ISK, tends to minimise the presence and threat of ISK. Given the Taliban's focus on eliminating internal threats to its rule, an increase in conflict with ISK remains likely.³⁸

10 COUNTRIES MOST IMPACTED BY TERRORISM

Somalia

GTI RANK

7

GTI SCORE

7.814

434  DEAD436  INJURED193  INCIDENTS

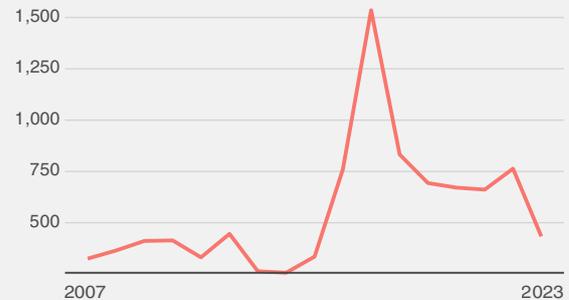
Somalia recorded a fall in the impact of terrorism in 2023, continuing a trend that began five years ago. There were 434 deaths and 193 incidents in 2023, a fall of 43 per cent and 37 per cent respectively compared to the previous year. This reduction marked the second-largest global decrease in deaths and Somalia's lowest death toll since 2015, largely due to reduced Al-Shabaab activity.

Al-Shabaab, Somalia's most lethal terrorist group, was linked to 429 deaths, or 99 per cent of the country's total terrorism-related fatalities in 2023. The number of deaths attributed to Al-Shabaab nearly halved in 2023, a testament to the effective counterterrorism operations by the Somali government and its allies. This impact was particularly pronounced in the Banaadir and Shabeellaha Dhexe regions, where deaths from Al-Shabaab attacks declined by 76 per cent and 89 per cent respectively. Banaadir, home to Somalia's capital Mogadishu, has historically been a hotspot for terrorism.

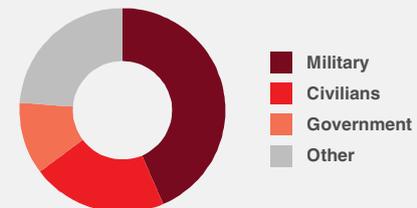
The regions of Shabeellaha Hoose and Hiiraan recorded the highest Al-Shabaab fatalities, with 133 and 117 deaths respectively in 2023. Al-Shabaab's deadliest act of violence for the year involved an assault on an African Union military base in Shabeellaha Hoose, claiming the lives of 54 soldiers.³⁹

The combined efforts of the Somali government, African Union, and US forces have been significant in retaking territories held by Al-Shabaab for more than a decade, contributing to the downward trend in terrorism-related deaths.⁴⁰ However, the later part of 2023 saw setbacks that prompted the Somali government to request a three-month delay in the withdrawal of 3,000 African Union peacekeepers from the UN. This request followed an attack that forced security forces to retreat from newly reclaimed towns.⁴¹ Stabilisation efforts to consolidate counterterrorism gains and prevent a security vacuum in liberated areas are crucial for preventing a resurgence of violence.⁴²

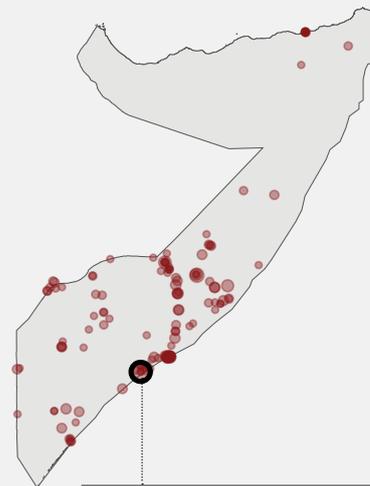
9,500 deaths from terrorism since 2007



Attack Targets in 2023



Worst attacks



Shabeellaha Hoose

Gunmen armed with firearms, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), and other explosive devices, in combination with suicide bombers, attacked an African Union army base housing Ugandan soldiers in Bullo Marer, Lower Shabelle region, South West state at around 0500hrs on 26 May. Security forces shot back in retaliatory fire. The Ugandan president said that at least 54 soldiers had died. These numbers had not been confirmed by the African Union or the Somali government. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility.

10 COUNTRIES MOST IMPACTED BY TERRORISM

Nigeria

GTI RANK
8

GTI SCORE
7.575

524 DEAD
89 INJURED
145 INCIDENTS

Nigeria recorded its first increase in terrorism in three years in 2023, with total deaths rising by 34 per cent to 524. This year marks Nigeria's highest death toll since 2020, driven by a surge in conflict between ISWA and Boko Haram. If the conflict between these two groups was excluded, terrorism deaths would have declined by 18 per cent.

Civilians were the most targeted group for the second consecutive year in 2023, followed by military personnel. Civilians were targeted in over a quarter of all attacks, followed by military personnel at 21 per cent and law enforcement also at 21 per cent.

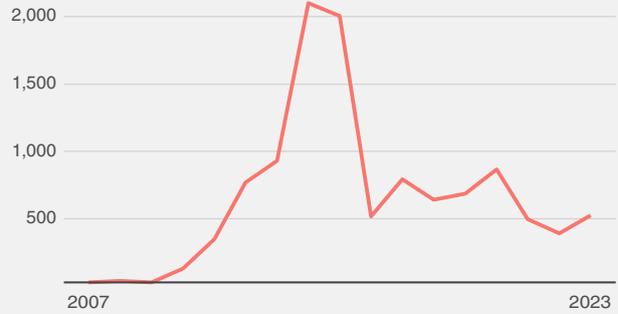
ISWA has been Nigeria's deadliest terrorist group for each of the past four years. It accounted for 53 per cent of the nation's terrorism-related fatalities and 37 per cent of terrorist incidents in 2023. Even though the number of ISWA terrorist attacks decreased slightly in the past year, the death toll rose by 27 per cent to 276 deaths, the highest amount in the past three years. On average, ISWA attacks became deadlier in 2023, causing 5.2 fatalities per attack, an increase from of 3.6 in 2022. The conflict between ISWA and Boko Haram intensified in 2023, with ISWA attacks resulting in the death of 167 Boko Haram militants, the most since the two groups split in 2016.

Boko Haram recorded its deadliest year since 2020, with 29 attacks leading to 151 deaths, a significant rise from the nine attacks and 72 deaths recorded in the previous year. The majority of Boko Haram's attacks targeted civilians, but almost a quarter of their fatalities occurred during confrontations with ISWA.

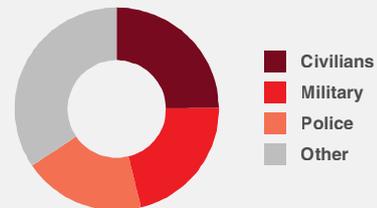
The conflict between Boko Haram and ISWA has resulted in a significant escalation in terrorism in Borno State, which experienced an increase of 63 per cent in terrorism deaths compared with the prior year. Attacks in the state also increased from 48 to 73 respectively, an increase of 52 per cent. The deadliest terror attack of the year occurred in Borno State, when 60 terrorists were killed in a battle between ISWA and Boko Haram gunmen in August. Boko Haram reportedly lost more fighters than ISWA in the attack.⁴³

The death of Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau in May 2021 has intensified conflicts between jihadist factions. Although ISWA remains the more dominant group, Boko Haram persists as a strong, albeit weakened, adversary. Regional observers have noted that government and security forces must focus on sustained peace initiatives in Borno State, allocate adequate resources to defector rehabilitation programs, and enhance services in rural areas to weaken recruitment efforts.⁴⁴

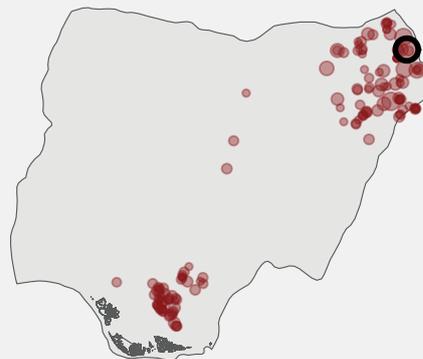
11,299 deaths from terrorism since 2007



Attack Targets in 2023



Worst attacks



Borno

Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) gunmen attacked Boko Haram fighters near Lake Chad in Borno State at around 1200hrs on 19 August. Boko Haram retaliated, and 100 fighters were killed between the sides. Boko Haram reportedly lost more fighters than ISWA.

10 COUNTRIES MOST IMPACTED BY TERRORISM

Myanmar

GTI RANK

9

GTI SCORE

7.536

354  DEAD231  INJURED444  INCIDENTS

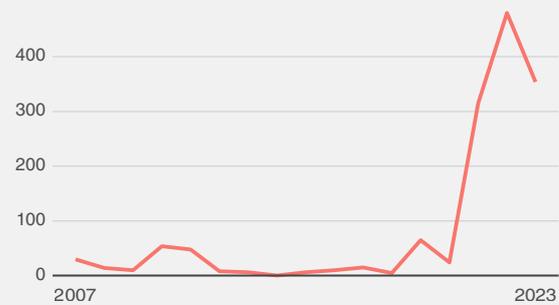
In 2023, terrorist attacks in Myanmar fell for the first time since 2020, from 851 attacks in 2022 to 444 attacks in 2023. This is a decline of almost 50 per cent, with attacks now at their lowest level since the military coup of 2021.

Deaths from terrorism declined by 26 per cent in the past year, falling from 480 in 2022 to 354 in 2023. Government and political figures continue to be the most targeted group by terrorism in Myanmar. A third of all fatalities in the country came from attacks targeted at these two groups.

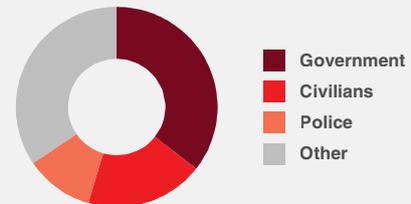
Terror attacks in Myanmar occurred in the context of ongoing civil conflict following the February 2021 military coup and subsequent rebellion by ethnic armed groups and pro-democracy supporters. The GTI does not include acts of state repression and violence by state actors and, as such, acts committed by the military junta are not included in the scope of the report. However, recent reports suggest that the military junta continues to expand the use of deadly force and repression to curb dissent in the two years since the coup.⁴⁵ The decline can be explained in part by the shift of opposition tactics to major offensives across Myanmar, and the capture of large amounts of territory, threatening the future of the junta's control.⁴⁶

In 2023, Mandalay surpassed Yangon as the region most impacted by terrorism in Myanmar, with almost 22 per cent of attacks and over 21 per cent of deaths occurring within Mandalay. Deaths and attacks fell the most in the Yangon region, with deaths from terrorism falling by over 80 per cent. This marks the first time this area had recorded a decrease in terrorist activity since the 2021 coup. By contrast, the central and southern regions of Bago, Sagaing, and Magway saw an increase in terrorist activity in 2023, with attacks more than doubling and deaths increasing almost 300 per cent.

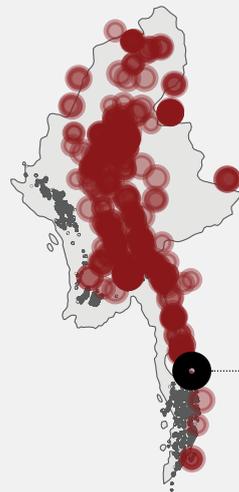
1,444 deaths from terrorism since 2007



Attack Targets in 2023



Worst attacks



Tanintharyi

Gunmen killed seven family members of a village administrator in Kyauk Lone Gyi village, Palaw township, Myeik district, Tanintharyi region on the night of 12 February. The village administrator escaped from the attack. The authorities attributed the attack to local anti-junta armed groups, which reportedly denied any involvement.

10 COUNTRIES MOST IMPACTED BY TERRORISM

Niger

GTI RANK
10

GTI SCORE
7.274

468  DEAD
166  INJURED
61  INCIDENTS

Terrorism in Niger experienced a surge in 2023 after a decline in 2022. The number of terrorist attacks increased to 61 in 2023, up from 54 in the previous year. Deaths more than doubled, with 468 deaths in 2023 compared to 193 deaths in 2022, indicating a significant escalation in the lethality of attacks. Military personnel accounted for 73 per cent of these casualties, resulting in Niger becoming the country with the third-highest military death toll in 2023.

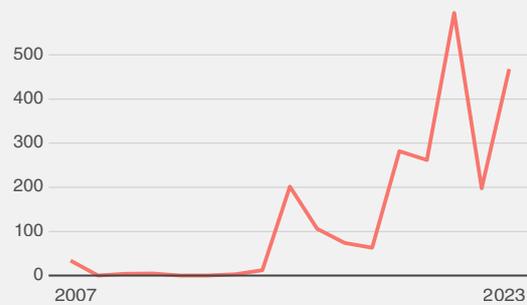
Niger's deadliest attack of 2023 occurred when gunmen killed at least 200 soldiers in an ambush on four military columns in Tillabéri in November. No group claimed responsibility for the attack, however local media outlets reported that the attack was a joint operation by IS and JNIM.⁴⁷

The Tillabéri region recorded the highest number of attacks and deaths. This region is in the unstable tri-border area shared with Mali and Burkina Faso, and has been hit hard by the Islamic insurgency in the Central Sahel. Terrorist attacks occurred in seven of Niger's eight regions, with Tillabéri recording 59 per cent of the country's terrorist attacks and 84 per cent of casualties. However, some regions recorded a fall in terrorism, most notably a number of areas near the border with Mali. Groups such as IS and JNIM were reportedly moving further into Niger to exploit ongoing political and security upheavals following the July coup, leading to the decline in terrorist activity at the border.⁴⁸

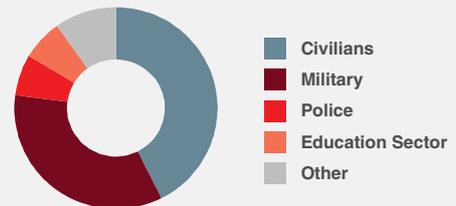
JNIM and IS continue to be the most active groups in Niger in 2023. The joint attack between JNIM and IS in Tillabéri in November 2023 drove deaths by JNIM in Niger to their highest level, from zero recorded in 2022 to 208 deaths in 2023. IS was responsible for three attacks and 33 deaths, all located in the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions. The IS-affiliated ISWA killed a further 31 people in nine attacks in 2023, compared to 39 deaths and nine attacks in the prior year. However, there is a large degree of uncertainty over exactly how active these groups are, as over 62 per cent the attacks in Niger in 2023 were not claimed by any terrorist group.

Like other countries in the Sahel region, Niger faces a significant threat to national security from the expansion of Islamist extremist groups, especially in the wake of the July 2023 coup. The resulting political instability may provide extremist groups with increased opportunities to recruit and incite violence, further threatening the stability of the wider Sahel region.⁴⁹

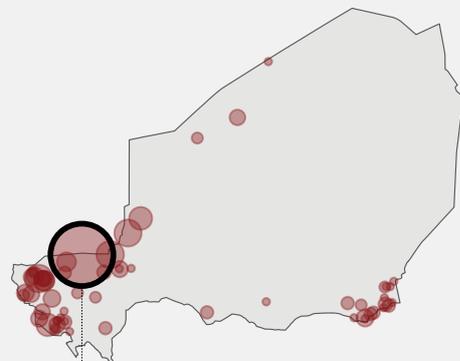
2,308 deaths from terrorism since 2007



Attack Targets in 2023



Worst attacks



Tillabéri

Gunmen killed at least 200 soldiers and wounded at least 34 others in an ambush on four military columns at Tassilatane, Fillingue department, Tillabéri region on 16 November. No group had claimed responsibility at the time of writing, but local media outlets reported that the attack was a joint operation by Greater Sahara Province of Islamic State (IS) and Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM).

The epicentre of terrorism has shifted from the Middle East and North Africa into sub-Saharan Africa, concentrated largely in the Sahel region. This region now accounts for almost half of all deaths from terrorism globally.

94% 

Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia have far more deaths from terrorism than any other regions. Collectively they accounted for just under 94 per cent of deaths from terrorism in 2023.



99% ↓

In Iraq, total deaths from terrorism have fallen 99 per cent since 2007.

The largest falls in terrorism since 2007 have occurred in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Nigeria.



In 2023, 98 per cent of terrorism deaths occurred in countries experiencing some level of conflict.

60

In the US since 2007, there have been 60 politically motivated attacks compared to 14 religiously motivated attacks.



Over the past decade the average impact of terrorism has only increased in two regions: North America and sub-Saharan Africa.

South Asia has the highest regional average impact from terrorism, although it improved over the past year.

Pakistan  3	Afghanistan  5	India  1	Bangladesh  14
Sri Lanka  2	Nepal  2	Bhutan  5	

Trends

44 → **41**
2022 2023

The number of countries recording at least one death from terrorism fell to 41 in 2023, down from 44 in 2022 and 57 in 2015.

Terrorism in the West

55% ↓

In the West, terrorist incidents dropped to their lowest level since 2007, down by 55 per cent from 2022, with 23 attacks and 21 deaths recorded in 2023.

5/7

In the US, five out of seven attacks in 2023 were linked to people with far-right sympathies or connections.



2 Trends in Terrorism

Trends since 2007

Figure 2.1 shows that there have been several distinct phases in terrorist activity since 2007. In 2007 and 2008, most terrorist activity was concentrated in Iraq and Afghanistan in response to the US and its allies' interventions. This impacted Pakistan, leading to an escalation in terrorist activity from 2008 to 2013. The Arab Spring and the rise of Islamic State (IS) triggered a surge in terrorism across the Middle East from 2011 to 2013, particularly in Syria and Iraq, while the growth of Boko Haram led to terrorism increasing in Nigeria. At its peak in 2015, almost 11,000 people were killed in terrorist attacks in a single year.

From 2016, fatalities from terrorism began to decline. Iraq saw a marked reduction in terrorism starting in 2017, whereas Afghanistan experienced an increase in terrorist activity from 2016 to 2021, followed by a notable decline in 2022 after the Taliban's ascension to power. During the same period, the Sahel region saw a significant rise in terrorist incidents and deaths, particularly in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Somalia.

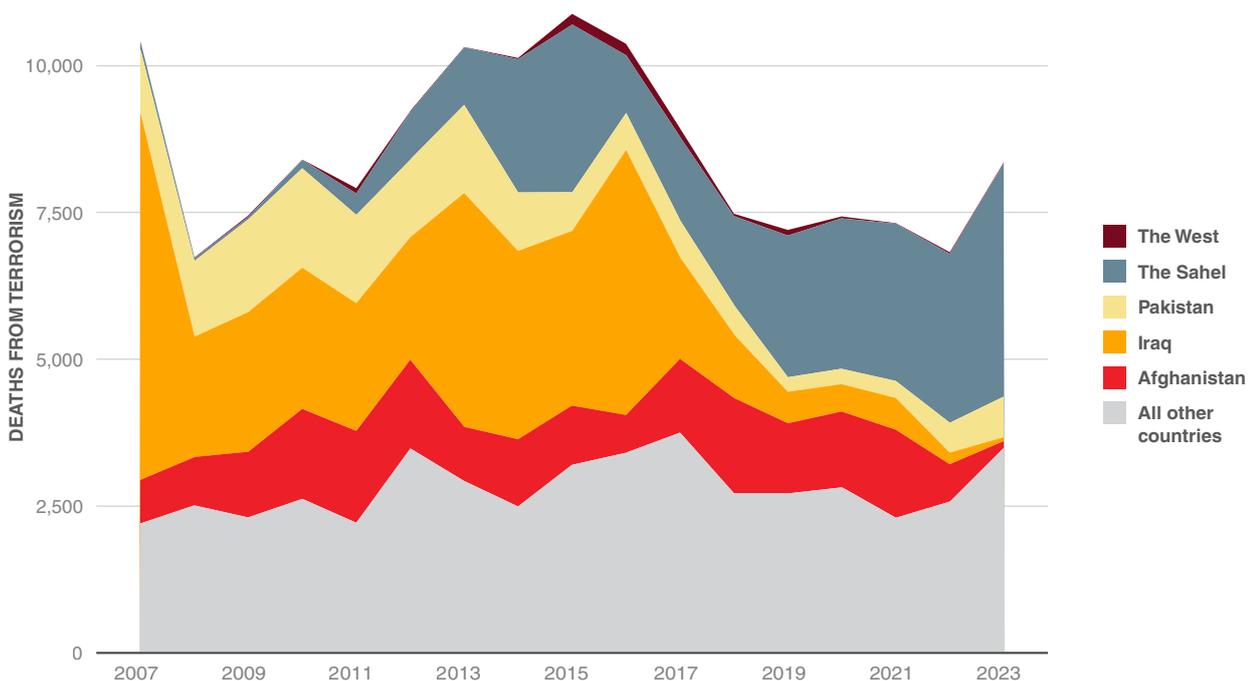
2022 marked the lowest global death toll from terrorism since 2007, but in 2023, deaths surged to levels comparable to those seen in 2017. This increase, the first since 2020 was primarily due to the October 7th attack by Hamas on Israel, which resulted in over 1,200 fatalities and the capture of more than 200 soldiers and civilians.¹ However, excluding the October 7th attack fatalities would still have increased by 4.8 per cent. This attack is the deadliest by any group globally since 2007, and the largest terrorist attack since 9/11. As of January 2024, an estimated 25,000 Palestinians have been killed in retaliatory attacks by Israel and a further two million people have been displaced.²

Despite renewed violence in MENA, the Sahel remains the epicentre of terrorism. The region accounted for 48 per cent of total terrorism deaths globally in 2023, compared to 42 per cent in 2022 and just one per cent in 2007. Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, and Cameroon each saw death tolls increase by at least 33 per cent over the past year. Even with decreases in deaths in Mali and Chad, total deaths in the Sahel were 38 per cent higher than in 2022.

FIGURE 2.1

Deaths from terrorism, 2007-2023

Total deaths have decreased 23 per cent from their peak in 2015.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

Overall, deaths from terrorism have declined by almost 25 per cent since the peak of terrorism in 2015, with Iraq and Nigeria recording the largest decreases. Deaths in Nigeria peaked in 2014 at 2,101 deaths before declining in five of the nine subsequent years. After recording 392 deaths in 2022, the lowest level since 2011, deaths from terrorism in Nigeria increased by 34 per cent in 2023 to 524. The resurgence of violence in Nigeria in 2023 can be primarily attributed to intensified conflict between ISWA and Boko Haram. Without the deaths resulting from clashes between these two groups, Nigeria's terrorism-related fatalities would have shown a decrease of 15 per cent for the year.

Deaths from terrorism in Iraq have fallen by 99 per cent since their peak in 2007. This is indicative of a broader trend in the MENA region, where terrorist activities have lessened especially over the last seven years. Contributing factors include the de-escalation of the Syrian civil war, IS' operational shift from MENA to the Sahel region, and enhanced counterterrorism cooperation at both national and international levels. These developments have collectively mitigated the impact of terrorism across MENA, other than the late 2023 resurgence of violence in Israel and Palestine.

As the conflict in Syria subsided, IS and its affiliates have shifted their focus to sub-Saharan Africa and more specifically Sahelian countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon. The Sahel has become increasingly more violent during this period, with deaths increasing 30 times between 2007 and 2023. Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria recorded the largest increases, 1,907, 751 and 495 more deaths respectively in 2023 than in 2007. Groups such as IS and JNIM continue to wage a violent campaign in the region, capitalising on political instability and organised crime. Figure 2.2 shows the shift of

terrorism away from MENA and towards the Sahel and, more specifically, the tri-border region between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

In the West, total deaths from terrorism peaked in 2016 when 194 people died, while attacks peaked a year later at 176 incidents. Most of these deaths were caused by Islamic jihadists. However, both religious and politically motivated terrorism have subsided significantly in the last five years in the West, as shown in Figure 2.3. In 2023, the total number of terrorist attacks in the West fell to 23, the lowest since 2007, down from 51 in 2022. Despite the drop in incidents, the number of deaths has remained relatively constant, ranging from 20 to 30 annually since 2020. Notably, there was a drop to nine deaths in 2021, which coincided with global mobility restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, deaths from terrorism have declined by almost 25 per cent since the peak of terrorism in 2015, with Iraq and Nigeria recording the largest decreases.

FIGURE 2.2

Most significant changes in deaths from terrorism, 2020–2023

Apart from a surge in Israel and Palestine, terrorism has shifted from MENA to the Sahel within the last three years.

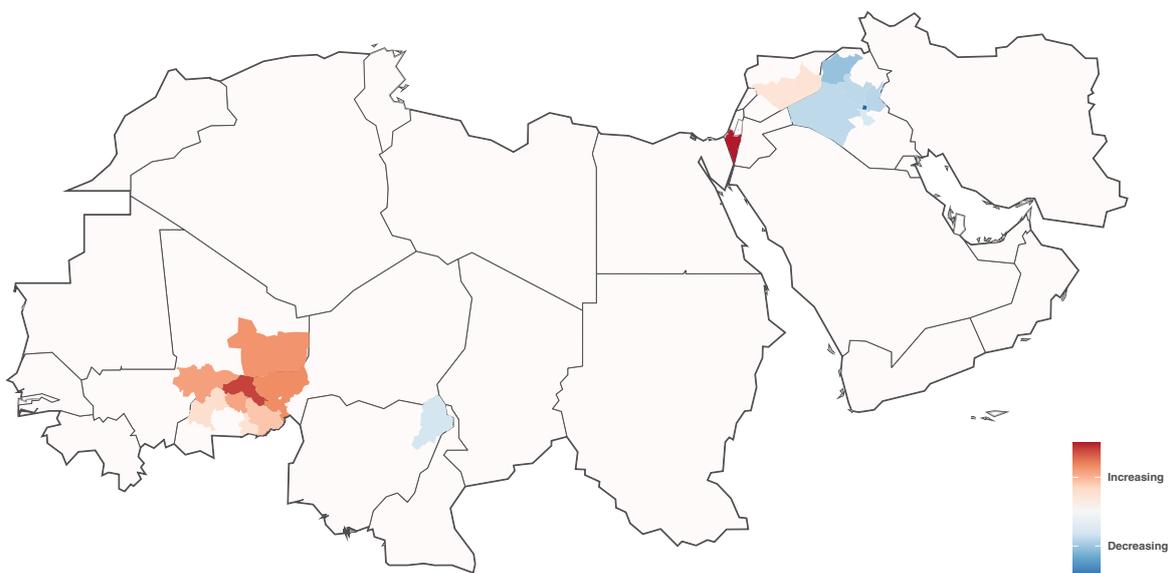
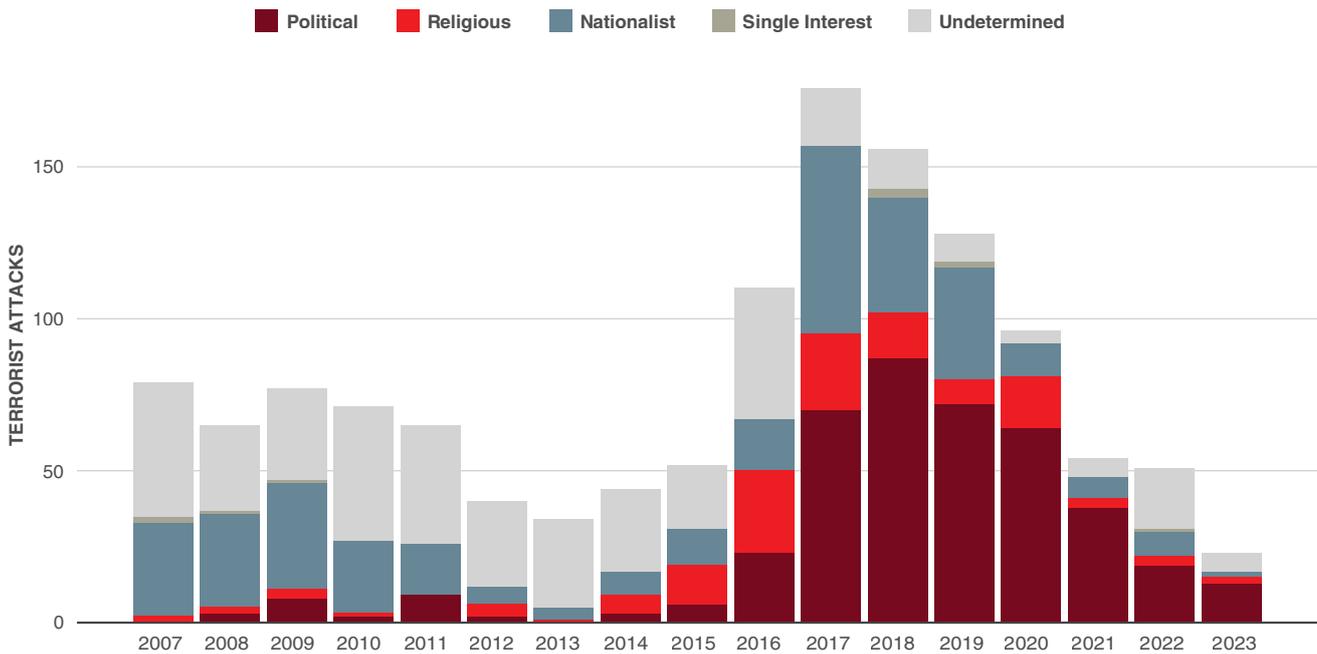


FIGURE 2.3

Attacks in the West by ideology, 2007–2023

Both politically and religiously motivated attacks have fallen since 2017.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

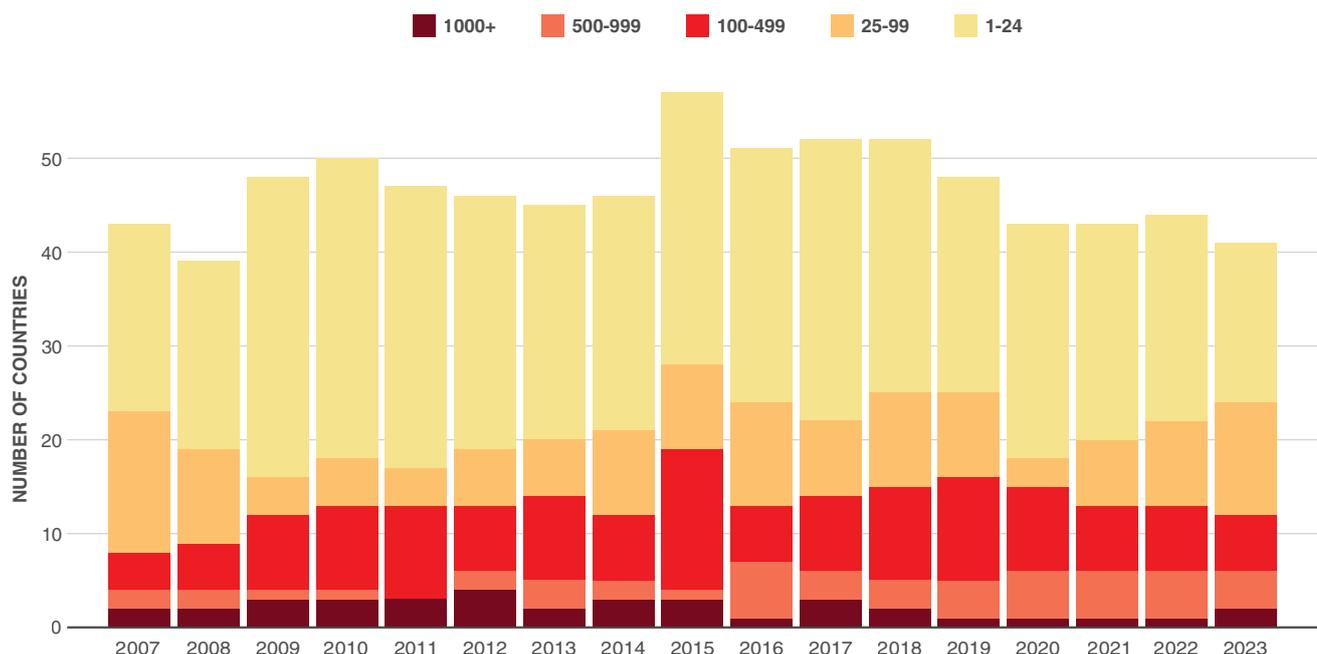
In 2023, the number of both deaths and incidents caused by political terrorism was higher than any other form of terrorism in the West, with 13 politically motivated attacks, compared with just two religiously motivated attacks. However, there are some indications that the October 7th attack in Israel might lead to an

increase in terrorism in Europe. Security services in Europe foiled several planned terrorist attacks in December 2023. These attacks were linked to Hamas, with some reported to have been targeting Jewish institutions in Germany.⁹

FIGURE 2.4

Distribution of deaths from terrorism, 2007–2023

41 countries recorded at least one death from terrorism in 2023.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

Terrorism has become more concentrated over the past few years, as shown in Figure 2.4. Although total deaths from terrorism are at their highest level since 2017, the number of countries that recorded at least one death from terrorism fell to 41, the lowest number since 2008. There are 75 countries with a GTI score of zero, meaning that they have not experienced a single incident of terrorism in the past five years. By contrast, in 2015 when terrorism was most widespread, there were only 57 countries with a GTI score of zero. Of the 163 countries in the GTI, only 27 have not recorded a single terrorist incident since 2007.

CONFLICT AND TERRORISM

Conflict has been the primary driver of terrorism since 2007. There were 145,376 terrorism deaths between 2007 and 2023, of which 98 per cent occurred in countries that were involved in a conflict at the time. In 2023, the 16 countries most impacted by terrorism were all defined as being in conflict.⁴ Chile is ranked 17th on the GTI, and is the only country in the 20 most impacted that was not classified as being in conflict in 2023.

Figure 2.5 illustrates the trend in deaths from terrorism by conflict type. In 2023, 98 per cent of terrorism deaths occurred in countries experiencing some level of conflict, down slightly from 99 per cent in 2022. The concentration of terrorism deaths in conflict zones has remained above 95 per cent since 2015. Terror attacks in countries in conflict also tend to be deadlier than those committed outside conflict zones, with attacks in conflict countries killing almost three people per attack in 2023 compared to 0.04 people per attack outside conflict zones.

Although deaths from terrorism in wars have declined since their peak in 2017, deaths in minor conflicts have risen, with over 3,000 terrorism deaths in minor conflict situations recorded in 2023. By contrast, deaths in non-conflict countries are well below the peak of 2015. In the past year there was fewer than 200 deaths from terrorism recorded in non-conflict countries.

Countries involved in conflict are more susceptible to terrorism in part because of the lack of a fully functioning state. Terrorism is also one of many tactics employed by insurgencies and paramilitaries in a civil conflict. For example, terrorist groups like IS and Boko Haram carry out conventional military attacks in the context of their respective conflicts, as well as undertaking extensive terrorist activity.

Although total deaths from terrorism are at their highest level since 2017, the number of countries that recorded at least one death from terrorism fell to 41, the lowest number since 2008.

FIGURE 2.5

Deaths from terrorism by conflict type, 2007–2023

In 2023, 98 per cent of deaths from terrorism occurred in countries currently experiencing conflict.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, UCDP, IEP Calculations

Regional Trends

Table 2.1 shows the regions of the world by their average GTI score for 2023, as well as changes in score over the last decade and the prior year. The impact of terrorism fell in five of the nine GTI regions in 2023. The largest improvement occurred in South America, with Venezuela and Ecuador recording zero attacks and deaths for the second time since 2013. South America and North America followed, recording falls in the number of incidents of 13 per cent and 38 per cent respectively. Central America and Caribbean recorded no change in GTI score while Russia and Eurasia recorded a marginal deterioration in the past year.

TABLE 2.1

Average GTI score and change by region

South Asia continues to have the highest average impact of terrorism in 2023.

Region	Average Score	Change 2013-2023	Change 2022-2023
South Asia	4.374	-0.582	-0.203
North America	2.947	0.862	-0.152
Middle East and North Africa	2.702	-1.139	0.018
South America	2.218	-0.058	-0.399
sub-Saharan Africa	2.218	0.712	0.029
Asia-Pacific	1.395	-0.039	-0.118
Europe	0.774	-0.156	-0.144
Russia and Eurasia	0.535	-1.339	0.020
Central America and Caribbean	0.087	-0.367	0.000

South Asia continues to be the most impacted region globally by terrorism, a position it has held since 2007. Similarly, Central America and the Caribbean remained the least impacted region for terrorism in 2023 for the eleventh consecutive year.

A total of 33 terrorism deaths have been recorded in the Central America and the Caribbean since 2007, with 24 per cent of those occurring in 2009. The region recorded one attack in 2023 but had not experienced any attacks or deaths in the four years prior to 2023.

Sub-Saharan Africa experienced the most significant regional deterioration over the past decade, with terrorist incidents and casualties rising by 239 per cent since 2013.

By contrast, the trends in MENA and Europe improved over the past decade, with attacks in MENA declining by 74 per cent, and fatalities decreasing by 63 per cent.

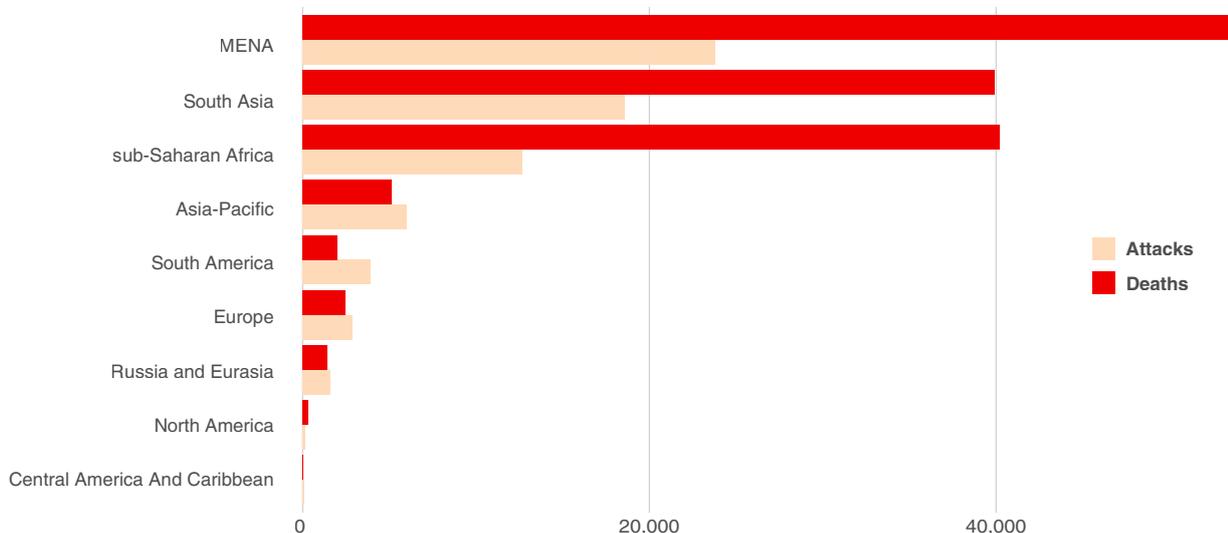
In Europe, there was an 88 per cent decline in fatalities from terrorism and a 63 per cent decline in terrorist attacks over the past ten years.

Figure 2.6 shows the total number of attacks and deaths from terrorism since 2007. Between 2007 and 2023, the largest number of deaths from terrorism was recorded in the MENA region, at 53,798 deaths. Just over 40,000 deaths were recorded in sub-Saharan Africa, with a further 40,000 in South Asia.

FIGURE 2.6

Attacks and deaths from terrorism by region, 2007–2023

The largest number of deaths were recorded in the MENA region, with over 53,000 deaths from terrorism since 2007.



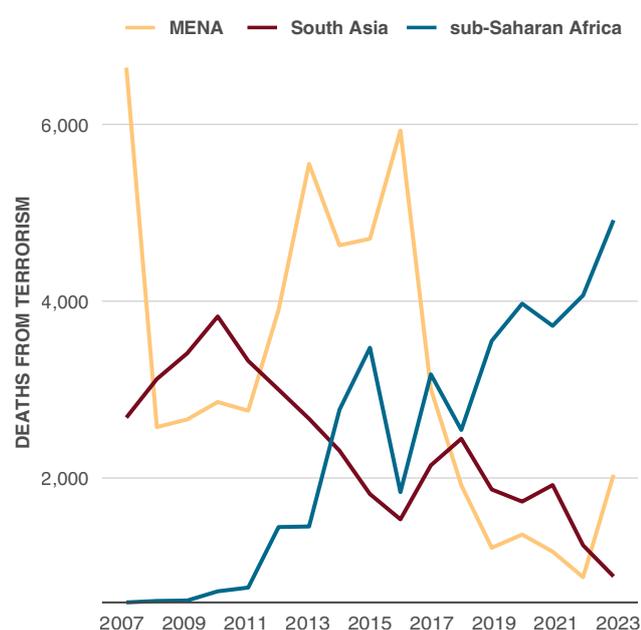
Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

Although MENA has had the highest overall number of deaths from terrorism since 2007, the region has recorded a substantial decline in the five years prior 2023, as shown in Figure 2.8. MENA is no longer the region with the highest number of deaths from terrorism and saw a sustained drop between 2016 and 2022. As a result, sub-Saharan Africa became the region with the most deaths from terrorism, overtaking MENA and South Asia. Figure 2.7 shows the trend in terrorism deaths for these three regions since 2007. Collectively they accounted for 94 per cent of deaths from terrorism in 2023.

FIGURE 2.7

Trend in terrorism deaths by region, 2007–2023

Sub-Saharan Africa has had the most deaths of any region every year since 2017.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

MENA, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 94 per cent of deaths from terrorism in 2023.

Regional Profiles

Asia-Pacific

TABLE 2.2

Asia-Pacific GTI score, rank and change in score, 2013–2023

Country	Overall Score	Overall Rank	Change 2013-2023	Change 2022-2023
Myanmar	7.536	9	3.291	-0.032
Philippines	5.383	19	-1.181	-0.216
Thailand	4.219	28	-2.661	-0.376
Indonesia	3.993	31	-0.161	-0.597
New Zealand	1.947	50	1.947	-0.623
Australia	1.475	57	1.475	-0.610
Japan	1.189	64	1.189	-0.050
China	0.582	73	-3.417	0.582
Malaysia	0.192	81	-0.705	-0.286
Cambodia	0.000	89	-0.524	0.000
South Korea	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Laos	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Mongolia	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Papua New Guinea	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
North Korea	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Singapore	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Timor-Leste	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Taiwan	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Vietnam	0.000	89	0.000	-0.044
Regional Average			-0.039	-0.119

Nine countries in Asia-Pacific improved in 2023, while only one deteriorated, resulting in the impact of terrorism falling in the region for the fifth consecutive year. A further nine countries showed no change in score last year. China was the only country in the region to record a deterioration in 2023. The average impact of terrorism in the region is now at its lowest level since 2013.

Myanmar is the most impacted country in Asia-Pacific for the third consecutive year, recording 444 attacks and 354 deaths in 2023. This is a decline of 47.8 per cent in attacks and 26.3 per cent in deaths when compared to the year prior.

The Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, New Zealand, and Vietnam all recorded improvements on the GTI in the past year. However, the Philippines still has the second highest level of terrorism in the region, recording 34 attacks and 39 deaths in 2023.

In 2023, China recorded the only deterioration in the region, recording first terrorist attack since 2017, which caused one injury. However, terrorism in China has been steadily declining over the past decade, with its GTI score improving from 5.89 in 2015 to 0.58 in 2023. China has made the biggest progress in its GTI Score, decreasing from 5.894 in 2015 to a score of 0.582 in 2023. There were no terrorist incidents recorded in China between 2018 and 2022.

Several countries have recorded improvements over the last decade, with the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, China, Malaysia, and Cambodia all improving since 2013. Thailand recorded the largest improvement after China, with deaths falling from 154 to just six over this period.

Central America and the Caribbean

TABLE 2.3

Central America and Caribbean GTI score, rank and change in score, 2013–2023

Country	Overall Score	Overall Rank	Change 2013-2023	Change 2022-2023
Mexico	1.040	67	-0.324	-0.007
Costa Rica	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Cuba	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Dominican Republic	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Guatemala	0.000	89	-2.110	0.000
Honduras	0.000	89	-0.768	0.000
Haiti	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Jamaica	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Nicaragua	0.000	89	-0.167	0.000
Panama	0.000	89	-0.167	0.000
El Salvador	0.000	89	-0.876	0.000
Trinidad and Tobago	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Regional Average			-0.367	-0.001

The Central America and Caribbean region remained largely free of terrorist activity over the past decade, although it has been heavily impacted by other forms of conflict. Mexico was the only country to record any terrorist activity in 2023 and has been the country with the worst score in the region since 2007. Eleven out of the 12 countries recorded a score of zero on the 2024 GTI. This signifies that these nations have not encountered a single terrorist incident in the past five years.

Terrorism in Mexico has historically been ideologically or politically motivated, and criminal activity by the cartels is not included as terrorism in this report. However, whilst the level of terrorism in Mexico is low, other forms of violent conflict are extremely high. At least 64 journalists were killed in 2023, significantly more than the 13 reported in 2022,⁵ and Mexico's homicide rate remains one the highest in the world. While terrorism in Mexico has declined, cartel activity continues to dominate the crime landscape.⁶

Every country in the region that experienced terrorism in 2013 recorded an improvement in the last ten years. The largest improvement occurred in Guatemala, followed by El Salvador and Honduras. The fall in terrorism in these countries has been followed by significant falls in homicide. The most notable recent improvement in the *homicide rate* occurred in El Salvador, where the *homicide rate* fell an estimated 70 per cent in 2023.⁷

Europe

TABLE 2.4

Europe GTI Score, rank and change in score, 2013–2023

Country	Overall Score	Overall Rank	Change 2013-2023	Change 2022-2023
Türkiye	4.168	29	-2.185	-0.680
Greece	3.028	34	0.026	-0.604
Germany	2.782	37	1.319	-0.439
France	2.647	38	-0.016	-0.693
United Kingdom	2.373	41	-1.166	-0.310
Belgium	1.904	51	1.781	0.326
Norway	1.747	53	-2.245	-0.606
Spain	1.669	55	0.485	-0.023
Italy	1.447	58	-0.022	-0.641
Kosovo	1.218	63	-0.715	1.188
Slovakia	1.092	66	1.033	-0.513
Austria	0.953	68	0.654	-0.549
Sweden	0.735	70	0.470	-0.430
Switzerland	0.627	71	0.294	-0.452
Cyprus	0.616	72	0.493	0.110
Netherlands	0.577	74	0.577	-0.403
Iceland	0.233	79	0.233	-0.190
Lithuania	0.059	87	0.059	-0.055
Ireland	0.030	88	-0.835	-0.029
Albania	0.000	89	-0.114	0.000
Bulgaria	0.000	89	-2.513	0.000
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.000	89	-0.782	0.000
Czechia	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Denmark	0.000	89	-0.114	-0.030
Estonia	0.000	89	-0.465	0.000
Finland	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Croatia	0.000	89	-0.582	0.000
Hungary	0.000	89	-0.030	0.000
Latvia	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
North Macedonia	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Montenegro	0.000	89	-0.059	0.000

Poland	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Portugal	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Romania	0.000	89	0.000	-0.167
Serbia	0.000	89	-1.198	0.000
Slovenia	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Regional Average			-0.156	-0.144

The impact of terrorism in Europe is now lower than it has ever been since the inception of the index. There were seven deaths from 24 incidents in 2023, compared to 736 deaths from 362 incidents at the peak of terrorist activity in 2016. Just five countries recorded a death from terrorism in the past year, and 17 of the 36 countries in the region have not recorded a single incident in the past five years. However, 12 countries experienced a deterioration in score over the past decade, with the strongest deteriorations occurring in Germany and Belgium. This is a reflection of the growing latent level of terrorism in the region, which although it has decreased since its peak in 2016, remains ready to flare up in the near future.

Türkiye has the highest levels of terrorism in the region, although its score has improved for seven of the past ten years, and it had the second largest improvement in Europe over the past year. It recorded two deaths from four incidents in 2023, compared to 591 deaths from 247 incidents in 2016. The largest overall improvement occurred in France, which recorded its lowest number of deaths and incidents since 2013. Although the security situation remains fragile in France, the country has not recorded ten or more deaths from terrorism in the past five years.

There have been some worrying signs in Europe over the past year, despite the sustained drop in the level of terrorism. Several terrorist plots were foiled in Germany after the October 7th attacks in Israel, with the perpetrators allegedly being linked to Hamas. IS also recorded its first attack for several years in 2023, when an attack on Swedish football fans in Belgium left two people dead. As tensions continue to mount in the Middle East as a result of Israel's military action in Gaza, the possibility of some form of related terrorist activity in Europe remains a distinct possibility.

Middle East and North Africa

TABLE 2.5

Middle East and North Africa GTI score, rank and change, 2013–2023

Country	Overall Score	Overall Rank	Change 2013-2023	Change 2022-2023
Israel	8.143	2	3.767	3.743
Syria	7.890	5	-0.137	0.119
Iraq	7.078	11	-2.611	-0.604
Egypt	5.221	20	-0.877	-0.676
Palestine	4.966	22	1.577	0.821

Yemen	4.951	23	-2.534	0.243
Iran	4.464	26	-0.087	0.029
Tunisia	2.914	36	-1.010	0.067
Libya	2.469	39	-2.921	-1.196
Algeria	2.197	44	-3.519	-0.766
Lebanon	1.562	56	-3.858	-0.659
Saudi Arabia	1.366	60	-0.443	0.157
Jordan	0.455	75	-0.403	-0.439
United Arab Emirates	0.233	79	0.233	-0.190
Bahrain	0.123	84	-3.312	-0.110
Kuwait	0.000	89	-0.257	0.000
Morocco	0.000	89	-2.271	-0.192
Oman	0.000	89	-0.059	0.000
Qatar	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Sudan	0.000	89	-4.070	0.000
Regional Average			-1.140	0.017

The impact of terrorism deteriorated slightly in the MENA region in 2023. However, there was a high level of variance across countries in the region, with nine countries recording large improvements, and seven countries recording significant deteriorations. Five countries in the region registered scores of zero, meaning they had been completely free of terrorist activity for the past five years. There was a substantial decrease in the total number of incidents, dropping from 788 in 2022 to 580 in 2023, however the total number of deaths surged from 878 to 2035.

The largest terrorist incident occurred on the October 7th, when Hamas-led militants launched a series of coordinated attacks that killed 1,200 people, with a further 200 taken hostage. This was the largest terrorist attack since 9/11. In response, Israel began retaliatory military action in Gaza which has killed an estimated 25,000 people as of January 2024. The ongoing actions from the attack and its aftermath threatens to destabilise the entire Middle East. Israel now has the highest impact of terrorism in the region, and the second highest impact of any country globally.

Syria has the second highest level of terrorism in the region and experienced a worrying surge in terrorist activity in 2023. Total deaths in Syria rose from 226 to 650, and the level of terrorism has been steadily increasing since 2015. There are indications that IS is increasingly active in the country despite having lost all its territorial control and may become more active if US troops are withdrawn from the country. The deadliest attack in 2023 in Syria took place during a military college graduation ceremony in Homs in October that year, where at least 100 soldiers and civilians lost their lives in an attack that was attributed to IS.⁸

The largest improvement in the region occurred in Libya. There were no incidents and no deaths from terrorism in Libya for the first time since 2010, and just 30 deaths have been recorded in

the past five years, compared to 537 in the five years prior to 2019.

The second largest improvement occurred in Algeria, which also recorded no incidents and no deaths from terrorism in 2023. Algeria has experienced the most sustained reduction in terrorism of any country in the region, with its overall GTI score falling for ten of the last 12 years. At the peak of terrorist activity in 2010, 138 people were killed in Algeria from 84 terrorist attacks.

North America

TABLE 2.6

North America GTI score, rank and change, 2013–2023

Country	Overall Score	Overall Rank	Change 2013-2023	Change 2022-2023
Canada	1.753	52	1.666	-0.330
United States of America	4.141	30	0.059	0.026
Regional Average			0.863	-0.152

The impact of terrorism improved in North America over the past year, owing to an improvement in score in Canada. There was one attack and death from terrorism in Canada in 2023, down from the peak of 12 deaths and eight attacks in 2018.

By contrast, the impact of terrorism increased in the US, with 16 deaths from seven incidents. Both countries have substantially higher levels of terrorism than a decade ago, with North America the only region other than sub-Saharan Africa where the impact of terrorism is higher in 2023 than 2013.

There has been a shift over the past decade in the US from religiously motivated to politically motivated terrorism. Since 2007, there have been 60 politically motivated attacks compared to 14 religiously motivated attacks. This change is especially marked since 2017, with five of the seven attacks in 2023 were linked to individuals with far-right sympathies or connections. There were no religiously motivated attacks in 2023.

Terrorism in North America has been largely unaffiliated with specific terrorist groups. Rather, most perpetrators of terrorist attacks have been individuals with ties to certain ideologies, but no formal membership in a group or party. Of the 113 attacks from 2007 to 2023, only 15 were linked to known terrorist groups. This points to a trend of independent or loosely connected actors shaping the US terrorism landscape, which highlights the evolving challenges in understanding and countering terrorism.

Russia and Eurasia

TABLE 2.7

Russia and Eurasia GTI score, rank and change in score, 2013–2023

Country	Overall Score	Overall Rank	Change 2013-2023	Change 2022-2023
Russia	3.016	35	-3.747	0.328
Ukraine	1.686	54	-0.460	1.124
Tajikistan	0.871	69	-1.653	-1.335
Armenia	0.423	76	0.423	0.423
Uzbekistan	0.423	76	-0.029	-0.297
Azerbaijan	0.000	89	-0.582	0.000
Belarus	0.000	89	-2.829	0.000
Georgia	0.000	89	-2.629	0.000
Kazakhstan	0.000	89	-2.196	0.000
Kyrgyz Republic	0.000	89	-1.870	0.000
Moldova	0.000	89	-0.493	0.000
Turkmenistan	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Regional Average			-1.339	0.020

The average GTI score deteriorated slightly, driven by increases in terrorism in Ukraine, Armenia and Russia. However, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan recorded significant improvements. Seven countries in the region recorded scores of zero, meaning they had no incidents of terrorism in the past five years.

Overall, the region recorded six terrorist attacks and four deaths from terrorism in 2023. The region has experienced a significant decrease in terrorism over the past 15 years, with deaths falling by 98 per cent from their peak in 2010, when 323 people were killed in terrorist attacks.

After a long period without any terrorist attacks, Armenia recorded its first incident since 2016, resulting in the second largest decline in the GTI score in the region in 2023. The country's only attack in 2023 occurred when a synagogue was tagged with spray paint and set ablaze by Molotov cocktails in the city centre of Yerevan on the evening of October 2nd 2023. There were differing accounts regarding the group behind the incident. Azerbaijani sources suggested it was the work of the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), while Israeli sources indicated the Young Fighters for the Freedom of Armenia (YFFA) was responsible. Each group allegedly expressed objections to what they saw as Israel's support for Azerbaijan.⁹

Russia remains the country most affected by terrorism in the region. Russia recorded three terrorist attacks in 2023, down from four in 2022. The number of deaths remains unchanged since 2021 at two deaths per year. This is a 99 per cent decline in deaths compared to the peak of terror activity in Russia in 2010, when 327 attacks and 274 deaths were recorded. The largest attack in 2023 was the targeted bombing of Vladlen Tatarsky, a pro-Kremlin military blogger, which killed Tatarsky

and wounded at least 30 civilians during an event organised by a nationalist group supporting the war in Ukraine. The National Republican Army, an anti-Kremlin group, claimed responsibility.¹⁰

Tajikistan recorded the largest improvement in the GTI score in the region in 2023. The country recorded no terrorist incidents in 2023 and has not recorded a death from terrorism since 2019.

South America

TABLE 2.8

South America GTI score, rank and change in rank, 2013–2023

Country	Overall Score	Overall Rank	Change 2013-2023	Change 2022-2023
Colombia	6.188	16	-0.588	0.156
Chile	5.679	17	3.636	-0.257
Peru	2.045	47	-1.645	-0.675
Brazil	1.988	49	1.874	-0.629
Argentina	1.274	61	-0.116	-0.594
Venezuela	1.174	65	-0.282	-1.035
Paraguay	0.241	78	-3.094	-0.372
Ecuador	0.167	83	-0.276	-0.856
Uruguay	0.114	85	-0.014	-0.119
Bolivia	0.000	89	-0.128	0.000
Guyana	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Regional Average			-0.058	-0.398

The impact of terrorism improved in South America over the past year, with eight countries improving their score and two recording no change. Colombia was the only country in the region to record a deterioration in score between 2022 and 2023. Total deaths from terrorism increased by 83 per cent, from 46 in 2022 to 84 in 2023, all of which were recorded in Colombia. The overall level of terrorism remains on par with the level a decade ago. Although, Chile and Brazil both experienced a significant increase in terrorism in the last ten years, the rest of the region, led by Peru and Paraguay recorded substantial improvements. In total there have been 2,027 deaths from terrorism in South America since 2007, the fourth lowest of any region.

Colombia has the highest impact of terrorism in the region, a position it has held for the past decade, despite a minor overall improvement between 2013 and 2023. Deaths from terrorism increased from 33 in 2022 to 84 in 2023, with the number of incidents more than tripling, from 51 to 171. Of the deaths recorded in 2023, 53 were attributed to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), with the National Liberation Army (ELN) responsible for the remaining 31 deaths. The ELN and the FARC were responsible for about the same number of incidents, with the FARC launching 51 per cent of attacks in 2023.

The increase in terrorist activity was the result of break-away elements from the FARC and ELN who were not satisfied with the peace accord and refused to lay down their arms. The overall situation in Colombia substantially deteriorated compared to the previous year, despite numerous attempts at negotiations and ceasefires throughout 2023.¹¹ The repeated efforts towards a peaceful resolution continued in early 2024 and might finally lead to an improvement in score over the next twelve months.¹²

Chile ranks second on the GTI, behind Colombia in the South America region. The situation in the country has gradually worsened since 2012 and reached its peak in 2022. 2023 marks the first year since 2017 in which no deaths were recorded. Chile is the worst ranked country on the GTI that is not in conflict. Just over 78 per cent of the attacks in Chile were carried out by Mapuche militants.

Venezuela recorded the largest improvement in the region in 2023, recording no deaths or attacks for the second year in a row. This is the first time in which the country recorded two consecutive years without incidents since 2012.

South Asia

TABLE 2.9

South Asia GTI score, rank and change in score, 2013–2023

Country	Overall Score	Overall Rank	Change 2013-2023	Change 2022-2023
Pakistan	7.916	4	-0.961	0.306
Afghanistan	7.825	6	-0.765	-0.634
India	6.324	14	-0.818	-0.252
Bangladesh	3.317	32	-0.146	0.670
Sri Lanka	3.072	33	0.036	-0.684
Nepal	2.163	45	-1.363	-0.831
Bhutan	0.000	89	-0.059	0.000
Regional Average			-0.582	-0.204

In 2023 South Asia was the region with the highest average GTI score, a position it has held throughout the last decade. Despite this, the average GTI score for the region has been improving since 2019. The improvement within the region is driven by a decline in deaths and terror attacks in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. The region is home to two of the ten countries with the worst GTI scores, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Of the seven countries in the region, only Bhutan has a GTI score of zero, meaning that it has not recorded a terrorist attack in the past five years.

For the first time since 2007, deaths within the region fell below 900, largely due to a substantial drop in Afghanistan. Pakistan and Bangladesh were the only two countries in the region to record a deterioration in score in 2023, resulting in Pakistan being the highest scored country in the region for the first time since 2014. Over the past decade all countries within the region have improved significantly, with the exception of Sri Lanka which deteriorated slightly.

Nepal recorded the largest improvement in score in the region, with the country recording no attacks or deaths for the first time since 2012. Followed closely by Sri Lanka which was the second most improved country in terms of the impact of terrorism, recording no attacks and no deaths for the fourth consecutive year in 2023.

Afghanistan recorded the largest improvement in the world and is no longer ranked at the top of the index. In 2023, Afghanistan recorded an 81 per cent decline in terrorism deaths, from 638 to 119. Attacks mirrored this trend, falling by 70 per cent from 231 to 67. This continued and significant decline in attacks and deaths was driven by the Taliban reclaiming control over Afghanistan following the fall of Kabul in August 2021. The GTI does not include acts of repression and violence by state actors and, as such, acts committed by the Taliban are no longer included in the scope of the report.

Pakistan is now the most impacted country in the region and experienced a continued increase in incidents and deaths since 2019. When compared with the previous year, Pakistan saw the number of attacks increase by 34 per cent from 365 to 490 attacks. Similarly, the number of deaths rose by 35 per cent from 509 to 689 deaths in 2023. However, Pakistan improved substantially compared to a decade ago. The number of dead and injured has declined by 54 and 66 per cent respectively.

Sub-Saharan Africa

TABLE 2.10

Sub-Saharan Africa GTI score, rank and change in score, 2013–2023

Country	Overall Score	Overall Rank	Change 2013-2023	Change 2022-2023
Burkina Faso	8.571	1	8.571	0.410
Mali	7.998	3	2.943	0.015
Somalia	7.814	7	0.527	-0.233
Nigeria	7.575	8	-0.322	-0.005
Niger	7.274	10	4.585	0.221
Cameroon	6.980	12	5.099	0.230
Democratic Republic of the Congo	6.514	13	1.648	0.324
Mozambique	6.267	15	4.420	-0.461
Kenya	5.616	18	-0.686	0.196
Chad	4.987	21	4.820	-0.375
Benin	4.898	24	4.898	0.693
Togo	4.670	25	4.670	0.749
Uganda	4.377	27	1.524	1.931
Burundi	2.434	40	-0.596	-0.654
Tanzania	2.267	42	1.547	-0.685
Angola	2.254	43	1.622	2.224
Côte d'Ivoire	2.060	46	-0.804	-0.660
Djibouti	2.035	48	2.035	-0.630

Central African Republic	1.445	59	-0.921	-0.572
Ethiopia	1.272	62	-2.281	-0.586
Eswatini	0.180	82	0.180	-0.153
Rwanda	0.114	85	-3.255	-0.103
Botswana	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Republic of the Congo	0.000	89	-0.087	0.000
Eritrea	0.000	89	-1.305	0.000
Gabon	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Ghana	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Guinea	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
The Gambia	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Guinea-Bissau	0.000	89	-0.720	0.000
Equatorial Guinea	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Liberia	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Lesotho	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Madagascar	0.000	89	-1.321	0.000
Mauritania	0.000	89	-1.432	-0.059
Mauritius	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Malawi	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Namibia	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Senegal	0.000	89	-0.648	-0.333
Sierra Leone	0.000	89	-0.782	0.000
South Sudan	0.000	89	-2.607	0.000
South Africa	0.000	89	0.000	-0.217
Zambia	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Zimbabwe	0.000	89	0.000	0.000
Regional Average			0.712	0.029

The average GTI score deteriorated slightly in sub-Saharan Africa in 2023. Of the 28 countries that recorded a deterioration globally between 2022-2023, ten were in the sub-Saharan region, and five of ten countries most impacted by terrorism in 2023 are in sub-Saharan Africa. However, there is a high degree of variance in terrorist activity in the region, with 15 countries recording improvements in score. In total, 22 countries in the region have a GTI score of zero, meaning that they have not recorded a single terrorist incident in the past five years.

Terrorist attacks in the region dropped to 1,205, compared to 1,368 in 2022, a decrease of 12 per cent. Despite the number of attacks decreasing, the number of deaths rose by 21 per cent to 4,916 in 2023, compared to 4,066 the year prior, indicating an increase in the lethality of attacks across the region.

Burkina Faso, Niger, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda had the largest increase in the number of people killed in terrorist attacks. Burkina Faso had the largest increase in deaths from terrorism, rising by 68 per cent when compared to 2022, with the number of terrorism deaths increasing to 1,907 in 2023. This is the highest terrorism death toll recorded globally this year, resulting in Burkina Faso being the worst

ranked country on the GTI in 2023. In 2023, 59 per cent of deaths were attributed to either unknown groups or to unspecified jihadist groups. The remaining 41 per cent were attributed to either JNIM or IS. The increase in terrorist activity in Burkina Faso is part of a larger increase across the Sahel region, with similar surges seen in Niger and Mali over the past few years.

Angola recorded the largest deterioration in GTI score in the region within the last year, after experiencing the country's first attack since 2018 and its first terrorist related deaths since 2010. Three soldiers and two Brazilian civilians were killed in an armed attack on a military vehicle in May 2023. The Front for the Liberation of Cabinda Enclave claimed responsibility.¹¹

Uganda experienced the second largest deterioration in GTI score in the region in 2023, after having recorded no attacks nor deaths in the previous year. The country saw a resurgence in terrorism by the Islamic State which carried out all five attacks and was responsible for all 42 deaths this year. 37 of those deaths occurred in an attack at Lhubiriha secondary school in Mpondwe town on 16 June. The victims included students and staff at the school.¹²

Benin and Togo also recorded significant continued deteriorations in their scores in 2023, driven by the spread of jihadist extremist activity from the neighbouring Sahel region. All 35 attacks and 90 deaths that occurred in Benin and Togo in

2023 were attributed to Islamic extremist groups including JNIM and ISWA.

Despite slightly improving in GTI score in 2023, Mali has the second highest impact of terrorism in the region. Attacks and deaths within the country fell by seven and 20 per cent respectively, with 253 incidents and 753 deaths. Mali faces many of the same issues as Burkina Faso and Niger, with JNIM being the most prominent terrorist group in the country.

Tanzania was the most improved country in the region in 2023, with the country recording zero incidents for the second consecutive year. Burundi and Côte d'Ivoire also recorded no incidents for the second year in a row, and Rwanda which recorded no incidents for the fourth consecutive year.

Burkina Faso had the largest increase in deaths from terrorism, rising by 68 per cent when compared to 2022, with the number of terrorism deaths increasing to 1,907 in 2023.

Terrorism is a unique threat not because it kills the most people, but because it has the greatest potential psychological and social impact.



After the October 7th attacks in Israel, support for the peace process and two-state solution collapsed, and rates of worry, sadness, and stress all more than doubled.

2007

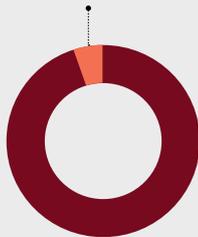
139

2023

25

Most terrorist groups do not last very long. Of the 139 groups that were active in 2007, just 25 were still active in 2023. Over 44 per cent of groups last two years or less.

80%



Deaths from terrorism are not evenly distributed across attacks. Eighty per cent of deaths from terrorism occurred from the top 18 per cent of attacks.

80%



Deaths from terrorism at the group level are even more unevenly distributed. Just 11 terrorist groups were responsible for 80 per cent of all deaths from terrorism since 2007.

51% ↓

Terrorist groups that disband are not being replaced with new groups at the same rate. The total number of active terrorist groups has fallen 51 per cent since 2007.



For Positive Peace, Acceptance of the Rights of Others had the strongest correlation for both OECD and non-OECD countries.

Negative Peace

Terrorism is correlated with measures of both negative peace, such as the Global Peace Index, and Positive Peace. All three GPI domains and seven of the eight PPI pillars correlate with the Global Terrorism Index.



Terrorism and Risk

9x
Armed Conflict

45x
Homicide

Terrorism kills far fewer people than other forms of violence. Armed conflict kills nine times as many people as terrorism, and homicide kills over 45 times as many people.

3 Properties of Terrorism

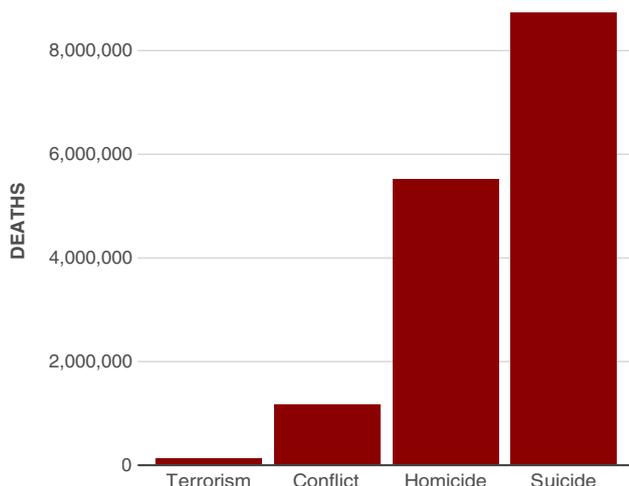
The Properties of Terrorism

TERRORISM AND RISK

When looked at in terms of the total number of deaths, the absolute level of terrorism is much lower than other forms of violence. Figure 3.1 shows the total number of fatalities from 2008 to 2021 for four different kinds of violence: terrorism, armed conflict, homicide, and suicide. Between 2008 and 2021 there were just under 120,000 deaths from terrorism. By contrast, over 1.1 million people were killed in armed conflict, over 5.5 million people were murdered, and 8.7 million people took their own lives. While there is likely to be some overlap between these different forms of violence, there is a clear difference in the scope of the absolute threat posed by each of them.

FIGURE 3.1
Total deaths from terrorism, conflict, homicide, and suicide, 2008–2021

Total deaths from terrorism were much lower than other forms of violence.



Source: UCDP, UNODC, GBD, WPP, Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

It should be noted however, that the relative threat of terrorism varies significantly across countries. For example, the median ratio of homicides to terrorism deaths over the period 2008–2021 at the country level is 148:1, meaning that there are 148

homicides to every one death for terrorism. However, there are ten countries where this ratio is lower than 10:1, and in Burkina Faso the ratio is 0.88, meaning that there were more deaths from terrorism than homicide recorded over this period, although this may be due in part to a lack of reporting of homicide.

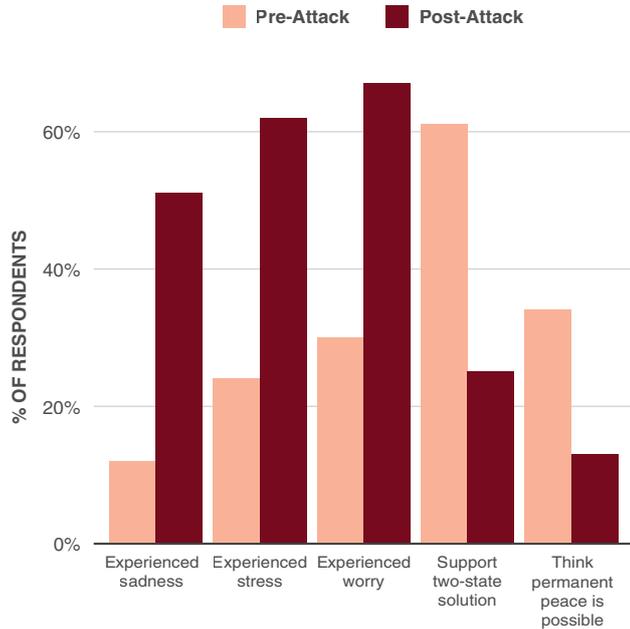
Although terrorism is not the most devastating form of violence in terms of overall deaths, it has several properties which make it an especially impactful form of violence. Firstly, the distribution of deaths from terrorism is ‘fat-tailed’, meaning that outlier events make up a disproportionately large amount of total deaths. Whilst there will rarely be more than one or two people killed in a homicide incident, large scale terrorist attacks can kill hundreds, even thousands of people in a single event. Furthermore, unlike battles or other conflict events which usually happen amidst ongoing high levels of violence, large scale terrorist attacks can occur even when the levels of other forms of violence are low. Terrorist attacks on public targets are designed to invoke fear and create chaos, leading to high levels of media coverage which in turn amplify the effect of the attack.¹

An example of the tremendous psychological impact that terrorist attacks can have, is seen in Figure 3.2, which shows public attitudes and emotions experienced by Israelis both before and after the October 7th attacks. The number of people who reported experiencing feelings of sadness, stress, and worry rose dramatically, with sadness rising from 12 per cent to 51 per cent, stress rising from 24 per cent to 62 per cent, and worry rising from 30 per cent to 67 per cent. Similarly, attitudes towards the possibility of peace fell dramatically, with support for a two-state solution dropping from 61 per cent to 25 per cent, and the percentage of respondents who felt that a permanent peace was possible dropping from 34 per cent to 13 per cent. Other polls have found strong levels of support amongst Israelis for the use of high levels of retaliatory force in Gaza after the attacks.²

FIGURE 3.2

Attitudes in Israel before and immediately after the October 7th attacks

Support for peace has collapsed, while negative emotions have increased dramatically.



Source: Gallup

The change in public attitudes and emotions in Israel is consistent with findings elsewhere on the unique risk that terrorism poses to society. Terrorist attacks have a large negative impact on public emotions,³ and can lead to increased support for fringe or extremist political parties.⁴ This heightened emotional response will not usually last long, but it does create a window after a large-scale terrorist attack in which more people will support the use of force.⁵

Terrorism also poses a unique risk because terrorist attacks are ‘contagious’. Terrorist attacks tend to occur in bursts over short time periods and in small areas.⁶ Successful terrorist attacks can also spur retaliatory attacks in other parts of the world. For example, it has been alleged that the Sri Lankan church and hotel bombings that killed 321 people were in direct response to the Christchurch mosque shootings, which killed 51 people.⁷

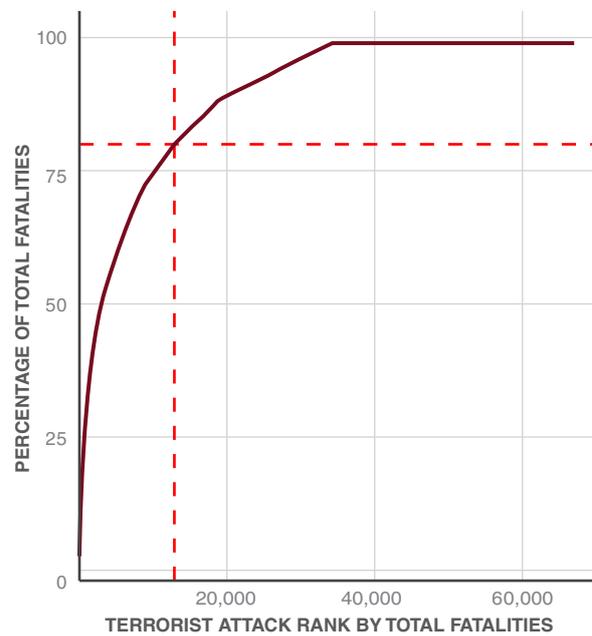
TERRORIST ATTACKS

Almost half of all terrorist attacks result in no fatalities at all, with a further 22 per cent resulting in just a single fatality. Almost 96 per cent of all terrorist attacks result in fewer than ten fatalities. The rareness of high fatality terrorist attacks means that deaths from terrorism have a Pareto distribution, where 80 per cent of deaths from terrorism result from just under 20 per cent of attacks, as shown in Figure 3.3. Even though large-scale terrorist attacks are rare, their impact can be several orders of magnitude higher than the median terrorist attack.

FIGURE 3.3

Pareto distribution of deaths from terrorism, 2007–2023

80 per cent of deaths from terrorism came from just 18.4 per cent of attacks



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

While large-scale terrorist attacks aren't common, they happen often enough that they can't necessarily be called "black swans," which are extremely rare and unpredictable events. The number of deaths from terrorism fits a certain pattern, showing that as the number of deaths in an attack increases, the number of such deadly attacks decreases, but in a predictable way, as shown in Figure 3.4.

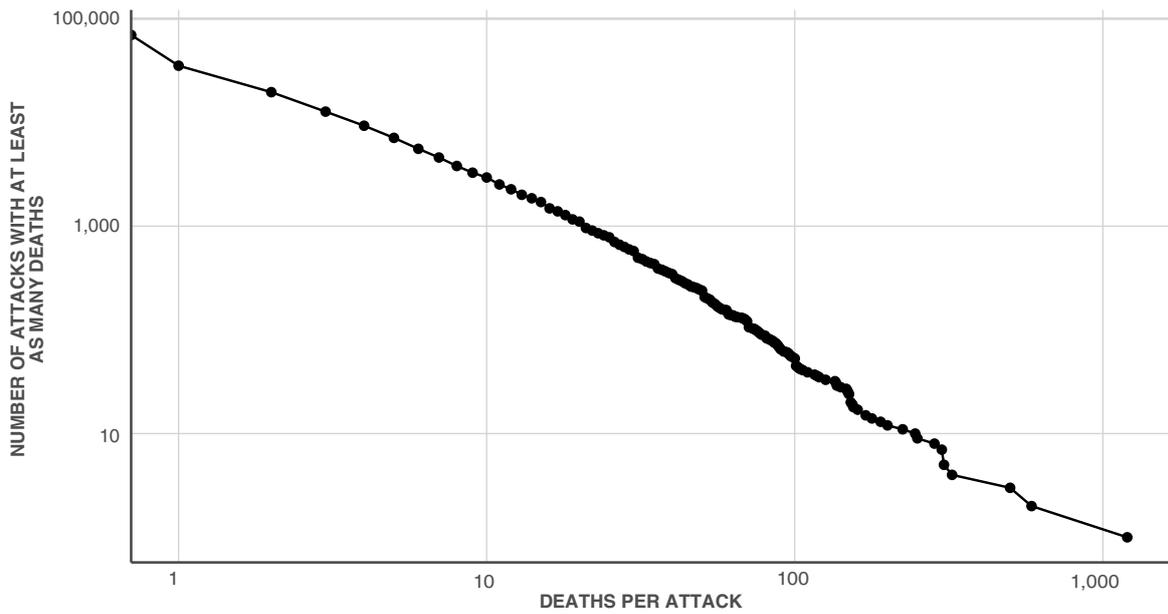
From 2007 to 2023, about 30,000 attacks killed at least one person, but only one attack killed more than a thousand. This pattern means big attacks can be somewhat anticipated, unlike true "black swan" events. Based on terrorism data from 1970 to 2011, an attack that killed more than one thousand people should be expected around every 22 years, which is almost exactly the gap between 9/11 and the October 7th attacks.⁸ However, the exact timing or location of any attack is still extremely difficult to predict.

Almost half of all terrorist attacks result in no fatalities at all, with a further 22 per cent resulting in just a single fatality. Almost 96 per cent of all terrorist attacks result in fewer than ten fatalities.

FIGURE 3.4

Distribution of Deaths from Terrorism, 2007–2023

There is a linear relationship between events and deaths, when viewed on a log-log scale.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

Although large-scale terrorist attacks might be expected when looking at the global level, at the national level they can be classified as a black swan event. Figure 3.5 shows the same log-log distribution of events and deaths for Burkina Faso and Israel. In Burkina Faso, the number of events shows the expected relationship with deaths per event, with only two attacks that resulted in more than a hundred fatalities. By contrast, Israel's trend line shows just how much of an outlier the October 7th attack was, with no previous attack between 1970 and 2022 having killed more than 100 people.

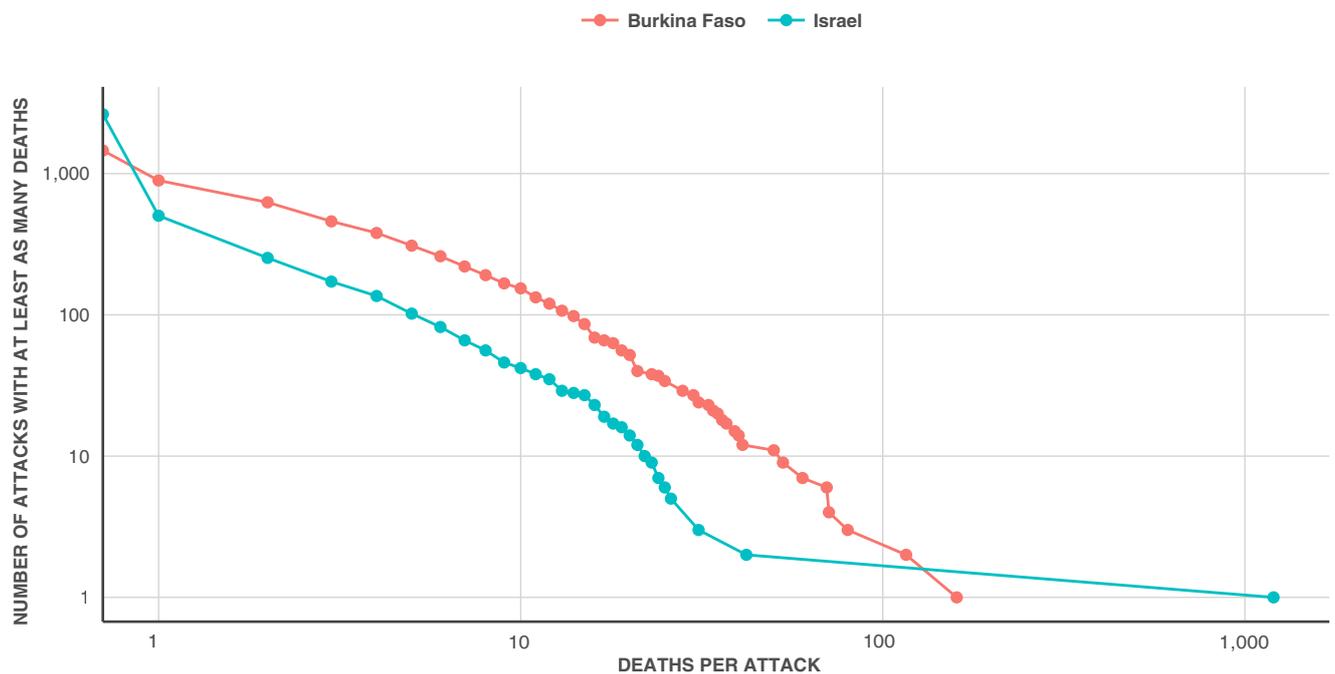
TERRORIST GROUPS

Deaths from terrorism at the group level have an even more extreme distribution than at the event level, as shown in Figure 3.6. Just 11 terrorist groups were responsible for over 80 per cent of all attributed deaths from terrorism between 2007 and 2023. Of the 407 named groups with at least one terrorist incident, 122 were not responsible for a single fatality, with a further 144 groups being responsible for less than ten deaths.

FIGURE 3.5

Distribution of deaths from terrorism in Burkina Faso and Israel

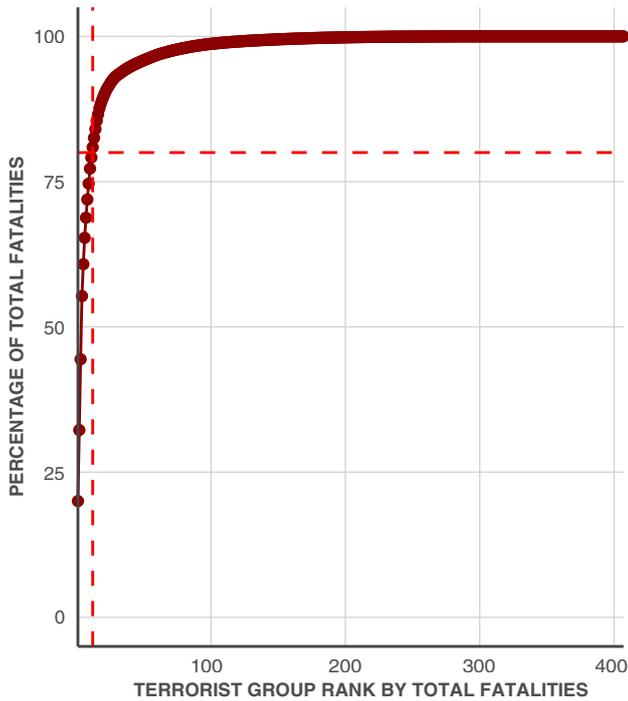
The attack on October 7th 2023 in Israel was a major outlier.



Source: Global Terrorism Database, Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

FIGURE 3.6
Pareto Distribution of Deaths by Group, 2007–2023

Just eleven terrorist groups were responsible for 80 per cent of deaths from terrorism.



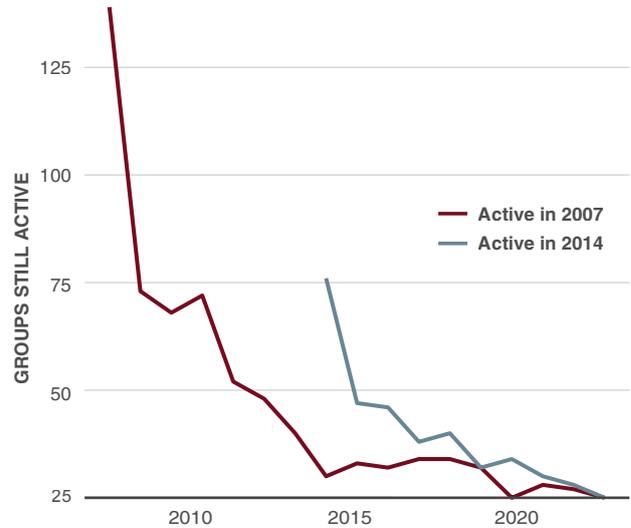
Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

One reason for the highly unequal distribution of deaths across terrorist groups is that most terrorist groups do not tend to last very long. Most terrorist groups end by either evolving into political organisations or being broken up by policing and military counter-terrorism operations. Only ten per cent of terrorist groups end because they have achieved their stated goals.⁹

The failure of most terrorist groups to survive for very long is shown in Figure 3.7, which plots the survival rates for terrorist groups that were active in 2007, and also terrorist groups that were active in 2014. In 2007, there were 139 groups that recorded at least one terrorist attack. However, by 2008 only 73 of these groups recorded an attack, and only 25 were still active in 2023, an 82 per cent reduction in active groups. The reduction in size is similar for groups who were active in 2014, when the level of terrorism was much higher than in 2007. Of the 76 groups that were active in 2014, only 47 were still active a year later, with 25 still being active in 2023. Overall, the median active lifespan of a terrorist group from 2007 to 2023 was three years, with 44 per cent of groups lasting two years or less.

FIGURE 3.7
Terrorist groups survival rate, 2007–2023

Just 25 of the 139 terrorist groups that were active in 2007 were still active in 2023.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

There are several reasons why the survival rate for terrorist groups is so low. Many groups never grow large enough to sustain their operations over the longer run, and so their operations are easily disrupted by the police or military. Terrorist groups are also constantly changing form as they make and break alliances with other groups, shifting allegiances, or are broken up and reform under different names. There may also be a tendency for smaller groups to become part of larger organisations, in order to have access to more resources.

The intensification of terrorism into fewer groups operating across fewer countries can be seen in Figure 3.8, which shows the total number of active terrorist groups active each year by ideology. The number of groups with at least one attack in any given year has fallen considerably since 2007. At the peak of group activity in 2009 there were 141 active groups, but by 2023 this number had fallen to 66.

The fall in the number of active groups is consistent across ideological types, with the number of active nationalist groups falling by 46 per cent, nationalist/religious groups falling by 57 per cent, religious groups falling by 48 per cent, and political groups falling by 62 per cent. The fall in the number of groups is not correlated with either the number of total terrorist incidents or the number of deaths.

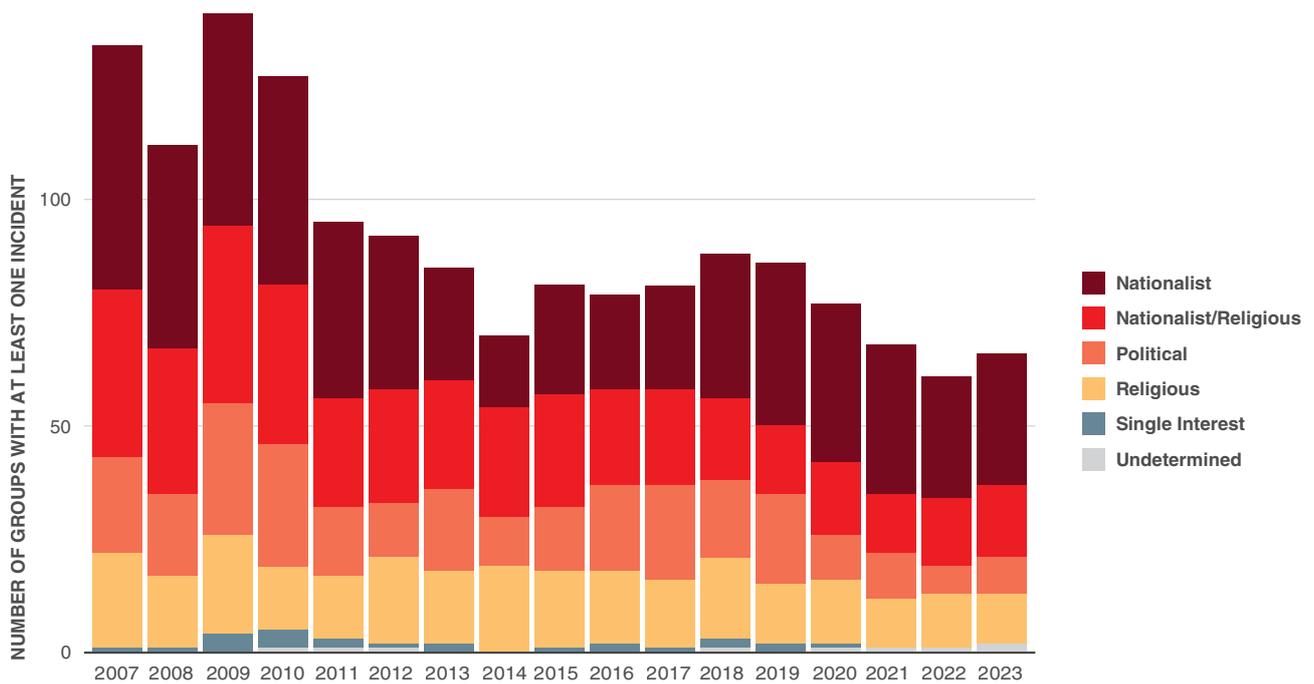
The majority of terrorist attacks lack sufficient information to be attributed to a specific group. Between 2007 and 2023, just under 57 per cent of terrorist attacks were not attributed to any specific group. Some attacks are simply listed as ‘unknown’, whilst others are attributed to a broad category like ‘unknown jihadists’, rather than a specific terrorist group.

There is significant year on year variation in this figure, ranging from 35 per cent being unattributed in 2009, to 79 per cent of attacks being unattributed in 2013. The high level of unattributed attacks means that the total number of deaths

FIGURE 3.8

Number of active terrorist groups by year

The number of active groups has fallen by 50 per cent since 2007.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

certain terrorist groups are responsible for is likely to be much higher than the officially attributed figure.

It's possible to try and attribute these unknown attacks using a machine learning (ML) model. The results of one such model are shown in Figure 3.9, for the seven terrorist groups with the highest number of attributed deaths between 2007 and 2023. The model incorporates a number of factors like target type, weapon type, incident location and date, number of people killed in the attack, and so on. The model is then trained on all terrorist incidents where the perpetrator is known, and then applied to the set of incidents where the perpetrator is listed as either 'unknown' or 'unknown jihadists'.

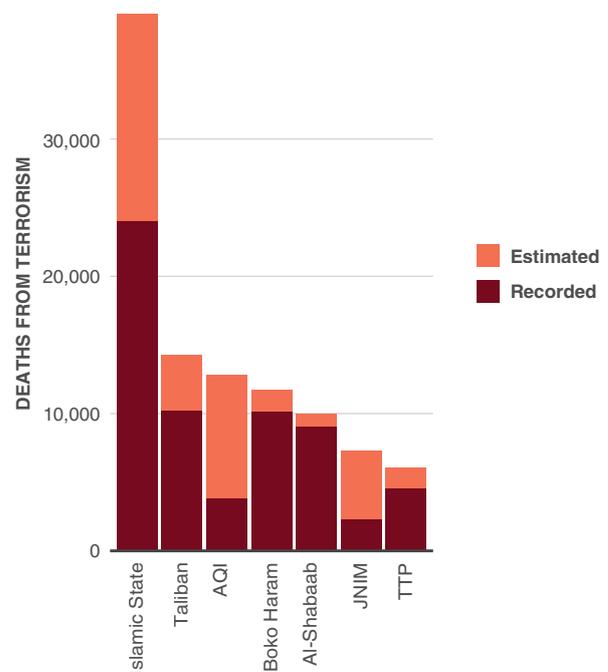
Applying the model leads to a large increase in the number of deaths attributed to certain groups. For example, the total number of deaths attributed to Islamic State would increase from just over 24,000 to just over 39,000, an increase of 62 per cent. The largest percentage increase for any group would be for AQI, whose estimated deaths would have increased 239 per cent. Deaths attributed to JNIM would also increase substantially, up 219 per cent.

While the results of the model should not be taken as definitive, they do give a broad indication of the possible range of additional deaths that could be attributed to a certain group. For example, the number of deaths that could be attributed to JNIM most likely ranges between 2,276 and 7,283. The model is also more likely to be accurate for groups with larger number of attributed attacks and deaths, but is much less accurate at attributing attacks to groups with only a small number of attacks or deaths.

FIGURE 3.9

Estimated deaths from terrorism by group, 2007–2023

Deaths attributed to Islamic State, AQI, and JNIM are much lower than the estimated total.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

The Correlates of Terrorism

The drivers of terrorism are complex and vary across regions and over time. Terrorism occurs across all kinds of contexts, and also does not occur in countries where other forms of violence are rampant. As such, certain factors which are known to be correlated with other types of violence and insecurity like overall poverty levels are not correlated with terrorism.

This section looks at the relationship between terrorism and indicators from the Global Peace Index (GPI) and the Positive Peace Index (PPI). The GPI is the world's leading measure of peacefulness, and comprises 23 indicators of violence and the fear of violence across three domains: Societal safety and security, ongoing conflict, and militarisation. Correlating the GTI against the GPI reveals which other types of violence and conflict are associated with terrorism.

The PPI measures Positive Peace, defined as the *attitudes, institutions, and structures* which create and sustain peaceful societies. The PPI consists of eight pillars: *Well-functioning Government, Sound Business Environment, Equitable Distribution of Resources, Low Levels of Corruption, Acceptance of the Rights of Others, High Levels of Human Capital, Good Relations with Neighbours, and Free Flow of Information*. Correlating the GTI against these Pillars of Positive Peace reveals which areas should be addressed in order to have the best chance of reducing the impact of terrorism.

Previous research from IEP⁵⁰ has revealed that many of the factors which correlate with terrorism vary significantly across economically developed and developing countries. Addressing terrorism in these different contexts therefore requires different

strategies. To best capture this difference, this section looks at the factors associated with terrorism at three levels: for the world as a whole; for countries in the OECD as a proxy for high levels of economic development; and for all countries outside the OECD. As there are different numbers of countries in each of these three groupings, the significance threshold is slightly different for each. In the tables in this section, any correlation marked in red is statistically significant.

In OECD member countries, socio-economic factors such as youth unemployment, military expenditure, lack of confidence in the press and lower inequality-adjusted life expectancy correlate significantly with the GTI. In non-OECD countries, factors such as a history of internal violence, internal conflict, friction with neighbouring countries, and corruption were more significantly correlated with the GTI than in OECD countries.

There are commonalities between OECD and non-OECD countries. Globally, higher levels of political terror, lower respect for human rights, higher levels of militarisation, the existence of policies targeting religious freedoms, group grievances and political instability all correlate with higher levels of terrorism.

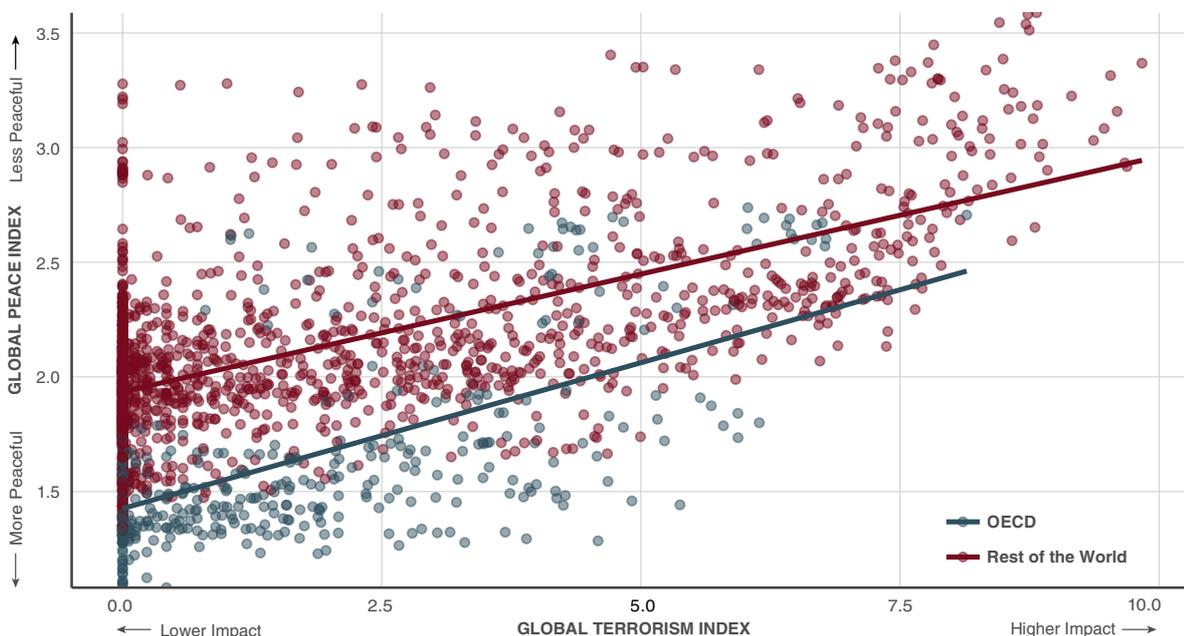
TERRORISM AND THE GLOBAL PEACE INDEX

The correlation between the GTI overall score and the GPI overall score is shown in Figure 3.10. OECD countries have lower levels of terrorism and higher levels of peacefulness on average. Peacefulness is strongly correlated with the impact of terrorism at the global level ($r = 0.59$), and also for both OECD and non-OECD countries.

FIGURE 3.10

GTI Overall Score vs GPI Overall Score ($r = 0.59$)

Peacefulness and terrorism are strongly correlated across every country in the world.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

Peacefulness is also correlated with terrorism across the majority of GPI indicators, as shown in Table 3.1. All three GPI domains are strongly correlated with terrorism across all three groups. However, *ongoing conflict* is much more strongly correlated outside of the OECD ($r = 0.7$) than amongst just OECD countries ($r = 0.36$).

TABLE 3.1
Correlation between the Global Terrorism Index and Global Peace Index indicators

All three GPI domains are strongly correlated with terrorism across all three country groupings.

Global Peace Index domains	All countries	OECD	Rest of the world
Overall Score	0.59	0.62	0.64
Ongoing Conflict	0.64	0.35	0.7
Safety and Security	0.46	0.53	0.51
Militarisation	0.35	0.58	0.3
Global Peace Index indicators			
Deaths from Internal Conflict	0.71	0.26	0.76
Internal Conflicts Fought	0.63	0.24	0.68
Internal Peace	0.57	0.53	0.65
Political Terror Scale	0.54	0.52	0.59
Intensity of Internal Conflict	0.54	0.46	0.59
Violent Demonstrations	0.43	0.38	0.44
External Peace	0.42	0.5	0.4
Nuclear and Heavy Weapons	0.32	0.51	0.31
Political Instability	0.32	0.16	0.36
Refugees and IDPs	0.31	0.46	0.29
Access to Small Arms	0.3	0.49	0.28

Violent Crime	0.3	0.36	0.29
Neighbouring Countries Relations	0.3	-0.06	0.36
Military Expenditure (% GDP)	0.22	0.47	0.19
Deaths from External Conflict	0.17	0.25	0.16
External Conflicts Fought	0.11	0.22	0.11
Weapons Exports	0.07	0.33	0.04
Perceptions of Criminality	0.05	0.23	-0.01
UN Peacekeeping Funding	0.05	0.06	0.02
Homicide Rate	0.01	0.28	-0.07
Armed Services Personnel Rate	-0.02	0.31	-0.08
Weapons Imports	-0.03	0.07	-0.04
Police Rate	-0.05	0.11	-0.07
Incarceration Rate	-0.12	0.22	-0.17

Source: IEP

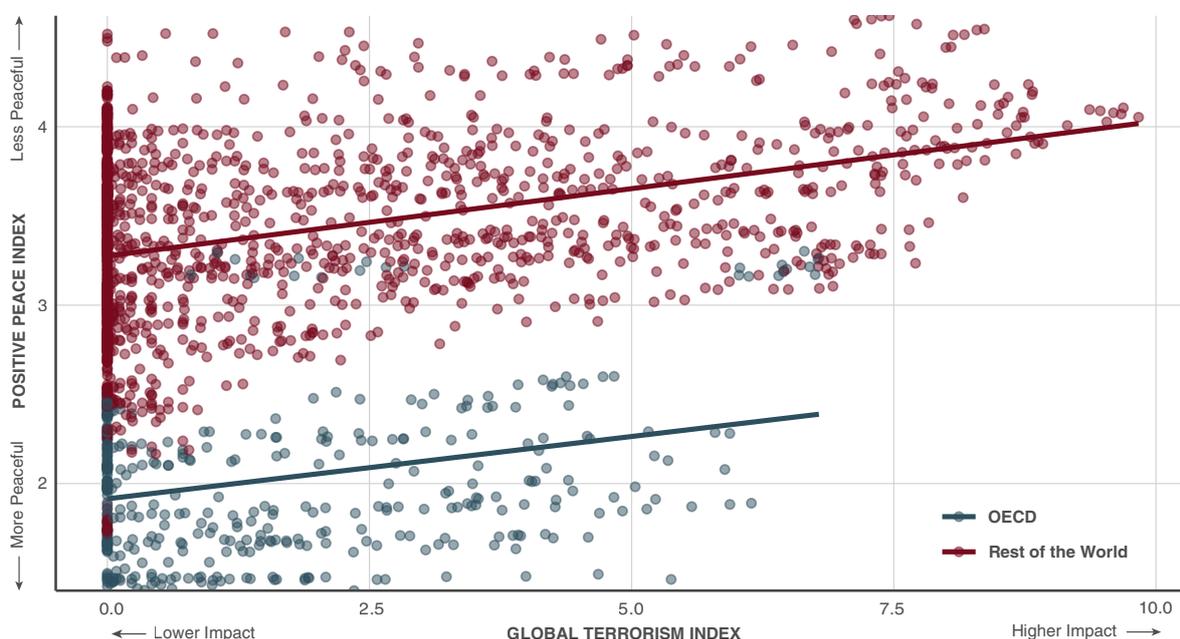
There are several differences between the country groupings at the indicator level. In less economically developed countries, indicators of *ongoing conflict* and *safety and security* are very strongly correlated with terrorism, most notably the *deaths from internal conflict*, *internal conflicts fought*, and *political terror scale* indicators. This shows that it is not just the presence of conflict, but also the intensity of conflict and the level of government repression that are the most significant predictors of the presence of terrorism.

Terrorism and Positive Peace

The correlation between the GTI and the PPI overall score is shown in Figure 3.11. There is a statistically significant correlation between terrorism and Positive Peace ($r = 0.29$). The correlation is stronger for non-OECD countries, and falls just

FIGURE 3.11
GTI Overall Score vs PPI Overall Score ($r = 0.29$)

Positive Peace is more strongly correlated with terrorism in countries outside of the OECD.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

below the significance threshold for OECD countries. There is a clear clustering of countries between the OECD and non-OECD groups, with only a small handful of OECD countries having a Positive Peace score considered high, and conversely very few non-OECD countries have a Positive Peace score considered low, which would indicate very high levels of Positive Peace. In this context high is considered less peaceful and low considered more peaceful.

Almost all of the Positive Peace domains are correlated with the impact of terrorism, as shown in Table 3.2. The only one of the eight Pillars of Positive Peace that is not correlated is *Sound Business Environment*. The strongest correlation between Positive Peace and terrorism is on the *Acceptance of the Rights of Others* Pillar. Countries that enforce formal laws that guarantee basic human rights and freedoms, and also have informal social and cultural norms that promote the rights of others, are more likely to have a much lower impact of terrorism.

TABLE 3.2

Correlation between the Global Terrorism Index and Positive Peace Index Domains and Themes

Acceptance of the Rights of Others is the pillar of Positive Peace that is most strongly correlated with low levels of terrorism.

Positive Peace Index domains	All countries	OECD	Rest of the world
PPI Overall Score	0.29	0.29	0.38
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	0.4	0.5	0.46
Good Relations with Neighbours	0.32	0.29	0.39
Low Levels of Corruption	0.3	0.24	0.41
Free Flow of Information	0.28	0.41	0.32
Equitable Distribution of Resources	0.28	0.39	0.3
Well-Functioning Government	0.24	0.16	0.29
High Levels of Human Capital	0.21	0.28	0.22
Sound Business Environment	0.14	-0.06	0.19
Positive Peace Index themes			
Attitudes	0.37	0.5	0.46
Structures	0.24	0.25	0.27
Institutions	0.24	0.13	0.32

Source: IEP

There are several differences between OECD and non-OECD countries with regards to Positive Peace and terrorism. Seven of the eight Pillars and all three of the thematic areas on the PPI correlate with the impact of terrorism in both non-OECD countries and for the world as a whole. Corruption is much more strongly correlated with terrorism in non-OECD countries, than at either the OECD or global level.

Just three of the eight Pillars are correlated with terrorism in OECD countries. Neither *Well-Functioning Government* nor *Low Levels of Corruption* are correlated, although levels of Positive Peace in these domains are much higher in OECD countries compared to non-OECD countries. This suggests that once a baseline level of government effectiveness has been reached, with corruption below a certain threshold, additional improvements on these domains do not reduce the risk of terrorism any further.

There is a clear correlation between the impact of terrorism and the level of organised criminal activity. This correlation is particularly strong in certain areas, like the Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa.



In Mali, cattle rustling has significantly increased due to escalating conflict and a campaign by IS-Sahel in late 2022 to expand their territory.

2017

78

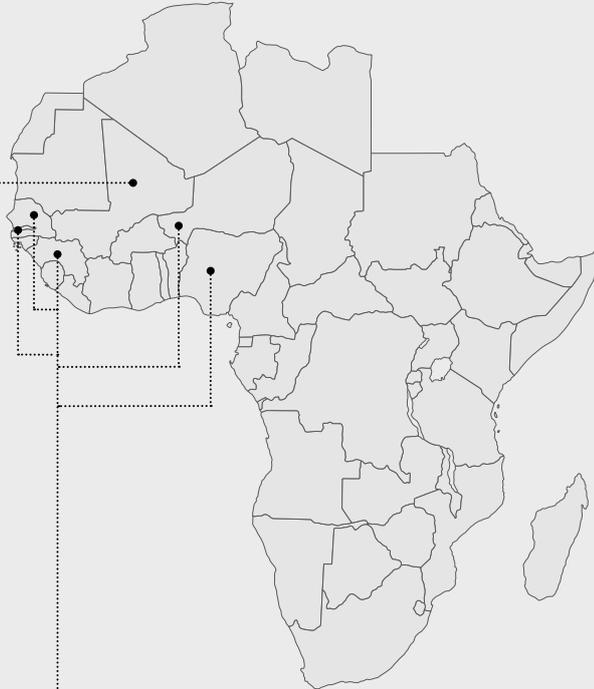


2023

1,000



Kidnapping has surged in the Sahel, with incidents increasing from 78 in 2017 to over 1,000 in 2023.



The nexus between organised crime and terrorism in the Sahel is characterised by activities such as cattle and livestock rustling, artisanal gold mining, drug trafficking, kidnapping, and ransom demands.



Terrorist organisations like JNIM in the Sahel often increase violent attacks, kidnappings, and ransom activities during phases of territorial expansion or competition.

Drug trafficking is also prevalent, involving cannabis in Gambia, Guinea, and Nigeria, opioids in Niger, and cocaine in Senegal.



Terrorist groups and organised crime organisations usually interact in three ways: they can coexist, cooperate, or converge into a single group.



Areas with contested territorial control typically experience higher levels of violence, including terror attacks.

4 Terrorism and Organised Crime in the Sahel

Introduction

There is a clear relationship between the impact of terrorism and the level of organised criminal activity. Criminal activity, the prevalence of criminal markets, human smuggling, arms trafficking, and the presence of established criminal networks all correlate significantly with the Global Terrorism Index. This relationship is summarised in Figure 4.1, which shows the correlation between the overall GTI score and the Organised Crime Index. The correlation is significant at the global level ($r = 0.4$), but is much stronger in certain regions, like the Sahel ($r = 0.81$)

As terrorism remains a relatively rare form of violence, while organised crime is more widespread, the relationship between the two is somewhat one-sided. There are many countries with high levels of organised crime that experience no or very little impact of terrorism. However, in countries with a high impact of terrorism, there is almost always a significant organised criminal presence. This can be seen in Figure 4.2, which shows the geographic distribution of terrorism and organised crime. Countries shaded in orange have higher than average levels of organised crime, while countries in dark red have a higher-than-average impact of both terrorism and organised crime.

FIGURE 4.1

Impact of terrorism vs organised crime, 2023

Countries with a higher impact of terrorism tend to have higher levels of organised crime.

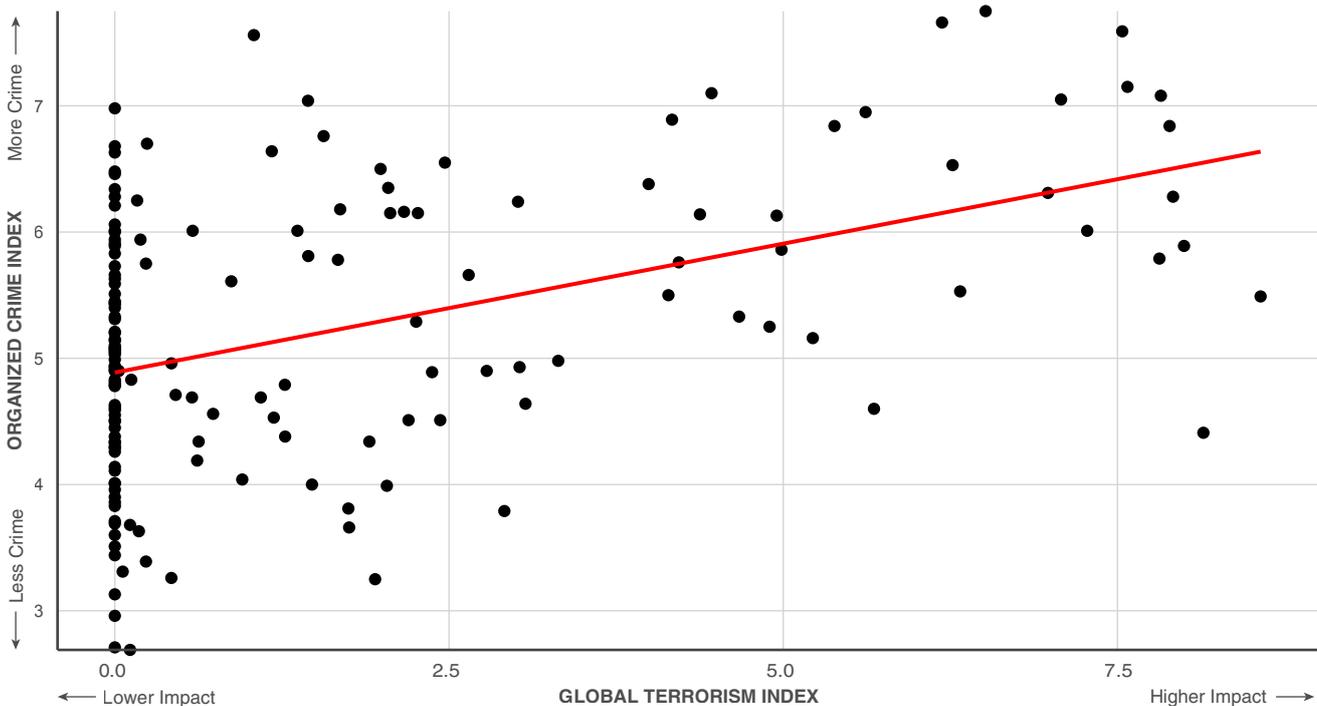
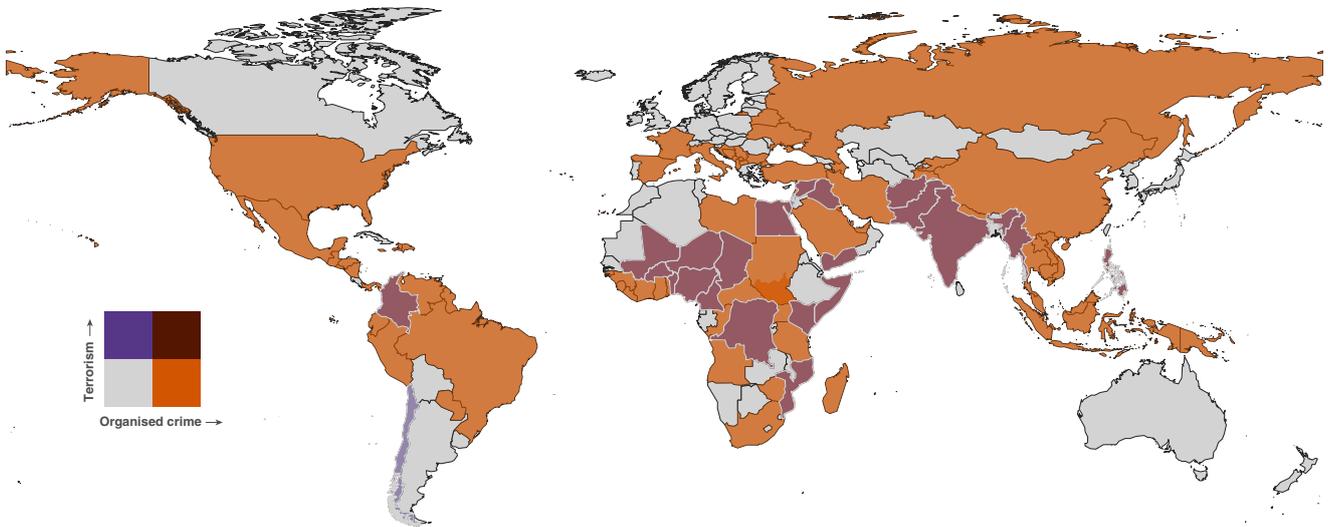


FIGURE 4.2

Terrorism and organised crime across the world

Organised crime and terrorist groups frequently operate in overlapping areas.



The relationship between organised crime, illegal economies, and violent extremist groups is complicated and varies across regions and contexts. Many violent extremists, non-state armed groups, and even some state actors, take over and run or help run criminal organisations to gain wealth and power. The revenue they make from these illegal activities is crucial for gaining or keeping control over areas or people. Therefore, fighting for control over these activities can greatly influence conflict dynamics. In most cases of terrorist organisations mentioned in the Global Terrorism Index, there has been some connection to illegal criminal activities, either locally or as part of an international organised crime network. This relationship is commonly known as the ‘Crime-Terror’ nexus.

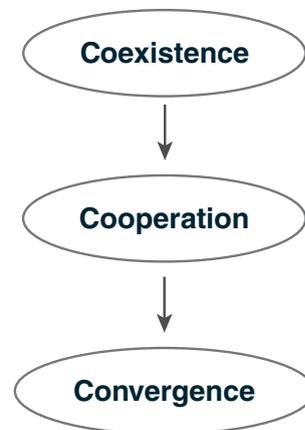
Although the way in which the ‘Crime-Terror’ nexus operates can vary greatly across different contexts, there are three consistent types of operational patterns for organised crime and terrorist groups: Coexistence, Cooperation and Convergence, as shown in Figure 4.3:¹

- **Coexistence** refers to both types of groups conducting operations in roughly the same geographic area, their presence may benefit each other but they don’t necessarily work together.
- **Cooperation** involves some level of working together for joint benefits but remaining distinct entities.
- **Convergence** refers to either terrorist or criminal groups taking on the basic elements of each other’s operations. This generally means armed groups directly operating organised criminal enterprises, but it could also refer in rarer circumstances to mergers.

FIGURE 4.3

Types of operational patterns for organised crime and terrorist groups

Organised crime and terrorist groups can co-exist, cooperate, or converge.



Violent extremist groups integrate organised criminal operations into their own strategies in several different ways. Sometimes this involves directly co-opting illicit economies to accumulate resources. However, it could also involve levying taxes for criminal or unregulated illegal enterprises that operate in territory controlled by the group, or providing security to criminal groups who are transporting illicit goods.

There are many examples of terrorist groups engaging with organised crime groups to finance their activities or as part of their logistical operations. In Afghanistan, the Taliban funded a significant proportion of their operations through the cultivation and export of opium poppies for heroin production.

Islamic State was able to generate \$2.9 billion in annual revenue through various illicit means including ransom, forced taxation and oil smuggling from the territory they controlled in Iraq and Syria.² However, while terrorist groups have historically always engaged in some type of criminal activity to fund operations, the need for terrorist groups to engage in criminal activity increased significantly after the September 11 terrorist attacks. State sponsorship of terrorist groups declined significantly following the end of the Cold War and this trend continued during and after the War on Terror owing to increased attention and sanctions placed on state supporters of terror. Terror group actors sought to create new revenue through participation in criminal activity.³

As both organised crime and terrorist groups go to great lengths to conceal their activity, the full scale of terrorist group involvement in criminal activity is hard to measure. It is estimated that between 1970 and 2007 at least a quarter of terrorist groups directly engaged in criminal activity, with groups that control territory up to four times more likely to be involved with various types of crime.⁴ Given the pressure placed on state support of terrorist groups after 2001, this percentage is very likely to have continued to increase.

Cooperation between terrorist groups and organised crime activities is less common than convergence. Between 1998 and 2005 it is estimated that only 12 per cent of terrorist groups

were cooperating with organised crime groups. Terrorist groups that had higher levels of fatalities, alliances with other terrorist groups, or links to drug trafficking were more likely to be cooperating with organised crime groups. Given the changes to the security landscape after the September 11 attacks, this percentage is also likely to have increased since 2005.

Terrorist groups are also more likely to be involved in organised crime in areas with weak state capability. Illicit economic activity is often fundamental to the livelihoods of people living in conflict zones or areas without strong governance. Armed non-state actors, including terrorist groups, can sponsor, enable and maintain that illicit economic activity in order to distribute economic benefits to the population. The presence of a strong illicit economy is directly linked to a greater number of terror attacks and more capable terrorists.⁵ This allows non-state actors to build trust and influence within communities, often providing security and even social services. Where armed extremists groups have popular support they are far more capable of operating within the population, and it becomes far harder to reduce their capabilities over time. Deficits in Positive Peace contribute to a context where terrorism and other forms of political violence can thrive, fuelled in part by illicit economic activity.

TERRORISM AND ORGANISED CRIME IN THE SAHEL

The strength of the link between terrorist group activity and organised crime varies from region to region. The connection is strongest in sub-Saharan Africa, most notably in the Sahel region, where almost every aspect of organised crime is strongly correlated with terrorism. The Sahel is also a region where the countries with the biggest deteriorations in Positive Peace have seen the largest increase in the impact of terrorism, as terrorist groups compete for influence in areas where the state has little or no control. This increase in terrorist activity means that the Sahel is now the site of almost half of all deaths from terrorism globally. The trend in terrorism in the Sahel is shown in Figure 4.4.

While terrorist activity has increased across the entire Sahel region, by far the greatest increase occurred in the Central Sahel: Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, most noticeably in the tri-border area. This section focuses on the connection between organised crime and terrorism in the Central Sahel specifically.

Violence tends to be more intense in areas where different groups – including the state, non-state actors, rebels, and extremists – compete for control. In contrast, areas where one group has established control usually experience less competition and, as a result, might see less visible violence. However, these areas can still have a lot of illegal economic activities and exploitation by the dominant group.

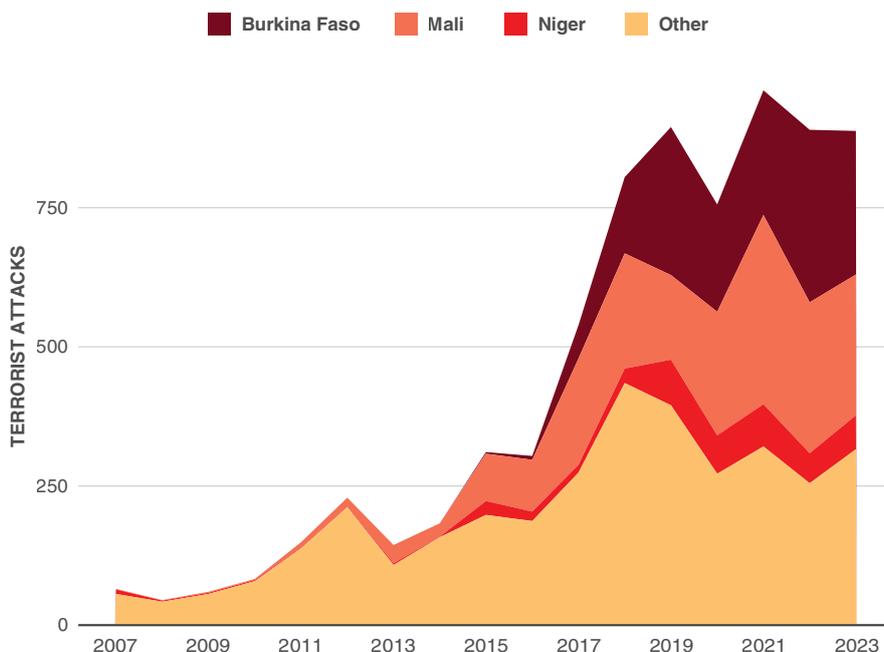
Understanding the full extent of how these illegal activities fund armed groups is challenging, especially when information is scarce or too dangerous to gather. It's also important to note that just because an area is not experiencing violence, doesn't mean armed groups are absent. If they have enough control, they may not need to use violence against civilians as part of their strategy to govern.

This situation is clearly seen with JNIM in the Sahel. They use violence in various ways, escalating attacks when they are expanding or competing with other extremist groups, the state, or pro-government militias. In areas where they have more control, violence tends to decrease as part of a strategy to gain popular support. This approach is believed to be associated with Al Qaeda and its affiliated groups, which have evolved since Osama Bin Laden's leadership. Al Qaeda's affiliated groups in South Asia and Somalia, for example, align with the global ideology of Al Qaeda but mainly focus on local conflicts and communities.⁶ In areas of Central Mopti in Mali where JNIM has entrenched its influence, livestock theft is significantly lower than neighbouring districts where multiple armed actors are also active and in competition for territory.⁷

FIGURE 4.4

Terrorist attacks in the Sahel, 2007–2023

The demise of IS and other groups in the Middle East coincided with the surge in terrorism in the Sahel.



Source: Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations



The nexus between organised crime and terrorism in the Sahel is characterised by activities such as cattle and livestock rustling, artisanal gold mining, drug trafficking, kidnapping, and ransom demands.

While terrorist activity has increased across the entire Sahel region, by far the greatest increase occurred in the Central Sahel: Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, most noticeably in the tri-border area.

Type of Illicit Activity

While terrorist groups are involved in a wide range of illicit economic activity, from human trafficking to poaching to illegal logging, there are four key areas in which they play the biggest role in the Central Sahel:

- Cattle and livestock rustling
- Artisanal gold mining
- Drug trafficking
- Kidnapping and ransoms.

Most of the time, terrorist groups in the Central Sahel don't directly extract, trade, or smuggle illegal goods themselves. Instead, they control the areas where these illegal activities happen and collect taxes from them. These illegal economies have often existed for a long time in places with weak governance. Both state and non-state groups have benefited from, and even coordinated, these activities.

Illegal activities need to be kept secret, so they depend on people within the state to protect them. In countries with weak governments, smuggling networks lead to competition among those who can offer protection and make money from these activities. This competition can cause violence as different groups fight to control the territory, the illegal activities, and the profits. This struggle for control can then lead to instability in the state.⁸

GOLD MINING

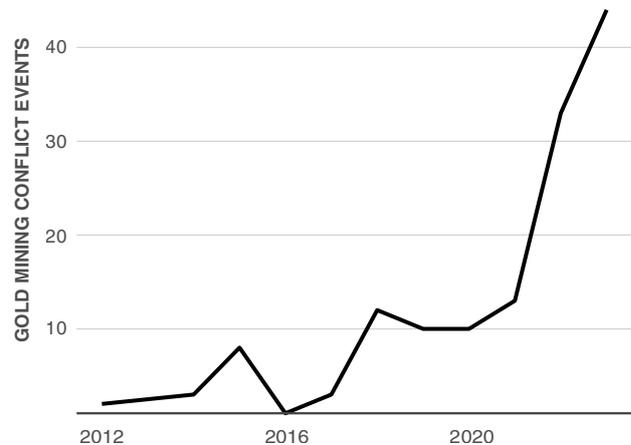
Many forms of conflict, including terrorism, have been strongly linked to artisanal gold mining and smuggling in the Central Sahel ever since the discovery in 2012 of a rich vein of gold spanning much of the Sahel. The rapid expansion of gold mining operations following this discovery has led to strong competition to control these operations. In Burkina Faso alone, artisanal gold mining produces up to 20 tonnes of gold per year,⁹ with an estimated annual value of up to 1.5 billion dollars. Even controlling a small percentage of these operations would greatly expand the resources available to armed extremist groups.¹⁰ Controlling the territory in which gold mining occurs also allows these groups to have much greater influence over the local population.¹¹ As a result of the strategic importance of this territory, there has been a large increase in attacks against gold mining operations in the past three years.

Gold is ideal for illicit smuggling, as it is difficult to trace and highly valuable. Gold from the Central Sahel is often smuggled into Togo before being exported to Dubai, where it is melted down and integrated into legal gold-selling operations, making it untraceable. The government in Burkina Faso announced the closure of artisanal gold sites in 2022, in an attempt to restrict jihadist groups getting access to gold mining revenue. However, it is unclear what effect this may have on access to gold mining. Similar attempts in the past have been counterproductive, as jihadist groups have used closures to gain popular support from local communities that depend on the mines.¹² It is also highly

FIGURE 4.5

Incidents involving gold mining in the Central Sahel region, 2012–2023

Incidents have surged since 2016.



Source: ACLED, IEP Calculations

likely that most of these mines continue to operate in areas where the state no longer has control over territory. The government in Burkina Faso has control of only 60 per cent of territory in the country, meaning that much of the gold rich region in the north of the country is outside the regime's control.

While terrorist groups might sometimes extract and smuggle gold, a more common practice in areas controlled by JNIM in Burkina Faso and Mali is to earn money through providing security. For example, in a gold mining area in Burkina Faso's Dida Forest, JNIM took over in 2021. They replaced the pro-government militia, the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDP), and started to offer security and protection to local miners. They charged less than the VDP for these services, which not only gave them a steady income but also helped them build relationships and partnerships in the region, where they wanted to strengthen their control.¹³ Gold mining areas also provide recruitment and mobilisation opportunities, as well as economic opportunities for local village networks. It can also be a source of explosive materials that are used in the mine but can be repurposed as explosive weapons.¹⁴

While forcibly controlling gold supplies may be more lucrative in the short term, the cooperative control of territory can be more strategically useful to a group like JNIM as they seek to present themselves as an alternative governing force. Gold mining is believed to be a major contributing factor to JNIM's expansion in recent years.¹⁵

CATTLE RUSTLING

Pastoralism is a key part of life and the local economy in the Central Sahel region. Cattle are a highly valuable commodity in many areas of the Sahel with consistently high prices per head of cattle.¹⁶ Different groups have been involved in cattle grazing and trade for a long time, but this has also led to conflicts and crime. Cattle rustling and livestock theft are common illegal activities in the Sahel as they are in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, and often linked to long-standing disputes between various ethnic

groups. Semi-nomadic pastoral groups frequently have conflicts with farming communities over land and resources.¹⁷

The surge in the number of terrorist groups and other non-state actors in the area has led to an increase in cattle rustling, and an increase in the severity of the violence associated with this activity. Between 2018 and 2020, an estimated 126,000 head of cattle were stolen in the Mopti region of Mali. By 2022, this number had risen almost 130,000 in a single year.¹⁸ A late 2022 campaign by IS-Sahel to grow the territory under their control in Gao and Menaka regions of Northern Mali came with a spike in cattle and livestock theft, as well as an increase in violence in those areas.¹⁹

The stolen cattle trade is a large illegal economy that involves traders, markets, and herders. This not only leads to more growth in this sector but also results in more frequent and violent thefts. Like gold mining, cattle trading is strategically important beyond just the value of the cattle. Armed groups offer protection to herders and their cattle as a way to govern and tax them for security. Cattle rustling is also connected to people joining violent extremist groups. For example, when Fulani herders and their communities, who are traditionally nomadic pastoralists and sometimes clash with farming communities, are targeted in attacks, raids, and cattle theft, they often end up aligning with or joining extremist groups. These groups use ethnic conflicts to further their own goals.²⁰

DRUG TRAFFICKING

Drug trafficking is one of the most financially lucrative illicit activities in which terrorist groups participate. Terrorist groups are more likely to engage in drug trafficking when they operate in areas with historically active networks for drug production or transit. Terrorist groups are also more likely to engage in drug trafficking where they hold territory and are thus more capable of delivering security to traffickers.²¹

Drug trafficking in the Sahel region dates back to at least the 1990s, when South American cartels looked for new ways to get drugs to Europe. Initially, cannabis was the main drug being smuggled, but later, cocaine became more common. A major event in 2011 highlighted how extensive drug trafficking was in the remote northern areas of Mali. In the Gao region, a cargo plane crashed and was later found burnt out, with up to 10 tons of cocaine on board, which was meant to be smuggled into Europe.²² Whilst several tonnes of cocaine and cannabis have been seized across the Sahel in recent years, this is likely just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the total volume of drugs being smuggled.²³ Trafficking is generally directed by criminal groups rather than terrorist groups directly. Armed groups gather revenue by taxing the criminal group and providing protection or security for smuggling operations.

Drug trafficking and its profits are a key factor in the conflicts between states and armed groups in the Sahel. Different responses to the problem of drug trafficking partially explain differences in the level of conflict in the Central Sahel Region. This could even partly explain the varying levels of conflict in the region. For example, both Mali and Niger are major routes for smuggling illegal drugs to Europe, with their northern

Saharan regions and nomadic communities deeply involved in providing protection for these smuggling operations. The 2011 Libyan revolution brought back large numbers of ethnic Tuaregs, including armed and trained fighters, to both Mali and Niger. These areas continue to be significant routes for drug smuggling. However, the two countries responded differently to this situation.

In Niger, returning Tuareg rebels were integrated into the state, and smuggling was allowed under a state-controlled model. This let peripheral groups like the Tuaregs benefit from the smuggling. In contrast, in Mali, government forces, which were also involved in drug smuggling, tried to keep control over the smuggling routes. This led to conflicts with the Tuareg MNLA rebel group and other groups wanting to control drug trafficking routes in Mali. This has significantly contributed to ongoing instability and conflict in northern and central Mali. Meanwhile, Niger, facing similar issues, has been comparatively more stable.²⁴

Drug trafficking through Northern Mali was reportedly lower during the period where UN peacekeepers and French forces were present, but since their departure competition between Malian armed forces and Tuareg armed groups has significantly increased. While the link to drug trafficking routes cannot be decisively confirmed, it may be one of several causes of this new conflict.

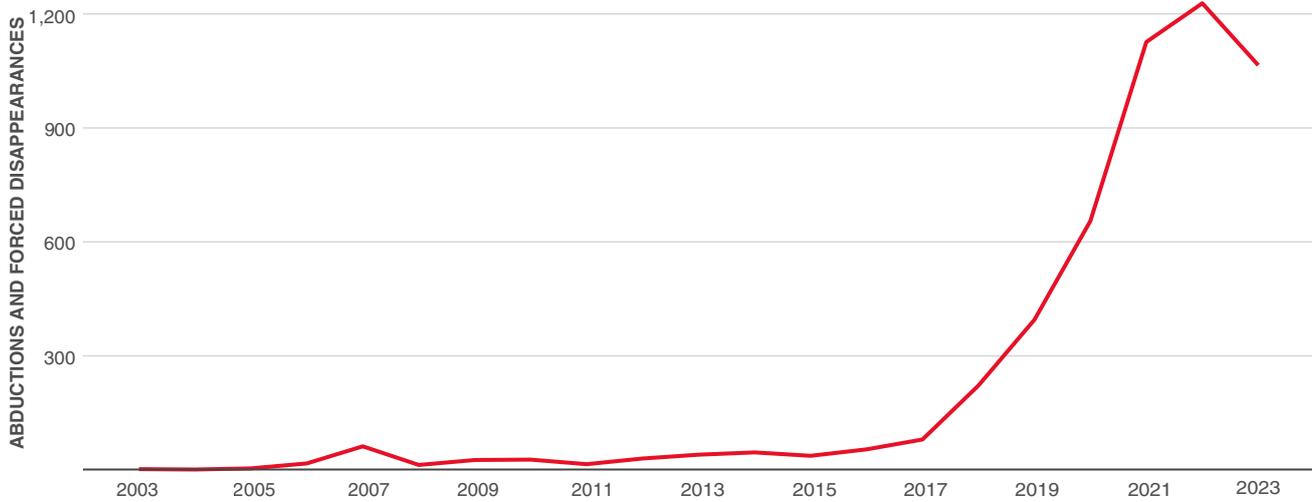
KIDNAPPING AND RANSOM

Groups in the Sahel have generated significant revenue from kidnapping and ransom in the past two decades. Al Qaeda in the Greater Sahara, the forerunner to JNIM, financed much of its operations through kidnapping and ransoming foreign nationals in Mali and Algeria. The activity is now at the core of the economic operations of JNIM, with civilians who have some role in business or politics across Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger being the most common targets. It is estimated that kidnappings and ransoms accounted for 40 per cent of JNIM's annual revenue in 2017. Kidnapping is also used for strategic purposes with individuals taken for political purposes and to gain strategic advantages or intelligence.²⁵ The trend in the number of kidnappings over the past two decades is shown in Figure 4.6.

FIGURE 4.6

Kidnapping events in the Sahel, 2003–2023

There have been more than a thousand kidnapping events per year for each of the last three years.



Source: ACLED, IEP Calculations

JNIM has been known to escalate its kidnapping activities when they seek to expand into new territory before reducing it as they gain control. For example, the number of kidnappings increased significantly in the regions of Burkina Faso where JNIM was clashing with the pro-government militia group, Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDP).

Republic, where smuggling of materials like gold and diamonds helps Russia bypass sanctions related to the 2022 Ukraine invasion. The Wagner Group's operations in Mali have been marked by a disregard for civilian protection, including the alleged involvement in the massacre of civilians in Moura alongside Malian forces.

Key Recent Developments

The surge in both terrorist activity and organised crime in the Sahel have led to a precarious security situation. A number of governments in the region have lost control of significant amounts of territory, and political instability remains extremely high. There have been a number of key developments over the past two years that have left the situation especially precarious.

WITHDRAWAL OF OPERATION BARKHANE

The 2022 withdrawal of French forces under Operation Barkhane significantly impacted regional security. The responsibility for providing security transitioned from French to Malian Armed Forces, supported by pro-government militias and the Russian Wagner Group. Although Barkhane's overall effectiveness in securing Mali was limited, it did manage to maintain control around key urban centres, in collaboration with UN MINUSMA peacekeepers. Many of these areas are now under siege from JNIM and IS-Sahel. The Wagner Group has been less effective in providing security, and has been involved in mining and extractive industry exploitation. Some observers have suggested that their operations in Mali are part of a broader pattern observed in Sudan and the Central African

WITHDRAWAL OF MINUSMA

In June 2023, the UN Security Council terminated MINUSMA's mission in Mali after the Malian government withdrew its support. Established in 2013, MINUSMA struggled with security provision outside its base areas, burdened by a massive operational area and infrastructural challenges. The phased withdrawal of peacekeepers, set to complete by December 2023, directly escalated violent conflict in areas previously under UN control.

Figure 4.7 shows the location of MINUSMA bases, as well as all conflict events in Mali since the withdrawal of UN forces. Fierce battles for control of former UN bases emerged, involving Malian forces, Wagner Group mercenaries, Tuareg rebels, and JNIM. The violence in Kidal in November 2023 was some of the most severe fighting between government and rebel forces since the 2015 peace deal. The deal collapsed completely in January 2024 with fighting likely to intensify.

The current Malian government, which came into power in two successive coups in 2020 and 2021, faces security threats from jihadists who have become entrenched across the country and a resurgent rebel conflict in the north.²⁶ In August 2023 the UN panel of experts on Mali declared that IS-Sahel had doubled the amount of territory they controlled in the country, while JNIM had continued to expand operations.²⁷ Collaboration between jihadist groups and Tuareg rebels could be possible. The deteriorating peace agreement and the rise in violence, particularly in urban areas of Central and Northern Mali, could provide jihadist groups with more opportunities to expand and strengthen their control in the region. This could also help them consolidate gains in other areas. Given the importance of territorial control in Northern Mali for all parties involved, especially in the context of drug smuggling and conflict, instability in this region could have significant implications for the wider conflict in Mali.

THE COUP IN NIGER

In July 2023, Niger experienced a military coup, with the presidential guard overthrowing President Mohamed Bazoum and General Adourahmane Tchiani assuming power. The justification centred around Bazoum's inability to counter jihadist threats, although this reasoning was seen as a pretext, especially considering the low terror attack frequency prior to the coup. The coup led to a diplomatic crisis, with regional powers threatening intervention and risking an interstate conflict. By the end of 2023, Niger distanced itself from Western allies, ending security cooperation with the EU and began exploring ties with Russia. Niger and Burkina Faso also withdrew from the G5 Sahel following Mali's departure, significantly weakening the alliance.

JNIM'S EXPANSION PLANS

Continuing its territorial expansion strategy initiated in 2022, JNIM has expanded its operations in neighbouring West African coastal states, notably Togo and Benin. Their activities are primarily focused on the inland areas bordering Burkina Faso, particularly within the WAP complex of national parklands, now a base for their operations. In Benin, there has been a substantial increase in kidnappings, rising from 6 in 2020 to 49 in 2023, with most attributed to JNIM or similar jihadist groups.²⁸ This trend aligns with JNIM's known tactics of expanding its influence in new areas by escalating kidnappings to gain leverage and intelligence.

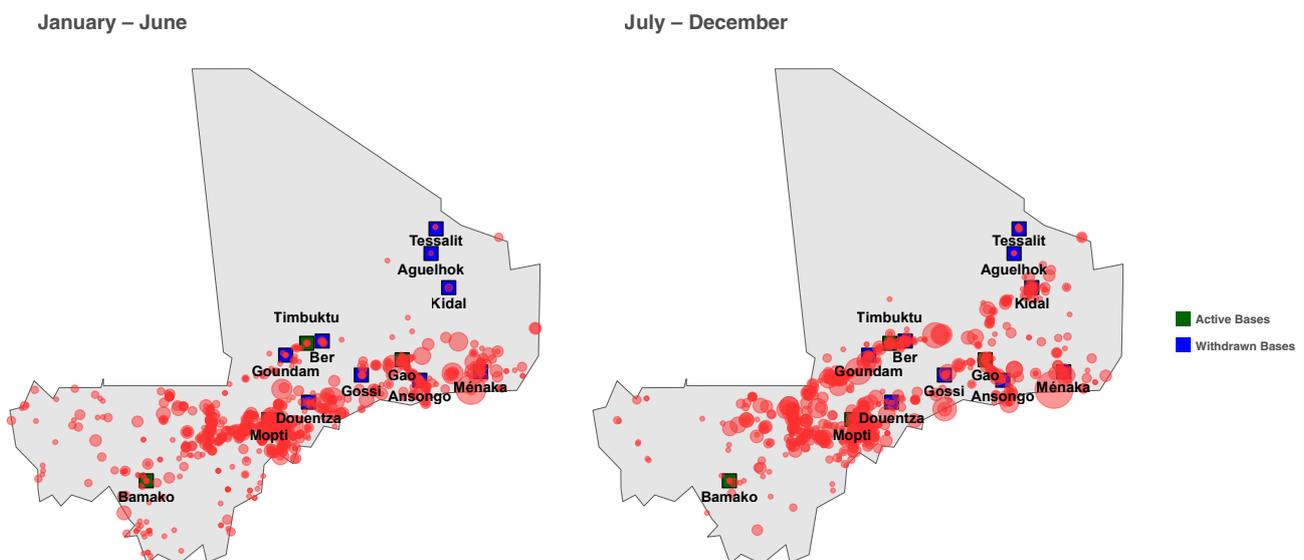
Their ability to establish a foothold in these regions is partly due to access to illicit smuggling markets and populations that have traditionally operated independently of state authority. However, this expansion into Benin and Togo does not necessarily signal intentions to advance further into these or other neighbouring West African states. Nonetheless, it presents significant challenges for counterterrorism efforts. Cross-border operations involving authorities from Benin, Togo, and Burkina Faso may face difficulties depending on the level of interstate cooperation.

Both Benin and Togo have maintained strong diplomatic and military ties with France, and they continue to be active members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In contrast, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali were suspended from this regional alliance, highlighting a divergence in regional security cooperation and approaches to countering terrorism. In January 2024 all three states also withdrew from ECOWAS.

FIGURE 4.7

MINUSMA bases and conflict events, 2023

Conflict has intensified in areas where UN bases have closed.



EXPERT CONTRIBUTIONS

EXPERT CONTRIBUTIONS

Transnational organised crimes sustaining terrorism in the Sahel region: what more could be done to effectively cut financial flows to terrorists?

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INTRODUCTION

The Sahel region especially the Liptako-Gourma Tri-Border Enclave is considered the hotbed of Terrorism and Violent Extremism (TVE) in Africa, and currently holds some of the world's deadliest terrorist groups and violent extremist organisations¹. These groups include Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'adati wal-Jihad (JAS or Boko Haram), ISWAP (Islamic State West Africa Province), JNIM (Jama'at Nustratal-Islam wal-Muslimeen) or GSIM (Group for the Support of Islam and Moslems), and ISGS (Islamic State in the Greater Sahara). Other local terrorist groups such as Ansarul Islam have become accomplices of terrorism in the Sahel. Boko Haram and ISWAP operate in Far North Cameroon, Lac Province of Chad, Southeast Niger (Diffa region), and North-eastern states of Nigeria (Borno, Adawama and Yobe). JNIM and ISGS also dominate TVE in Liptako-Gourma (Tri-Border area of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger), Northern and Southern Burkina Faso regions, Central Mali and Western Niger. Recently JNIM has expanded its geographical reach into Northern Benin and Savanes region of Togo. These groups have a worldview orientation with affiliation to either Al-Qaeda (JNIM and Boko Haram) or ISIS Central (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria- ISWAP and ISGS). This affiliation facilitates provisions logistical and financial supports and encourages the participation of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF)².

While virtually pursuing the ideology of ISIS and Al-Qaeda, the terrorist groups continue to attack civilians in local communities, security installations and critical infrastructures, causing devastating atrocities and humanitarian crisis. Consequently, the TVE situation in the Sahel have remained fragile and characterized by incessant terrorist attacks and ethnic tensions³. Generally, TVE in the Sahel is derived from multi-faceted and extremely diverse causal factors. Nevertheless, sustained level terrorism financing, money laundering, transnational organised crimes (TOC) and its nexus with terrorism, and other illicit economies have created conditions for violent extremism to grow and fester in many Sahel countries⁴. While terrorism in the Sahel could not lend itself to be predicted by a single variable, TOC activities including illicit firearms trafficking, taxation and extortion, drug trafficking, illegal artisanal gold mining, as well as trafficking in persons and

migrants appears to be a major source of resilience, resurgence and sustaining momentum of TVE in the Sahel. Terrorists control large territories, recruit more fighters, and engage in sophisticated attacks. This requires huge financial resources, leading to the reliance on TOC networks and other illicit economies to fund their ambitions and operations. In control of national territories, terrorist groups run criminal economies in conjunction with highly organised TOC network syndicates and inhabitants in local communities become beneficiaries of such criminal enterprises. Hence, the local population have become sympathetic to the cause of terrorist groups in several areas which are in the eye of the storm of terrorism.

Against this background, the question that arises is has the measures instituted to cut financial and logistical supplies to terrorist groups in the Sahel been effective? Understanding the conditions, the challenges, the vulnerabilities, as well as the catalysts that facilitate and shape the TOC dynamics in the Sahel would form the basis of any response generation efforts. This article therefore assesses the TOC activities in the Sahel and its nexus with the growing terrorism. Actionable policy metrics aimed at ameliorating the TOC and illicit economies are proposed.

TOC AND TERRORISM NEXUS IN THE SAHEL

The growing nexus between TOC and Terrorism has generated global concerns. The African Union (AU) and Member States have expressed their concern over the increasing synergies between terrorist and TOC network groups as indicated in the 1999 OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism and the 2002 Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. Recently, the 16th Extraordinary Summit of the AU Assembly decided to strengthen the measures against all forms of terrorism financing, and to accelerate the implementation of AU legal frameworks on the criminalization of ransom payments⁵. Realizing the illegal exploitation of natural resources by terrorist groups, the assembly committed to promote concerted efforts on improved management of natural resources. The assembly further decided to scale up efforts to combat TOC especially illicit arms.

At the international level, the United Nations Security

Council has recognized, and expressed concern at the connection between Terrorism and TOC in several of its resolutions, including Resolutions 1373 (2001), 2195 (2014), 2322 (2016), 2347 (2017) and 2368 (2017), and more recently in Resolution 2462 (2019). While most of the African countries could be directly exploited or used as transit points by these groups, the Sahel belt presents a corridor for human and drug trafficking, arms trafficking and smuggling, trafficking of counterfeit goods, illegal artisan gold mining, amongst many other illicit economies.

Terrorist groups are engaged in arms trafficking, drugs trafficking, human trafficking, fuel trafficking, cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, money laundering, illicit trade in natural resources, taxation and extortion among others. The goal is to take care of their troops, maintain operational capabilities and their influence. Linking up with TOC network traffickers facilitates terrorist groups' procurement of consumable goods like food and medicine as well as operational means including arms, ammunition, and fuel. Basically, terrorist groups engage directly/indirectly in TOC as beneficiaries, service providers or 'regulators' of illegal activities. For instance, JNIM and Boko Haram makes an estimated USD5-35 million and USD5-10 million respectively annually from illegal taxation, donations, kidnapping for ransom, extortion, bank robberies, smuggling of counterfeit cigarettes, and drugs⁶. Evidence on several TOC activities financing terrorism in the Sahel exists. Transnational Environmental Crimes (TEC) such as Wildlife Trafficking and Illegal Logging; Illegal Artisanal Gold Mining; Illicit Firearms Trafficking; Kidnapping for Ransom (KFR); and Supply, Trafficking and Taxations of Goods and Extortion constitute major sources of terrorism financing.

Transnational Environmental Crimes (TEC): TEC have overtaken drug trade as a major income generating channel for terrorist organizations in the Sahel. With limited financing, terrorist groups in the region resort to illegal logging and illegal trade of wildlife for their sustenance and income to finance their activities⁷. Terrorist groups such as the Boko Haram and JNIM engage in illegal trade of great apes, ivory, and horns of wildlife as well as illegal logging of timber for charcoal⁸. Annual income from illegal trade in Ivory in the Sahel is estimated to be between US\$4 to US\$12.2 million annually. Due to the benefits of illegal wildlife trade that communities receive from terrorist groups, they have become willing participants in this illicit activity and as a result are unwilling to provide information on individuals and groups engaged in it nor able to mobilize against their activities.

Illegal Artisanal Gold Mining: Illegal Artisanal Gold Mining has become a major source of financing for terrorist groups in the Sahel particularly within the Liptako-Gourma area (Tri-Border regions of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger). This area is dominated by ISGS and JNIM and they both control swathes of national territories as well as mines sites. These mines serve as haven and sustained revenue source and sustainable financing mechanisms for terrorists⁹. In Burkina Faso, JNIM benefits from illegal gold mining by providing security protection to miners and receive payments for providing access route of transport of gold mined¹⁰. In

mining areas such as Igouzar and Tinzaouaten, terrorist groups collaborate with other NSAGs in control of such territories on a mutually benefiting arrangement. In several cases, miners have been attacked on their sites and the groups take over sites after such attacks. JNIM and IGSGS are also believed to control several mining sites in both Burkina Faso and Mali. More than 2,000 miners are estimated to be working in (a) JNIM controlled mine sites in N'Abaw goldfield located in the Gao region of Mali¹¹. Among other trafficking route for illegal mined gold from Mali, weaknesses in the existing legal regimes and loopholes in import/export procedures appear to facilitate illegal gold trade by terrorists¹².

Illicit Firearms Trafficking: Illicit firearms are widespread in the Sahel region. Firearms serve as a multipurpose tool for terrorist groups to perpetrate violence and exercise control over their mobility corridors. The link between illicit firearms trafficking and terrorism is more profound as compared to other TOC activities, as terrorist groups require high quantities of weapons to carry out attack¹³. The destabilizing accumulation, proliferation, and illicit transfer firearms continue to sustain and exacerbate the terrorism in the Sahel. The growing presence of Private Military Companies (PMCs) and Mercenaries also serve as a source of illicit firearms trafficking. Terrorist groups use natural resources as a means of attracting PMCs, whereas PMCs are also attracted by Natural Resources controlled by terrorists. As a result, terrorist groups now trade minerals such as gold with PMCs in exchange for Arms, Ammunitions and Military Grade Equipment.

Kidnapping for Ransom (KFR): KFR has become a major of source of finance for terrorists in the Sahel. In Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria major terrorist groups including Boko Haram, JNIM, ISGS, and ISWAP engage in kidnapping of prominent individuals, cattle farmers and foreigners, and demand ransom payment from their families before they are released. Abducted individuals whose families refuse to pay ransom are killed. When abducted, individuals especially government and state officials pay more than US\$ 20, 000 before their release. The table below is an estimated payment by various abductees in the Sahel¹⁴.

Category of Abductees	Ransom	
	FCFA	USD
Small Traders and Shopkeepers	300,000-800,000	\$500 – \$1,340
Important Businessmen	2m - 3m	\$3,350 – \$5,000
Cattle and Gold Site Owners	8m	\$13,400
Government and State Officials	13m	\$22,000

Supply Chains and Trafficking of Fuels, Drugs, & Contraband Goods: Illicit supply chain with trafficking networks remains essential to the procurement of goods by terrorist groups. Many of the groups, in particular JNIM and ISGS engage trafficking networks in the illicit supply of fuels, motorbikes, counterfeit drugs/ medicines as well as contraband goods. To sustain supply of fuel for their operations, groups such as JNIM engages highly organised and sophisticated fuel

trafficking rings¹⁵. Consequently, several tankers of fuel are delivered to terrorist groups for their operations and reselling to communities under their control. Motorbikes have also become one of the important goods for terrorists, as a result motorbike trafficking is a lucrative venture¹⁶. Trafficking routes have also been established for counterfeit medicines, illicit drugs such as cocaine and other contraband goods to and from the Sahel to other parts of Africa and beyond.

OTHER SOURCES OF TERRORISM FINANCING IN THE SAHEL

Terrorists generate funds to cover operational costs associated with their operations, including purchasing weapons, intelligence gathering, training, transportation, and material costs. Apart from TOC activities mentioned above, terrorists continue to have access to other sources of finances and logistics. Majority of these sources are noted to be outside the formal financial systems as the groups increasingly rely on informal money transfer methods such as the Hawala systems. Also, the use of emerging technologies such as mobile financial technologies (FinTechs) and virtual currencies such as Crypto-Currency and Bitcoins are increasingly becoming alarming. For instance, 0.1% of \$1.6 billion cryptocurrencies sent and received in Africa in 2021 was linked to terrorism financing. In 2022, 6% of the virtual assets-related in Nigeria were on terrorism financing, and kidnapers in Nigeria demanded and received \$15,000 worth of bitcoin in ransom in September 2019¹⁷.

Other notable sources of terrorism financing include bank robberies, taxation of goods, extortion of farmers and fishers, zakat collection, construction of roadblocks and checkpoints to collect money, and livestock thefts among others. Taxation is a major source of revenue to terrorists. JNIM for instance benefits from a wide range of taxes collected from business owners including international NGOs operating in areas under its control¹⁸. Gao, Timbuktu, northern Benin communities, and Koalou on the Burkina Faso- Benin border are some areas where taxing of goods are frequent¹⁹. Extortion of farmers and fishers particularly along the Lake Chad has also become a great source of finance for terrorists especially Boko Haram and ISWAP, whereas livestock theft continues to serve another illicit economy for the groups specially JNIM and ISGS.

MEASURES TO EFFECTIVELY CUT THE FINANCIAL AND LOGISTICAL SUPPLIES TO TERRORIST GROUPS IN THE SAHEL REGION

The growing nexus between TOC and terrorism in the Sahel has elicited stakeholders' concerns. Various UN agencies, African Union (AU) specialised agencies including the ACSRT, GIABA- ECOWAS's FATF styled regional body, and other international actors have exercised plethora of initiatives aimed at breaking the sources of financing to terrorist groups. Despite the numerous interventions, the TOC threats have remained potent. Terrorist groups have tightened their deadly grip over the complexity of terrorism financing and TOC activities. Under the circumstances, one would ask 'What More Could be Done?'. The following urgent actionable policy measures are proposed to effectively

cut logistical and financial flows to terrorists.

Develop regional strategic plan of action (PoA) on disrupting TOC network groups. This will ensure synergy and harmony in legislation and implementation of countering terrorism financing legal frameworks and mechanisms. There is a need for reforms to realign legislation and regulations on TOC-Terror nexus to create a more comprehensive framework that can easily be implemented.

Enhanced Intelligence sharing mechanisms are required in the region. This can be achieved through effective border management, cooperation, and control. Existing mechanisms such as the Sahel Liaison Fusion Centre and the revitalised Nouakchott process could prove helpful in this regard. Governments in the region must increase resource commitment to capacity building for monitoring, intelligence gathering and information exchange among law enforcement agencies to enhance detection and prosecution of TOC cases.

There is a need to rethink CFT in Sahel. Emphasis have often been placed on formal financial systems or the formalised banking systems. However, the peculiarity of the Sahel has shown that many of the TOC activities, cash transfers, and terrorism financing channels are outside formal systems. Watching the informal systems through a Whole-of-Society approach could help cut the financial sources to terrorist groups.

Governments in the Sahel must conduct NPOs risks assessment to identify institutions at risk of terrorism financing. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendation eight (8) set the international standards for states to establish measures to prevent the use of NPOs as a channel for terrorism financing. Many Sahelian states are yet to fully comply with this recommendation. States therefore require assistance to ensure compliance-driven due diligence.

Governments in the region need to take measures to improve state authority and legitimacy in local communities that are currently engaged in TOC activities with terrorist groups. This can be achieved through building community resilience and trust between state law enforcement actors and the citizenry.

CONCLUSION

The transnational nature of illicit economies and terrorism financing in the Sahel has shown the need for a multidimensional response based on increased cooperation among Sahelian countries with the support of their regional and international partners. Cutting financial and logistical supplies to terrorists hinges on unravelling and severing the ties between terrorism and TOC. This article has revealed that while some of the vulnerabilities shaping TOC activities are general in nature, others are local context specific and applicable to certain countries. Even in countries, experiences, and risk of terrorism financing differ. This brings to bear the highly localised nature of TOC and sources of finances to terrorists. Given that terrorism financing takes the shape of localised dynamics, the solutions require localised contextualisation. The implications are that inclusive, community-informed CFT approaches and counter TOC measures must be the basis of any interventions aimed at addressing the TOC-Terror nexus.

EXPERT CONTRIBUTIONS

Views on countering violent extremism

Sir Ciarán Devane

Executive Director of Coventry University's Institute for Peace and Security and a trustee of the British-Irish Association and of Friends of Europe. He was previously Chief Executive of the British Council.

The Institute for Peace and Security is an 80 strong group of academic researchers focused on providing senior officials in security, peace-building and government around the world with insights on significant societal drivers undermining security and peace.

In international relations (IR) theory, there are three main schools of thought. There are the realists who promote a strong military as one cannot trust the neighbours so one holds a big stick to knock them on the head if needed. Institutionalists trust the neighbours a bit more and want to join every good club going to work on resolving shared problems by pooling effort. And constructivists say we are a product of our history and experiences, so to change the future one needs to build the relationships and experiences which will generate the trust required to make good things happen.

My observation from my time running the British Council is that practitioners in international relations were often wedded to a point of view and promoted their particular military, diplomatic or 'soft power' solutions to IR issues. Their analysis and views were pre-determined by which theory they subscribed to.

The truth of course is that all three theories are legitimate and issues are best viewed by peering through all three lenses to gain a better perspective, and to determine a more sophisticated set of plausible approaches. This was the approach proposed by the Fusion Doctrine promoted by the UK's then National Security Advisor, Sir Mark Sedwill. It was the combination of approaches which was most impactful, not the redundant debate of coercion or development, sanctions or negotiation, public diplomacy or cultural relations.

I say all this as I observe three similar camps amongst many organisations and practitioners in the PVE/CVE space. Simplistically, there are those who see the solutions as more and better counter-terrorism assets. There are those who see security services as a problem to be managed, perhaps even a driver of extremism, demanding more accountability, transparency and restrictions. And there are those who say it has nothing to do with security but rather it is social issues which need to be addressed if the push factors are to be addressed. As with international relations, all three lenses contain truth. The problem is that organisations respond to events with siloed responses and a lack of collaboration between agencies, civil society, governance and the public. Joined up, balanced, mutually supportive is often not.

If one accepts this logic, a responsible plan should cover four bases. It should indeed deliver more and

better security assets. It should promote the trust and participation of citizens through appropriate accountability and transparency. It should address the social drivers of extremism. And it should build the governance capability at government level to determine the right mix of the above, to coordinate and implement a coherent, patient, strategic programme.

This says something about policy formulation at the heart of the state. If the process is to select between alternative approaches submitted by agencies of whatever type then the response will be one-dimensional and inadequate. Worse, if it is a contestation then the process will be fractious, demoralising and again inadequate. The best administrations create processes to channel the contesting ideas into a forum for co-creating solutions and ensuring multi-agency governance of implementation.

This ability and willingness to pool assets and capability is not one which naturally emerges from conventional leadership development approaches or indeed conventional leadership experience. It requires leaders to be comfortable with shades of grey and solutions which are suboptimal from a single-agency position. They need to learn to lead without authority, to build coalitions of the willing not under their command. They need to engage and understand the other - meaning security practitioners and social activists, humanitarians and peacekeepers, police and youth. This implies a need to invest the time and effort to get inside each other's head, and to do so on the basis of presumed good intent.

Building this decision-making process must be a conscious effort. Left to itself the pressure of business as usual, institutional loyalty and the challenge of putting oneself in the shoes of an agency with a different culture and different priorities precludes easily establishing the collective, institutionally-generous governance models required. It takes political and policy intent, backed up by expertise in public leadership, governance and trust.

This challenge is replicated at a local level in my own Institute which hosts an eclectic group of 80 former security practitioners, career peace study scholars, theologians, social scientists, strategic communications

experts and many more. Practicing what we preach requires its own management but leads to novel trans-disciplinary approaches to address major societal challenges in peace and security.

Amongst those issues we are currently exercised by is protective security, and in particular the management of insider risk. An under-researched issue is understanding the environmental and psychological factors that lead individuals to harm their own organisations, and the systems-based approach to personnel security which mitigates one's own staff becoming allied with the extremist or even terrorist groups that one seeks to confront. Our model suggests that while the components of a personnel security system are relatively easy to describe (we all know about psychometric testing, access controls and exit processes for example), the qualities of those systems are harder to describe, and harder still to embed. Dr Paul Martin, our Professor of Security Practice identifies ten desirable qualities systems should have.

They should be risk-based, system-based and evidence-based. That is they should be based on evidence of the relative risk, and should be systemic in the sense of having complementary inter-locking capabilities. Linked to that they should be holistic, covering the domains of people, physical protection, and cyber - and good governance should be in place without compromising dynamism and the ability to adapt quickly. Defences should be regularly tested, demonstrably effective and reliable under a wide range of circumstances. And finally they should be legally compliant and socially acceptable - not always the same thing.

If one under-researched area is the internal dynamic of the counter-extremism agency, another is the internal dynamic of the extremist or proto-extremist organisation. Dr Joel Busher, Professor of Political Sociology, points to the heterogenous nature of the membership of extremist organisations. We often imagine these groups to be uniformly extreme. Like all social groups however they vary, and often those proposing violence do not enjoy the approval of their peers. Detaching the violent extremists from their group by leaning on points of tension may be a better strategy than confronting the whole body of membership and increasing the cohesion of the group as it feels threatened. A nuanced understanding reduces the chances of counter extremism efforts back-firing.

A third area needing further work on the inner dynamics of the group is the public response to counterterrorism (CT) messaging. The work of trust scholars Dr Charis Rice and Dr Jenny Ratcliffe with Dr Martin Innes, Director of the Crime and Security Research Institute at Cardiff University suggests how the public 'reads' counter terrorism campaigns. It identifies two key tensions which frustrate the design and the delivery of campaigns.

The first is the 'fear trap' in which campaigns, in seeking to raise awareness, underestimate the fear they generate in the public - and fear was of course the terrorist's goal in the first place. Conversely, over-achieving on raising awareness in an information rich environment is the same as being part of that noise and missing the teachable moments which come with signal events.

Context of course matters. What is seen as normal is different across time and space. What people think of as terrorism is framed by specific incidents, as well as by how individuals think of those incidents and how they think others think of them. It is also not a given that campaigns will be effective. They can be counter productive. Working with trusted channels may be more effective than relying on the 'big' media, and close up, local communications may be more effective than large national campaigns, or at least be a beneficial complement to them.

The STARS (Situation, Threat, Adapt, Response, Signals) model aims to consider who within the public needs to hear what, will they hear the message and trust it, how are they expected to respond? And will they in turn be heard by the security services?

Developing insight into how the human beings who make up the agencies, the extremist organisations and the public think and act is a critical input into developing coherent counter-terrorism strategies.

Equally critical is anticipating where increases in terrorist activity may emerge. One such field is maritime security. Maritime terrorism is not new, even if we classify piracy separately. Terrorist activity has always taken place in the form of attacks on the maritime assets of states and organisations subject to terrorist attack. Traditionally, maritime terrorism has been classified into four categories. There are those attacks which use the maritime space to attack land targets - the Mumbai bombings being a dramatic case in point. These cases highlight the need to consider the land-sea nexus as a counter-terrorism priority. There is the transport of terrorist assets over the sea to build attack capacity on land. There is direct attack on shipping eg the bombing of the USS Cole and related to this, the use of ships as the location of terrorist attack such as hostage taking on board the Achille Laura being the most well-known example.

The future may be different of course. as Dr Ioannis Chapsos, who leads the MarSec group, points out in his work. Future scenarios may include the use of shipping as a vehicle to place weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in populated areas, or to choke primary shipping lanes. While such thoughts have resulted in codes to enhance port security and implement robust maritime security governance, their effectiveness and degree of consistency are not yet evidenced.

Newer still are the threats to undersea and offshore infrastructure. Undersea cables have been subject to interference by state actors for some time, but not yet terrorist organisations. Offshore wind farms do not yet have the same degree of thought applied to their protection as oil rigs. Thinking on both is emerging but good practice is not yet in place. The same applies to autonomous craft whether as weapons in themselves or as targets of cyber-interference. One prediction therefore is that maritime terrorism in new forms will be more common in future, especially without proactive measures in the early days of the technologies, and without remedial action on vulnerabilities from the cables we have laid down on the sea bed in recent decades.

This year's Global Terrorism Index data again shown the

high level of terrorism in the Sahel. A major project out of this Institute is seeking to advance understanding of how violence is experienced in two countries in the G5 Sahel region - Mauritania and Burkino Faso. It is also seeking to understand how preventing violent extremism (PVE) interventions are upholding or compromising dignity, being the indicator of positive or negative consequences of the interventions. The work is also looking at how heritage, as cultural assets and capital, can be used to prevent violence.

Unsurprisingly the data showed the level of public concern. Of note, extremist violence was seen not only as a threat to life and limb. It was also seen as a threat to society's culture and heritage. An implication for public communication was that areas with the higher levels of violence often had a lower perception of the threat level than areas with lower levels of violence.

The good news is that PVE programmes were fairly broadly supported and rarely seen to undermine dignity. This largely positive view at least partly reflects the effective integration of PVE efforts with social programmes, with PVE often (not unreasonably) being seen as being about development.

The conundrum of Mauritania - the "Mauritanian Exception" by which the country has not been impacted by Islamist Insurgency in the way other places have - was also investigated. Existing literature attributes this to specific policy decisions. Our study emphasises the importance of Mauritania's broader social characteristics such as socially embedded religious teaching, and the broad range of cultural and heritage assets that are seen as effective tools for conflict management. The Mauritanian Exception may in fact require both good policy and good social characteristics.

In all the above, the premise is that understanding the social and systems contexts of terrorism and counter-terrorism is an aid to security agencies and a source of effective PVE tools. Applying equal rigour to the full spectrum of analysis, internally, of malign actors, and of societies, must be part of the mature counter-terrorism strategies of the future.

EXPERT CONTRIBUTIONS

Rehabilitation and reintegration: the end of the terrorist cycle?

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INTRODUCTION

One of the main trends in counterterrorism since the publication of the last Global Terrorism Index has been a concerted political effort to promote returns from the Al Hawl camp in North-East Syria, where around 45,000 people, mainly family members of former terrorist fighters of at least 40 different nationalities, still subsist.

Progress has been steady, with significant returns of Iraqis, of the largest single foreign nationality to Syria, and growing returns of women and children for example to the Western Balkans and Central Asia. Some states, especially in Western Europe, nevertheless still resist return, and in others returning men, assumed to be the main perpetrators of terrorist acts, is the next frontier.

In many ways Al Hawl is exceptional. It is in contested territory, many of its residents are foreign citizens, more than half of them are children, and in many cases their states are still reluctant to return them. At the same time, a focus there has helped raise awareness of the wider global opportunity of returning, rehabilitating and reintegrating former terrorists and their family members. It has galvanized bi-partisan support and a consensus among human rights, security, and development actors. And it has prompted renewed and sometimes innovative approaches to rehabilitation and reintegration.

Even should Al Hawl eventually be closed, or more realistically reduced to a minimum population, it is important to maintain this momentum. For despite the upward trends reported in this year's Global Terrorism Index, there is also substantial demobilisation of terrorists and violent extremists elsewhere in the world, including in Iraq, Mali, Niger, the Philippines, and Somalia.

Effectively to rehabilitate and reintegrate them is critical. Even as non-combatant family members or disenchanted former fighters, their potential for recidivism is still high, especially where they are marginalized or face discrimination on return. New approaches, moreover, are extending support beyond the individual returnees themselves, to implicate the wider community and generate resilience against radicalisation and recruitment more widely. Ending the terrorist cycle for one individual can consequently stop it starting for others.

This short article reports on evolving approaches to rehabilitation and reintegration, including through global programmes supported by the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF).

CASE MANAGEMENT

The rehabilitation and reintegration of the family members of foreign terrorist fighters in the Western Balkans, in particular, is based on case management. This approach works on the basis that individuals need a suite of services including but beyond the medical alone. The case management-based approach to rehabilitation and reintegration involves linking individual returnees and others directly affected by violent extremism to the psychiatric, psychological, social, economic, administrative, legal, educational, and clinical services and support they need to recover from trauma.

The approach can be extended 'upstream'. GCERF, for example, is using the case management approach to provide support during the pre-departure phase for foreign nationals in the northeast Syrian camps, who are cleared to return to their country of origin. This includes an initial assessment of trauma, which is especially important for children who often display significant mental health and behavioural consequences that may translate to violence and radicalisation. Engaging and preparing these children and their mothers for returns to their country of origin is an initial step to managing expectations and counter misinformation and disinformation.

It can also be extended 'downstream'. Integral to the case management approach to rehabilitation and reintegration is a focus on the agency of these individuals to influence others who are at risk of radicalisation and recruitment. Prevention is a critical element of case management-based approaches to rehabilitation and reintegration.

In Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia a few hundred people benefitted from the case management support. This was possible because the national governments of these countries realised the importance and the necessity of returning their citizens and providing them with rehabilitation and reintegration services with the engagement of civil society organisations.

Countries in Central Asia, notably Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, also repatriated many of their citizens who were associated with the Islamic State or Al Qaida from Iraq, Northeast Syria, and Afghanistan. Children are integrated in the formal education system and women are provided with livelihood activities and psychosocial support.

COMMUNITY-BASED INTEGRATION

The case management-based approach works well if there is a limited number of individuals, substantial resources are available, and national governments support rehabilitation and reintegration.

But former terrorist fighters and their families are also returning to other contexts. Here, lessons are being learned from approaches adopted for people disengaging from local non-state armed groups, and in particular, community-based integration approaches. Characteristically communities lead the integration process, which is intended to benefit the entire community, not just the individuals returning, and hence reduce stigmatization.

In Somalia, for example, low-level members of the Al-Shabaab terrorist organisation often leave the group based on negotiations among clan elders. These talks may determine the amount of compensation that the returnee and his or her clan need to pay to compensate for the victims. Once this is agreed, former members return directly to the community. Here, the local leadership engages directly with the returnee, who accesses services supported by other community members.

In the case of Mali, 'repentants' involved in or affected by armed violence, upon their release from prisons, are integrating back into communities. Local civil society organisations have provided social and income-generating services to the communities where they settle. This has accelerated their integration while increasing access to alternative opportunities for other community members at risk of radicalisation and recruitment.

In the Philippines, training in income-generating skills for widows of Abu Sayyaf Group combatants is supported by local grassroots organisations in coordination with local authorities, helping them earn a living without turning to the armed group for resources. Support is also being extended to the remaining 80,000 internally displaced people who lost their land and livelihoods in the Marawi siege.¹

Community-based integration benefits many people, not exclusively those disengaging from non-state armed groups. These may include measures to improve human security, social cohesion, and collaboration between community members. It may also involve support for small-scale infrastructure rehabilitation, employment generation, and the revival of cultural and traditional norms. It is often most appropriate when large numbers of people are disengaging.

COMBINED APPROACHES

Case management and community-based integration are not mutually exclusive. In situations of limited returns and where the case management approach is feasible, it should still adopt principles from community-based integration, especially the need to avoid stigma by benefiting the wider community. In situations of mass returns, certain at-risk individuals may still require intensive case management. Alternatively, these can be staged approaches, with case management applied to

early returns, and community-based integration applied as the scale of return increases.

In the case of Iraq, for example, psycho-social support is being provided for initial returnees from Al Hawl, but at the same time investment is being made into creating an enabling environment for return within local communities to prepare for many more returnees. Through the localisation of the National Strategy to Combat Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism at the district and governorate levels, plans are prepared to provide broader community services for vulnerable populations.

In the case of Yemen, where thousands of children were engaged in fighting in different state and non-state armed groups, individual counselling, educational catch-up, and non-formal education are provided. At the same time, local civil society organizations also work with educational institutions and communities to sensitize them to the return of former child soldiers and provide educational, social, and economic services for those who are at risk of being recruited to these groups.

The return of children who may have been born in non-state armed groups and never been part of the community to which they will return illustrates why the term 'reintegration' may not always be appropriate. In addition, sometimes people do not return to their communities of origin, and even where they do, it is unclear to what extent they had previously felt integrated.

REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION: THE END OF THE TERRORIST CYCLE?

Maintaining a focus on returning people from Al Hawl camp is critical – it represents at the same time a global security threat and a global human rights violation. But it would be a mistake to prioritize return without subsequent attention to rehabilitation and reintegration. The implied expenditure required for people who at worst were terrorists and at best sympathized with them, is one important reason why many countries remain unwilling to return people from the camps. The successes being reported from those countries that have returned their citizens, and the evolution of more cost-effective methods such as the hybrid approach of case management and community-based integration described above, may accelerate the process.

Even if that does not occur, a positive outcome is renewed attention on rehabilitation and reintegration, and the codification of effective practice, for example in framework documents including the forthcoming Elman Peace Center/Folke Bernadette Academy/GCERF/UNDP Guidance Note on Supporting Community-based Reintegration of Former Members of Armed Forces and Groups.²

One way to maintain this attention, and to begin to alleviate concerns and lift barriers to return, is to demonstrate how effective rehabilitation and reintegration can signal the end of the terrorist cycle. This is clear for the individuals concerned – the corollary being that the recidivism risk may be high where programming is inadequate. There is growing evidence that it is also the case that rehabilitation and

reintegration can reduce the risk of others entering the terrorist cycle, directly where returnees' voices are used to counter misinformation and disinformation, and indirectly where approaches to their reintegration imply community engagement and resilience. In this way, rehabilitation and reintegration, far from being a separately funded and supported exercise, should become an integral component of wider approaches to preventing violent extremism, potentially ending the terrorist cycle for a far wider group of vulnerable people who are at-risk of radicalisation and recruitment.

EXPERT CONTRIBUTIONS

Addressing the links between organized crime and terrorism

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

UNODC welcomes the increased focus on the linkages between organized crime and terrorism, which is a growing threat facing the international community. United Nations Member States have increasingly expressed concern that terrorists can benefit from domestic and transnational organized crime as a source of financing or logistical support. This may include through the trafficking in arms, persons, firearms, drugs, artefacts, cultural property, the illicit trade in natural resources and wildlife, the abuse of legitimate commercial enterprise, non-profit organizations, donations, crowdfunding, virtual assets and proceeds of criminal activity, including kidnapping for ransom, extortion, bank robbery and transnational organized crime at sea.¹

These linkages were re-emphasized recently in a presidential statement (S/PRST/2023/6) adopted by the Security Council in December 2023, in which the Council expressed concern over the serious, growing threats posed by organized crime and acknowledged that — in specific contexts and regions — terrorists may benefit from organized crime, whether domestic or transnational.

The nature and scope of these linkages varies by region. According to Member States' inputs for the UN Secretary-General's Report on Action taken by Member States and United Nations entities to address the issue of linkages between terrorism and organized crime,¹ jointly prepared by UNODC and UNOCT in 2020, as well as UNODC's own research² and capacity building work, these linkages can be opportunistic alliances based on shared operational territory, shared hostile perspectives towards authorities, or personal connections potentially developed in prisons or through shared networks. Furthermore, "Some Member States described linkages between terrorism and organized crime involving the smuggling of migrants, the illicit trade in arms, light weapons and other military equipment, fraudulent documents, kidnapping for ransom, car theft, illicit mineral extraction and trafficking in drugs, cultural property or other licit or illicit goods. Other reported manifestations include the involvement of organized criminal groups in transporting terrorists across borders and of returning foreign terrorist fighters in organized crime activities."³ Many States noted how linkages with organized crime can help finance terrorist activities.

As just one example, UNODC research indicates that, in the Sahel, while terrorist groups are involved in firearms trafficking, their involvement in crimes like fuel trafficking and smuggling of migrants is limited to charging "taxes" from organized crime groups and individual criminal actors for operating within or transporting goods or people through territories they control.⁴ However, it

has been observed by some Member States that, in some contexts, criminal organizations are increasingly disinterested in cooperation with terrorist groups to avoid additional scrutiny from national authorities. In other regions with limited terrorist activity or investigative capacity, States have not been able to confirm the existence of linkages between terrorism and organized crime.⁵

Continuing to identify and better understand these linkages and their regional manifestations and impact, particularly through dedicated data collection and research, is essential to create the evidence base for designing targeted and tailored regional and national responses. This Global Terrorism Index report is a key step in support of these efforts by highlighting some of the increased linkages between terrorism and organized crime which have been identified during the past year. However, further data collection and research is essential to comprehensively understand the linkages. UNODC aims to continue advancing this understanding by building on UNODC's Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment (TOCTA) methodology, which has been successfully applied in a number of regions.⁶

Addressing these interlinked threats poses a range of challenges for Member States. Too often these crimes are addressed in a siloed manner at the policy and operational levels with separate units or even offices responsible for terrorism and organized crime responses respectively. Effectively addressing these crimes, therefore, requires effective multi-dimensional and coordinated policy, legislative, and operational responses at the national, regional and international levels.

The UN Secretary-General's Report on Action taken by Member States and United Nations entities to address the issue of linkages between terrorism and organized crime, along with UNODC's capacity building work on the ground, identifies a number of areas where further action would be recommended to respond to the United Nations Security Council resolution 2482 (2019) and to benefit from the good practices reported by Member States. This includes to:

- Conduct further research to better understand the nature of the links and the vulnerabilities of different sectors to exploit, with a view to ensuring that responses are evidence-based;
- Strengthen national intelligence and criminal justice cooperation through inter-agency coordination mechanisms, at the policy level, through national policy or action plans to promote information exchange and whole-of-government responses and, at the operational level, through protocols and the

- establishment of specialized units, joint task forces, operational centers, and other mechanisms to promote intelligence-led policing;
- Continue to prioritize detecting and countering the financing of terrorism to identify and counter links with other forms of criminality, including to conduct financing risk assessments; strengthen the role of Financial Intelligence Units and build cooperation with counter-terrorism investigators;
 - Continue to assess and address risks associated from new payment methods, financial instruments, crowdfunding platforms, and virtual assets and apply risk-based anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing regulations to service providers⁷;
 - Comprehensively address all forms of trafficking in persons including when committed by terrorist groups;
 - Address the illicit exploitation and trafficking of natural resources and other goods which can benefit terrorist groups including through financial investigations, risk-based supervision, strengthened border control measures and cross-border cooperation criminalizing these acts to hold those responsible accountable;
 - Further address the illegal trafficking, manufacture, and possession of small arms which can financially benefit terrorist groups and facilitate terrorist acts, including through ratifying and implementing the relevant international instruments;
 - Address illicit drug trafficking through comprehensive drug demand reduction and response strategies and strengthened border management cooperation and investigative approaches
 - Support States to prevent and fight corruption, as a driver of violent extremism, terrorism and organized crime and a spoiler of effective criminal justice responses against terrorism and organized crime;
 - Establish databases and benefit from new technologies to collect and analyse information such as passenger data systems and biometrics, while ensuring full respect and protection for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
 - Support States to establish effective, accountable, inclusive and human rights-compliant legal, crime prevention and criminal justice measures that prevent and counter abuse of technology by terrorist and organized criminal groups.
 - Build capacity on border security and maritime crime to detect and prevent the illicit transit of goods and people which can be used to fund terrorist groups and facilitate the travel of foreign terrorist fighters through data collection tools, surveillance and control systems and enhanced cooperation through operations centers and inter-agency cooperation including between customs, investigators, and intelligence officials;
- Promote regional intelligence sharing and international cooperation in criminal matters through the support of regional practitioner networks, information sharing agreements, the exchange of liaison officers, INTERPOL and regional organization databases and tools, and through adoption of mutual legal assistance treaties;
 - Build and promote public-private partnerships with art dealers, firearms manufacturers, banks, and Internet Service Providers, amongst others;
 - Update national legal frameworks to ensure criminalization of facilitation acts, while maintaining narrow and precise definitions of terrorism and organized crime offences, in accordance with international law;
 - Strengthen capacity to gather and preserve evidence, including electronic evidence;
 - Adopt investigative and prosecutorial strategies that prioritize building cases against organized crime or terrorism networks and those who finance and support them, and establish plea-bargaining or other incentives for the accused to cooperate with authorities;
 - Build capacity in the field of prison management to ensure that the corrections system can fulfil its role to rehabilitate organized crime and terrorism offenders and prevent the forging of new linkages between terrorism and organized crime in prison settings. This requires to continue building police-prison intelligence, rehabilitation programmes for violent extremist prisoners, and prison management strategies conducive to rehabilitation and reintegration;
 - And finally, ensure that all of these measures comply with obligations under international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee laws.
- These actions will support a strong response to terrorism but also to other forms of serious and organized crime that can be a threat to security, peace and development, helping to overcome the siloed approach. They further form the bedrock of a strong criminal justice response to these inter-linked crimes.
- UNODC looks forward to continuing to support Member States in addressing the linkages between terrorism and organized crime. As the UN Secretariat body entrusted with promoting implementation of the conventions on transnational organized crime, corruption and drugs, as well as the international instruments against terrorism and the UN standards and norms on crime prevention and criminal justice, UNODC is mandated to address these crimes in a holistic manner.
- Only through our combined and coordinated efforts can we ensure there is no safe haven for terrorists or those who support them.

A

GTI Ranks & Scores, 2023

GTI Rank	Country	2023 GTI score (out of 10)	Change in score (2022-2023)
1	Burkina Faso	8.571	0.41
2	Israel	8.143	3.743
3	Mali	7.998	0.015
4	Pakistan	7.916	0.306
5	Syria	7.89	0.119
6	Afghanistan	7.825	-0.634
7	Somalia	7.814	-0.233
8	Nigeria	7.575	-0.005
9	Myanmar	7.536	-0.032
10	Niger	7.274	0.221
11	Iraq	7.078	-0.604
12	Cameroon	6.98	0.23
13	Democratic Republic of the Congo	6.514	0.324
14	India	6.324	-0.252
15	Mozambique	6.267	-0.461
16	Colombia	6.188	0.156
17	Chile	5.679	-0.257
18	Kenya	5.616	0.196
19	Philippines	5.383	-0.216
20	Egypt	5.221	-0.676
21	Chad	4.987	-0.375
22	Palestine	4.966	0.821
23	Yemen	4.951	0.243
24	Benin	4.898	0.693
25	Togo	4.67	0.749
26	Iran	4.464	0.029
27	Uganda	4.377	1.931
28	Thailand	4.219	-0.376
29	Türkiye	4.168	-0.68
30	United States of America	4.141	0.026
31	Indonesia	3.993	-0.597
32	Bangladesh	3.317	0.67
33	Sri Lanka	3.072	-0.684
34	Greece	3.028	-0.604
35	Russia	3.016	0.328

GTI Rank	Country	2023 GTI score (out of 10)	Change in score (2022-2023)
36	Tunisia	2.914	0.067
37	Germany	2.782	-0.439
38	France	2.647	-0.693
39	Libya	2.469	-1.196
40	Burundi	2.434	-0.654
41	United Kingdom	2.373	-0.31
42	Tanzania	2.267	-0.685
43	Angola	2.254	2.224
44	Algeria	2.197	-0.766
45	Nepal	2.163	-0.831
46	Côte d’Ivoire	2.06	-0.66
47	Peru	2.045	-0.675
48	Djibouti	2.035	-0.63
49	Brazil	1.988	-0.629
50	New Zealand	1.947	-0.623
51	Belgium	1.904	0.326
52	Canada	1.753	-0.33
53	Norway	1.747	-0.606
54	Ukraine	1.686	1.124
55	Spain	1.669	-0.023
56	Lebanon	1.562	-0.659
57	Australia	1.475	-0.61
58	Italy	1.447	-0.641
59	Central African Republic	1.445	-0.572
60	Saudi Arabia	1.366	0.157
61	Argentina	1.274	-0.594
62	Ethiopia	1.272	-0.586
63	Kosovo	1.218	1.188
64	Japan	1.189	-0.05
65	Venezuela	1.174	-1.035
66	Slovakia	1.092	-0.513
67	Mexico	1.04	-0.007
68	Austria	0.953	-0.549
69	Tajikistan	0.871	-1.335
70	Sweden	0.735	-0.43
71	Switzerland	0.627	-0.452

GTI Rank	Country	2023 GTI score (out of 10)	Change in score (2022-2023)
72	Cyprus	0.616	0.11
73	China	0.582	0.582
74	Netherlands	0.577	-0.403
75	Jordan	0.455	-0.439
76	Armenia	0.423	0.423
77	Uzbekistan	0.423	-0.297
78	Paraguay	0.241	-0.372
79	United Arab Emirates	0.233	-0.19
80	Iceland	0.233	-0.19
81	Malaysia	0.192	-0.286
82	Eswatini	0.18	-0.153
83	Ecuador	0.167	-0.856
84	Bahrain	0.123	-0.11
85	Rwanda	0.114	-0.103
86	Uruguay	0.114	-0.119
87	Lithuania	0.059	-0.055
88	Ireland	0.03	-0.029
89	Albania	0	0
89	Azerbaijan	0	0
89	Bulgaria	0	0
89	Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	0
89	Belarus	0	0
89	Bolivia	0	0
89	Bhutan	0	0
89	Botswana	0	0
89	Republic of the Congo	0	0
89	Costa Rica	0	0
89	Cuba	0	0
89	Czechia	0	0
89	Denmark	0	-0.03
89	Dominican Republic	0	0
89	Eritrea	0	0
89	Estonia	0	0
89	Finland	0	0
89	Gabon	0	0
89	Georgia	0	0
89	Ghana	0	0
89	Guinea	0	0
89	The Gambia	0	0
89	Guinea-Bissau	0	0
89	Georgia	0	0
89	Guinea	0	0
89	The Gambia	0	0
89	Guinea-Bissau	0	0
89	Equatorial Guinea	0	0
89	Guatemala	0	0
89	Guyana	0	0
89	Honduras	0	0
89	Croatia	0	0

GTI Rank	Country	2023 GTI score (out of 10)	Change in score (2022-2023)
89	Haiti	0	0
89	Hungary	0	0
89	Jamaica	0	0
89	Kazakhstan	0	0
89	Kyrgyz Republic	0	0
89	Cambodia	0	0
89	South Korea	0	0
89	Kuwait	0	0
89	Laos	0	0
89	Liberia	0	0
89	Lesotho	0	0
89	Latvia	0	0
89	Morocco	0	-0.192
89	Moldova	0	0
89	Madagascar	0	0
89	North Macedonia	0	0
89	Montenegro	0	0
89	Mongolia	0	0
89	Mauritania	0	-0.059
89	Mauritius	0	0
89	Malawi	0	0
89	Namibia	0	0
89	Nicaragua	0	0
89	Oman	0	0
89	Panama	0	0
89	Papua New Guinea	0	0
89	Poland	0	0
89	North Korea	0	0
89	Portugal	0	0
89	Qatar	0	0
89	Romania	0	-0.167
89	Sudan	0	0
89	Senegal	0	-0.333
89	Singapore	0	0
89	Sierra Leone	0	0
89	El Salvador	0	0
89	Serbia	0	0
89	South Sudan	0	0
89	Slovenia	0	0
89	Turkmenistan	0	0
89	Timor-Leste	0	0
89	Trinidad and Tobago	0	0
89	Taiwan	0	0
89	Vietnam	0	-0.044
89	South Africa	0	-0.217
89	Zambia	0	0
89	Zimbabwe	0	0

B

50 Worst Terrorist Attacks in 2023

Rank	Country	Date	State/Province	Organisation	Fatalities	Attack type
1	Israel	7/10/2023	HaDarom	Hamas	1200	Armed attack
2	Niger	16/11/2023	Tallberi	JNIM	200	Armed attack
3	Syria	5/10/2023	Homs	Separatist/Nationalist (undetermined)	89	UAV/Drone attack
4	Pakistan	30/1/2023	Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	84	Bombing
5	Burkina Faso	17/2/2023	Sahel	Islamic State (IS)	71	Armed attack
6	Burkina Faso	26/2/2023	Est	JNIM	70	Armed attack
7	Burkina Faso	5/11/2023	Centre-Nord	Jihadist (undetermined)	70	Armed attack
8	Mali	1/3/2023	Gao	Islamic State (IS)	60	Armed attack
9	Nigeria	19/8/2023	Borno	Islamic State West Africa (ISWA)	60	Armed attack
10	Burkina Faso	24/12/2023	Nord	JNIM	60	Armed attack
11	Somalia	26/5/2023	Shabeellaha Hoose	Al-Shabaab	54	Armed attack
12	Pakistan	30/7/2023	Federally Administered Tribal Ar	Islamic State - Khorasan Province	54	Bombing
13	Syria	17/2/2023	Homs	Shia militia (undefined)	53	Armed attack
14	Burkina Faso	4/9/2023	Nord	JNIM	53	Armed attack
15	Pakistan	29/9/2023	Balochistan	Jihadist (undetermined)	53	Bombing
16	Nigeria	5/7/2023	Borno	Islamic State West Africa (ISWA)	50	Armed attack
17	Burkina Faso	24/10/2023	Est	Islamic State (IS)	50	Armed attack
18	Mali	7/9/2023	Timbuktu	JNIM	49	Explosive projectile
19	Nigeria	24/8/2023	Borno	Islamic State West Africa (ISWA)	41	Armed attack
20	Burkina Faso	15/4/2023	Nord	Jihadist (undetermined)	40	Armed attack
21	Burkina Faso	26/11/2023	Sahel	JNIM	40	Armed attack
22	Uganda	16/6/2023	Kasese	Islamic State (IS)	37	Armed attack
23	Somalia	4/1/2023	Hiiraan	Al-Shabaab	35	Bombing
24	Nigeria	8/1/2023	Borno	Boko Haram	35	Armed attack
25	Democratic Republic of the Congo	9/3/2023	Nord-Kivu	Islamic State (IS)	35	Armed attack

Rank	Country	Date	State/Province	Organisation	Fatalities	Attack type
26	Burkina Faso	26/6/2023	Centre-Nord	JNIM	34	Armed attack
27	Burkina Faso	27/4/2023	Est	Jihadist (undetermined)	33	Armed attack
28	Burkina Faso	11/5/2023	Boucle du Mouhoun	Jihadist (undetermined)	33	Armed attack
29	Syria	16/4/2023	Hamah	Islamic State (IS)	32	Armed attack
30	Burkina Faso	6/4/2023	Sahel	Jihadist (undetermined)	31	Armed attack
31	Niger	15/8/2023	Tallberi	Jihadist (undetermined)	31	Armed attack
32	Nigeria	8/3/2023	Borno	Islamic State West Africa (ISWA)	30	Armed attack
33	Burkina Faso	28/5/2023	Boucle du Mouhoun	JNIM	30	Armed attack
34	Burkina Faso	26/6/2023	Centre-Nord	JNIM	30	Armed attack
35	Niger	29/9/2023	Tallberi	Islamic State (IS)	30	Armed attack
36	Mali	12/12/2023	Ségou	JNIM	30	Armed attack
37	Niger	2/10/2023	Tahoua	Jihadist (undetermined)	29	Bombing
38	Mali	3/12/2023	Gao	Islamic State (IS)	29	Armed attack
39	Burkina Faso	27/6/2023	Haut-Bassins	JNIM	28	Armed attack
40	Burkina Faso	11/10/2023	Est	JNIM	28	Armed attack
41	Mali	6/12/2023	Mopti	JNIM	27	Armed attack
42	Democratic Republic of the Congo	19/5/2023	Nord-Kivu	Islamic State (IS)	26	Armed attack
43	Democratic Republic of the Congo	23/10/2023	Nord-Kivu	Islamic State (IS)	26	Armed attack
44	Democratic Republic of the Congo	12/11/2023	Nord-Kivu	Islamic State (IS)	26	Armed attack
45	Burkina Faso	4/2/2023	Sahel	Jihadist (undetermined)	25	Armed attack
46	Mali	19/3/2023	Gao	Jihadist (undetermined)	25	Armed attack
47	Burkina Faso	27/5/2023	Boucle du Mouhoun	JNIM	25	Armed attack
48	Burkina Faso	6/8/2023	Centre-Est	Jihadist (undetermined)	25	Armed attack
49	Syria	11/8/2023	Dayr Az Zawr	Islamic State (IS)	25	Armed attack
50	Burkina Faso	25/8/2023	Centre-Nord	JNIM	24	Armed attack



GTI Methodology

The GTI ranks 163 countries based on four indicators weighted over five years. A country’s annual GTI score is based on a unique scoring system to account for the relative impact of incidents in the year. The four factors counted in each country’s yearly score are:

- ▶ total number of terrorist incidents in a given year
- ▶ total number of fatalities caused by terrorists in a given year
- ▶ total number of injuries caused by terrorists in a given year
- ▶ total number of hostages caused by terrorists in a given year

Each of the factors is weighted between zero and three, and a five year weighted average is applied in a bid to reflect the latent psychological effect of terrorist acts over time. The weightings shown in Table C.1 were determined through consultation with the GPI Expert Panel.

The greatest weighting is attributed to a fatality.

HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE OF A COUNTRY’S GTI SCORE

To assign a score to a country each incident is rated according to the four measures. The measures are then multiplied by their weighting factor and aggregated. This is done for all incidents and then all incidents for each country are aggregated to give the country score. To illustrate, Table C.2 depicts a hypothetical country’s record for a given year.

TABLE C.1

Indicator weights used in the Global Terrorism Index

Dimension	Weight
Total number of incidents	1
Total number of fatalities	3
Total number of injuries	0.5
Total number of hostages	0.5

TABLE C.2

Hypothetical country terrorist attacks in a given year

Dimension	Weight	Number of incidents for the given year	Calculated raw score
Total number of incidents	1	21	21
Total number of fatalities	3	36	108
Total number of injuries	0.5	53	26.5
Total number of hostages	0.5	20	10
Total raw score			166.5

Given these indicator values, this hypothetical country for that year would be assessed as having an impact of terrorism of

$$(1 \times 21) + (3 \times 36) + (0.5 \times 53) + (0.5 \times 20) = 166.5.$$

FIVE-YEAR WEIGHTED AVERAGE

To account for the after effects of trauma that terrorist attacks have on a society, the GTI takes into consideration the events of previous years as having a bearing on a country's current score. For instance, the scale of the 2011 terrorist attacks in Norway will continue to have a psychological impact on the population for many years to come. To account for the lingering effects of terrorism, the prior four years are also included in the scoring with a decreasing weight each year. Table C.3 highlights the weights used for each year.

TABLE C.3

Time weighting of historical scores

Year	Weight	% of Score
Current year	16	52
Previous year	8	26
Two years ago	4	13
Three years ago	2	6
Four years ago	1	3

LOGARITHMIC BANDING SCORES ON A SCALE OF 1-10

The impact of terrorism is not evenly distributed throughout the world. There are a handful of countries with very high levels of terrorism compared to most countries which experience only low levels or no terrorism. To produce a more equally distributed index, the GTI uses a base 10 logarithmic banding system between 0 and 10 at 0.5 intervals.

As shown in Table C.4 this mapping method yields a total number of 21 bands. This maps all values to a band of size 0.5 within the scale of 0-10. In order to band these scores, the following method is used:

1. Define the Minimum GTI Score across all countries as having a banded score of 0.
2. Define the Maximum GTI Score across all countries as having a banded score 10.
3. Subtract the Minimum from the Maximum GTI scores and calculate 'r' by:
 - a. $\text{root} = 2 \times (\text{Highest GTI Banded Score} - \text{Lowest GTI Banded Score}) = 2 \times (10 - 0) = 20$
 - b. $\text{Range} = 2 \times (\text{Highest Recorded GTI Raw Score} - \text{Lowest Recorded GTI Raw Score})$
 - c. $r = \sqrt[\text{root}]{\text{range} - 1}$ for all values of root between 1 to 21

This method produces the set of bands used in the GTI listed in Table C.4.

TABLE C.4

Bands used in the GTI

Band number	Bands	Band cut off values	Band number	Bands	Band cut off values
1	0	0	12	5.5	578.19
2	0.5	1.78	13	6	1030.79
3	1	3.18	14	6.5	1837.66
4	1.5	5.67	15	7	3276.14
5	2	10.1	16	7.5	5840.64
6	2.5	18.01	17	8	10412.57
7	3	32.11	18	8.5	18563.3
8	3.5	57.24	19	9	33094.25
9	4	102.04	20	9.5	58999.71
10	4.5	181.92	21	10	105183.4
11	5	324.32			

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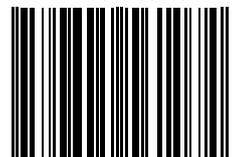
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