The Uncertain Trends in the “Wars” on Terrorism: Challenges of State Terrorism, Insurgency and Other Key Problems

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Overview and Main Conclusions
Seventeen years after the start of the first major U.S. war on terrorism – and tens of thousands of casualties and more than two trillion dollars later – the U.S. still lacks a credible database on international terrorism. There is no common official database at the interagency level, there are deep disagreements over the size and success of given threats, and there are major gaps in coverage. Each “war” on terrorism has its own approach (and usually approaches) to estimating the threat and to judging what parameters are important.

There are a wide range of databases outside the U.S. government, ranging from commercial efforts to academic and NGO assessments. They often sharply disagree, and many are clearly political or ideological in character. The closest thing to an official database is the one used by the U.S. State Department in its Country Reports on Terrorism and its Annex of Statistical Information. The report and annex provide an overview of the global trends in terrorism. This database was originally developed by RAND, and was then maintained by the National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC).

The START Database

As the most recent State Department report makes clear, this database for this report is now maintained by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), which is an academic consortium maintained by the University of Maryland. The U.S. Department of State contracted with START to collect a Statistical Annex dataset and provide a report to include in the State Department’s annual Country Reports on Terrorism.

The State Department report indicates that START has maintained this Global Terrorism Database (GTD) since 2001, and it is an unclassified event database compiled from information in open-source reports of terrorist attacks. The first version of the GTD was released in 2006 and included information on worldwide terrorism from 1970 to 1997. START now routinely updates and improves the accuracy of the data. The full GTD (1970-2017) and accompanying documentation are available to the public at http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd. Its Advanced Search system is available at https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/.

Problems in the Data

The database has many limitations that are laid out in detail by START. Limitations include a dependence on media reporting – rather than on intelligence and official reporting – and a lack of any official support, review, or vetting by intelligence personnel and other experts. START is not charged with publicly examining the range of other databases and their comparative strengths and weaknesses, nor are they charged with explicitly assessing and reporting the problems in collecting and analyzing given sets of data.
START makes it clear that there are high levels of uncertainty that vary sharply by region, country, and perpetrator. It also makes it clear that there is no agreed upon definition of terrorism or on the movements and actions that should be described as terrorist in nature.

Less clear, however, is that START issues summary data that does not explicitly state the level of uncertainty chosen, and — as this analysis shows — it seems to use different sets of indicators for different countries and regions. This seems particularly true of its coverage of military targets. In an era of sectarian and ethnic conflict, it does not clearly identify perpetrators or targets by sect, ethnicity, or tribe. Key trends are often summarized without an explanation of the cause or motive.

This does not prevent the State Department Country Reports on Terrorism and its Annex of Statistical Information from having great value in portraying the broader trends in terrorism, but the reader should be aware of these limits, as well as the fact that other official, academic/think tank, and commercial estimates of terrorism can provide very different trends.

Focusing on the 2017 Report and Annex

The latest versions of the U.S. State Department Country Reports on Terrorism and its Annex of Statistical Information were issued on August 19, 2018, and are the focus of this graphic analysis. They note that changes in methodology over time raise questions about the continuity of the data, but the impact is unclear. What is clear is that the START database used in the Annex of Statistical Information has a very different list of terrorist groups or perpetrators from the list of U.S. Government Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations, and the START data base has changed in structure and content over time — limiting some aspects of the comparability of the data from year-to-year.

Uncertain Overall Trends in Terrorism in 2016: Case Study One


Ironically, its database can also lead to major differences in reporting by users of the START database. The graphic analysis that follows draws on another model developed by Our World in Data to provide additional detail on comparative trends. This model states that it uses some of the START Global Terrorism Database, though it was only updated to 2016 when the Our World in Data version was prepared. If one compares the data for 2016 in the Annex to the Our World in Data report the are major differences:
Conflicting Estimates of Global Terrorism in 2016

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<th>Terrorism Fatalities</th>
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<td>Our World in Data</td>
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<td>% Difference</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The data for 2017 – which is the main focus of this graphic analysis – provides both another case study in the uncertainty in the key trends in global terrorism and a case study in the problems in relying on a database that was never structured to take account for the fact that nation states are often the perpetrators of major acts of terrorism, and successful extremist and terrorist movements can move from scattered acts of terrorism to fighting major insurgencies.

The main report and Annex of Statistical Information provides a summary assessment and graph of the trend in total incidents and deaths by month from 2012-2017 – a period that covers the failed U.S. attempts to disengage its combat forces from Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the period of worst fighting against ISIS. This graph is shown in Figure One, and the State Department Annex concludes that,

...the global trends in terrorist attacks observed in 2017 are the continuation of an overall pattern of decline that began in 2014 following a rapid increase in terrorist violence. This rapid increase was largely the result of violence carried out by ISIS and allied groups including Boko Haram in Nigeria, as well as the Taliban in Afghanistan. Likewise, the subsequent decline was primarily the product of decreasing levels of violence by these same groups. Despite these patterns, these groups remained several of the deadliest terrorist groups in the world in 2017.

There are good reasons to question both these conclusions, and the way in which the State Department main report and Annex of Statistical Information are structured. These are reasons that raise serious questions about the way the U.S. is approaching the very nature of terrorism and its wars against extremism.

Describing Less than Half the Problem: Ignoring State Terrorism

The first – and most serious – reason to question how well the Annex and its data characterize the broader threat from terrorism comes from the way in which terrorism is defined. It only includes "violent acts carried out by non-state actors." The main report does include "State Sponsors of Terrorism," but only describes the ways given nations sponsor non-state actors. Neither the main report nor the Annex of Statistical Information address the fact that states commit direct acts of terrorism, or the extent to which non-state actors are reacting to such terrorism.
This leads to a critical lack of coverage in a wide number of cases. Examples include:

- The Syrian civil war has almost certainly produced over 500,000 dead and a larger number of wounded. The UN estimates that roughly half the population has been made into refugees and independently displaced persons, and the CIA World Factbook estimates that, "Syria's economy has deeply deteriorated amid the ongoing conflict that began in 2011, declining by more than 70% from 2010 to 2017."

  ISIS has played a remarkably destructive role in Eastern Syria, but it is the Assad regime – supported by Iran, the Hezbollah, and Russia – that has been responsible for the vast majority of the killing, injuries, and damage done in Syria's far more populated West. There are no reliable estimates. However, if one examines the number of deaths shown worldwide for non-state actors in Figure One, looks at the various civilian casualty estimates for Syria, and looks at media reporting on the locations of such attacks, the Assad regime's state terrorism may well have killed more civilians since 2012 than all of the world's non-state actors combined.

- State terrorism and the military in Myanmar has killed, injured, and displaced a vast number of the country's Muslims or Rohingya.

- China is reported to have displaced or suppressed the freedom of millions of Uighurs in Western China.

- The Turkish regime deliberately provoked Turkish Kurds into renewing a civil war in Turkey to help Erdogan win a new mandate for power. There are very real terrorist elements among the Turkish Kurds, but Turkish state terrorism has become a growing issue and one that affects mass arrests and firings of ethnic Turks – not just Kurds.

- Nations like Algeria, Egypt, and Russia face very real terrorist threats, but their counterterrorism activities sometimes cross the line into repression and state terrorism. The cases where state terrorism (and counterterrorism) help breed terrorism need to be clearly identified – not just the actions of non-state actors.

- Civil wars like the war in Yemen have certainly been driven by non-state state actors like the Houthi. At the same time, the failures of the Saleh and Hadi regimes and the levels of violence on the other side that reflect a form of state terrorism also need to be flagged and analyzed.

- State terrorism often has a very different character from non-state terrorism. It can involve arrests, detentions, and convictions/imprisons rather than the kind of incident counted for non-state actors. It can also involve large-scale forced movement and economic and severe human rights penalties for large elements of the population. Once again, only focusing on non-state actors – and direct violence in the form of immediate killing and injuries – grossly understates the real scale of terrorism and the extent to which state terrorism breeds non-state terrorism. In fact, looking at the recent UN reporting on refugees and IDPs, and the states involved, it seems likely that state-driven terrorism and repression impacts far more civilians than the actions of non-state actors.

The U.S. does separately examine a number of these issues in broad terms in the annual State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and International Religious Freedom, but the present reporting on terrorism seems to cover fewer than half these problems. It provides no basis for understanding the extent to which non-state action is provoked or sustained by state terrorism, and presents the threat almost solely in terms of non-state actors rather than addressing key causes of the terrorism and the threat it poses.
The Counterinsurgency Disconnect: Understating the Role of Non-State Actors

The second major problem is that the main report only counts acts of terrorism that meet two-of-three criteria, while the Annex of Statistical Information only counts acts of terrorism that meet all three of the following criteria:

- The violent act was aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal;
- The violent act included evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) other than the immediate victims; and
- The violent act was outside the precepts of International Humanitarian Law insofar as it targeted non-combatants.

There is no "good" definition of terrorism in the sense that it can meet the different expectations, values, and goals of those who seek to define it. In broad terms, the criteria used by the State Department and START form as good a definition as any for terrorism committed by non-state actors that do not hold or control significant amounts of territory. The criteria, however, does not apply to non-state actors that become strong enough to pose a serious insurgent threat, and/or control or influence a large amount of territory or the population.

This is critical gap at a time when many terrorist movements have come to pose a serious threat in terms of occupying or controlling territory (Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria), can threaten the existence of governments (Sub-Saharan Africa), or create or exploit a situation where there is no effective national government (Libya, Yemen).

The U.S. is now fighting movements like ISIS, Al Qaida, and the Taliban with mixed success, as well as supporting a long list of countries in fights with their affiliates or other movements. In many cases, the threat has escalated from isolated or sporadic acts of terrorism to active insurgency or ongoing patterns of attacks that use terrorism and other forms of violence to systematically undermine a given government.

The most serious case-in-point is ISIS, though the Taliban is a close second. Both have posed major ongoing threats in 2017. In the case of ISIS, it faced major defeats in serious fighting where it systematically used violence and intimidation to create human shields, sought to control the population, and systematically displaced or killed civilian opposition. Its seems likely, for example, that ISIS violence directly affected more civilians in the battle of Mosul alone in 2017 than were directly pressured or subjected to ISIS violence in any given previous year. Similarly, the Taliban posed its largest threat to civilians in 2017, and civilian casualties peaked in Yemen.

However, the State Department report and the Annex of Statistical Information do not take the broader fighting and levels of non-state actor violence into account, and conclude that a major cut took place in terrorism between 2016 and 2017:
• The total number of terrorist attacks worldwide in 2017 decreased by 23 percent and total deaths due to terrorist attacks decreased by 27 percent, compared to 2016. While numerous countries saw a decline in terrorist violence between 2016 and 2017, this overall trend was largely due to dramatically fewer attacks and deaths in Iraq. Twenty-four percent of all deaths in terrorist attacks in 2017 were perpetrator deaths, down from 26 percent in 2016. This statistic was historically much lower but began to increase in the 2000s, largely due to shifting tactics in Afghanistan and, to a lesser extent, in Iraq in the 2010s.

• Although terrorist attacks took place in 100 countries in 2017, they were concentrated geographically. Fifty-nine percent of all attacks took place in five countries (Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Pakistan, and the Philippines), and 70 percent of all deaths due to terrorist attacks took place in five countries (Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, and Syria).

• The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) was responsible for more attacks and deaths than any other perpetrator group in 2017. However, ISIS carried out 23 percent fewer terrorist attacks and caused 53 percent fewer total deaths, compared to 2016. ISIS and groups that have pledged allegiance to ISIS carried out attacks in more than 20 countries in 2017. The most active ISIS affiliates were in Afghanistan/Pakistan, Egypt, and West Africa.

• The number of kidnapping victims and hostages declined 43 percent between 2016 and 2017, a notable shift from previous years which saw sharp increases in the number of kidnapping victims and hostages, primarily due to attacks involving exceptionally large numbers of victims.

• In several of the locations that experienced the most terrorism in 2017, a decrease in terrorist attacks coincided with a decrease in the total number of people killed in terrorist attacks. These countries include Iraq (-56%), Syria (-48%), Nigeria, (-16%), and Pakistan (-11%).

A Nightmare of Conflicting Data

The key uncertainties in the patterns in the estimates provided by the Annex of Statistical Information emerge clearly in two Figures. Figure Two shows the estimated decline in deaths, injured, and kidnapped/hostages in the ten most violent countries. Figure Three shows the five perpetrator groups with the most attacks worldwide in 2017.

Both Figures show a sharp decline in the level of violence caused by ISIS in 2017, and the overall level of violence in Iraq. The pattern is less clear in Afghanistan, where the incident rate dropped, but there was a slight increase in deaths and drop in injuries. At the same time, in country trend data shown in Figure Four – all countries where the level of internal violence and insurgency increased sharply in 2017, along with civilian casualties – show major dips in 2017 in terms of terrorism. It seems likely that if these Figures included the overall level of violence, death, and injuries in Iraq and Syria, the drop would be substantially reversed or increased.

There are also some additional problems in such data. There are gaps and contradictions between the totals in Figure Two and Figure Three that are not explained in the Annex. If one compares the data in the two Figures, the totals for all main ISIS action worldwide accounted for only 44% of the attacks in Iraq alone, but it accounted for 102% of the killed, 80% of the injured, and 111% of the kidnappings and hostages.
The report highlights a number of trends for Iraq but does not attempt to explain them or even mention the massive increase in the fighting that took place between 2016 and 2017. It ranks Syria last in the top-ten score of violent countries and does not address the trends in that country.

It is also unclear that the report’s comments on national trends in Iraq draw on the same data based on ISIS as the top perpetrator data.

- By a wide margin, more terrorist attacks took place in Iraq than in any other country in 2017. However, as terrorist violence decreased in Iraq in 2017 the number of people killed in terrorist attacks was less than one-half what it was in 2016 and the number of people injured was less than one-third what it was in 2016. As a result of these declines, Afghanistan surpassed Iraq as the country with the most casualties due to terrorist attacks in 2017.

- Perpetrator deaths comprised 23 percent of all deaths due to terrorist attacks in Iraq in 2017, down from 25 percent as the number of perpetrators killed in terrorist attacks declined from more than 2,400 in 2016 to fewer than 1,000 in 2017.

- ISIS remained the primary perpetrator of terrorist attacks in Iraq in 2017. For 60 percent of attacks in Iraq, source materials did not attribute responsibility to a particular perpetrator, group, or organization; however, ISIS was identified as the perpetrator in 97 percent of the remaining attacks for which a perpetrator organization was named. The number of attacks ISIS carried out in Iraq decreased from 946 in 2016 to 762 in 2017 (-24%).

- The total number of people killed in terrorist attacks in Iraq decreased 56 percent in 2017, due in large part to a decrease in exceptionally lethal attacks. In 2016, more than 9,700 people were killed in terrorist attacks in Iraq, including more than 2,700 killed in 22 attacks that killed 50 people or more. Four of these attacks killed 250 people or more. In contrast, there were five terrorist attacks in 2017 that killed 50 people or more, none of which killed 250 people or more.

Somewhat similar problems emerge for Afghanistan. The total Taliban activity worldwide accounted for only 60% of the attacks in Afghanistan alone, but 93% of the killed, 65% of the injured, and 84% of the kidnappings and hostages. The report summarizes the trends in Table Two as follows, and again does not mention the heavy wartime fighting in either year:

- The total number of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan decreased 13 percent between 2016 and 2017, while the total number of deaths increased two percent. At the same time, perpetrator deaths declined eight percent, though the percentage of total fatalities in Afghanistan that were perpetrator deaths remained especially high – 46 percent, compared to 24 percent worldwide.

- Like Iraq, Pakistan, India, and Somalia, Afghanistan experienced a large decrease (-51%) in the number of people kidnapped or taken hostage in terrorist attacks in 2017.

- Information about perpetrator groups was reported for more than two-thirds of all attacks in Afghanistan in 2017 (69%).
  - The majority of these attacks (86%) were attributed to the Taliban. Attacks carried out by the Taliban in 2017 killed more than 3,500 people (including nearly 2,000 perpetrators) and wounded more than 3,100 additional people. These patterns were remarkably stable between 2016 and 2017.
The number of terrorist attacks attributed to the Khorasan branch of ISIS in Afghanistan more than doubled, from 58 terrorist attacks resulting in more than 500 deaths in 2016, to 119 attacks resulting in more than 670 deaths in 2017.

Comparing Terrorism Casualties to Wartime Casualties

As the graphic analysis that follows shows, an effort to go further and compare the Annex estimates of casualties to estimates of total wartime casualties reveals another set of problems.

Unfortunately, there are no official numbers that reflect the total patterns of violence in Iraq and Syria in 2016 and 2017. The UN stopped making estimates for Syria several years ago. Iraq Body Count, however, provides respected NGO estimates for Iraq. Its totals for direct wartime casualties – which may exclude many terrorist casualties – are 17,578 for 2015, 16,393 for 2016, and a preliminary 13,387 for 2017. These totals are roughly twice the total deaths counted in the State Department Annex – which are 9,782 for 2016 and 4,269 in 2017. (https://www伊拉qbodycount.org/database/).

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) provides respected estimated for Syria. Its estimates for direct civilian casualties total 13,617 for 2016 and 10,517 for 2017 – which may be very conservative. These casualties compare with Annex estimates of 2,119 for 2016, and 1,096 for 2017 in the Annex data provide in Figure Two.

The situation is reversed in the case of Afghanistan. The UN provides widely accepted civilian casualty estimates for Afghanistan. These total 2,138 for the casualties caused by all threat elements in 2016, and 2,303 for 2017. The estimates seem very low for the scale of the ongoing fighting, and it is interesting that Table Two shows the Annex estimates 4,578 for 2016 and 4,672 for 2017. In this case, the total casualties from war are only half the casualties for all non-combat terrorism.

Reporting on the Other Impacts of Terrorism

The graphic analyses for the wars in Iraq, Syria, Afghan, and Yemen also highlight another problem. It may be legitimate not to attempt to identify the causes of terrorism or extremist violence. There is no agreement among experts as to what potential causes are most important or how to weight them. It is clear, however, that simply counting the number of incidents or attacks does nothing to explain the seriousness of given patterns of terrorism and extremism, and put them in perspective.

The current database now only covers the impact of terrorism in terms of deaths, injuries, and kidnappings/hostage taking. It does not tie terrorism and extremism to the creation of millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, enduring sectarian and ethnic violence, impact on minorities, fights for the control of space and populations, and the
massive costs in economic, social, and infrastructure terms. One has only to look at the UN OCHA graphics for each war – or review the World Bank and other reporting on terrorism’s impact on governance and economic development – to realize that short-term impacts in terms of deaths, injuries, and kidnappings/hostage taking may well be a fraction of the human cost of terrorism and extremism.

Restructuring the Estimates of Terrorism

There are several conclusions that should be drawn from these figures:

• The first is that START has made an excellent start, but the U.S. needs a fully adequate open-source database on terrorism, one that has the full resources needed to provide comprehensive coverage, and one where the analysts have the support of experts in the U.S. intelligence and law enforcement community to create accurate reports through suitable background briefings and selective declassification of material that can be released on an open-source basis. At another level, an interagency review is needed to develop some agreed database at more sensitive levels.

• The second is the need to explicitly analyze the trends in state terrorism. No meaningful analysis of terrorism can ignore the reality that state actors are often as active in terrorism as non-state actors.

• The third is the need to tie the present method of defining and estimating terrorism to the fact that insurgencies and counterinsurgencies are having a massive impact on the role and levels of violence committed by non-state extremist groups. The present data on the most serious threat actors are too contradictory to be useful, and the problems would be even more severe if the estimates included a full breakout of the violence committed by non-state actors like Hezbollah or Iranian "volunteers."

• Finally, in a world where so much terrorism is driven by religious, ethnic, and tribal anger and violence, the individual incident reports – and totals for incidents and casualties – should identify the perpetrator and target by sect, ethnicity, and tribe where this is the key motive and/or objective
Figure One: State Department’s annual *Country Reports on Terrorism*. Annex of Statistical Information Summary of the Global Trends in Terrorism in 2012-2017 (Terrorist attacks and total deaths worldwide by month, 2012 - 2017)

### Figure Two: Ten Countries with the Most Terrorist Attacks, 2017

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<td>484</td>
<td>327</td>
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<td>735</td>
<td>4.20</td>
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*Includes perpetrators

Figure Three: Five Perpetrator Groups with the Most Attacks Worldwide, 2017

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<td>1121</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes perpetrators
** Excludes attacks attributed to branches of ISIS or ISIS-inspired individuals


Adapted from START Global Terrorism Data Base, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?chart=casualties&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=2000&end_yearonly=2017&dtp2=all&region=10; 3.8.18
Additional Global Trends in Terrorist Incidents and Casualties
Key Issues in START Data

• Does not include State Terrorism
• Does not reflect impact of insurgency, war, or outcome of struggle to control territory
• Open-source and media driven. Nations differ sharply in media coverage and in allowing accurate media coverage, particularly in Asia.
• Uses START estimate and list of terrorist groups, and not U.S. officially designated list of terrorist groups.
• Uses all criteria to define terrorist incidents, while State Department report uses two out-of-three.
• Database does not allow easy graphing of comparative trends in incidents and outcome of violence in terms of deaths, injuries, and kidnappings/hostages.
• Database does include substantial uncertainty data, but Annex does not explain probable levels of uncertainty or compare outcome with other estimates of terrorism.
Main Report

Despite our successes, the terrorist landscape grew more complex in 2017. ISIS, al-Qa’ida, and their affiliates have proven to be resilient, determined, and adaptable, and they have adjusted to heightened counterterrorism pressure in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia, Yemen, and elsewhere. They have become more dispersed and clandestine, turning to the internet to inspire attacks by distant followers, and, as a result, have made themselves less susceptible to conventional military action. Further, the return or relocation of foreign terrorist fighters from the battlefield has contributed to a growing cadre of experienced, sophisticated, and connected terrorist networks, which can plan and execute terrorist attacks.

As ISIS lost territory, it continued to shift away from a centralized command and control structure toward a more diffuse model. It has experimented with and employed small unmanned aerial systems and has used rudimentary chemical weapons. The group encouraged sympathizers to use whatever weapons were at hand – such as large vehicles – against soft targets and public spaces. Increasingly, the responsibility for deciding where, when, and how to attack has devolved to homegrown terrorists inspired or enabled by ISIS to conduct operations far from the war zone. In 2017, we saw such attacks in Manchester, UK; Barcelona, Spain; Sinai, Egypt; Marawi, Philippines; New York City; and elsewhere.

Al-Qa’ida quietly expanded its membership and operations in 2017. Its global network includes the remnants of its core in Afghanistan and Pakistan, al-Nusrah Front (in Syria), al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula, al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb, al-Shabaab (in Somalia), and al-Qa’ida in the Indian Subcontinent. Nusrah’s formation of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, drawing in other hardline Syrian opposition groups, exemplified its effort to rebrand itself to appeal to a wider segment of the Syrian population. Al-Qa’ida affiliates also conducted major attacks, such as in October 2017, when al-Shabaab detonated a truck bomb in the heart of Mogadishu, killing over 300 people, the deadliest terrorist attack in Somali history. Al-Qa’ida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri continued to publicly call for supporters to attack the U.S. government and citizens globally.

Iran remained the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism and continued to support attacks against Israel. It maintained its terrorist-related and destabilizing activities through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Qods Force and the Lebanon-based terrorist group Hizballah. Iran is responsible for intensifying multiple conflicts and undermining the legitimate governments of, and U.S. interests in, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. In particular, Iran and Hizballah are emerging from the Syria conflict emboldened and with valuable battlefield experience that they seek to leverage across the globe. IRGC leader Qasem Soleimani recruited and deployed Shia militias from diverse ethnic groups across the Middle East and South Asia to fight in defense of the Assad dictatorship in Syria.
Beyond the Middle East, Iran and its terrorist affiliates and proxies posed a significant threat and demonstrated a near-global terrorist reach. Notably, in June 2017, the FBI arrested two suspected Hizballah operatives in Michigan and New York who allegedly were conducting surveillance and intelligence gathering on behalf of the organization, including in the United States.

Regionally focused terrorists groups remained a threat in 2017. For example, Hamas continued to rebuild its military infrastructure and capabilities to support terrorist attacks against Israel. Additionally, Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar e-Tayyiba continued to pose a regional threat in the subcontinent. Some regional and local terrorist groups have avoided greater international attention by remaining independent from ISIS and al-Qa‘ida while others may have concluded that the benefits of greater expertise, resources, and prominence outweighed the risks of a formal connection with a notorious transnational terrorist network.

In short, the nature of the terrorist threat confronting the United States and our allies around the world evolved in 2017. While the immediate dynamics that led terrorists to flock to Iraq and Syria since 2014 have diminished, other factors that terrorists exploit to recruit new followers remained a challenge, such as sectarianism, failing states, and conflict zones. More than ever, it remains a critical priority for the United States and our allies to defeat our terrorist adversaries.

### Statistical Annex

- The total number of terrorist attacks worldwide in 2017 decreased by 23 percent and total deaths due to terrorist attacks decreased by 27 percent, compared to 2016. While numerous countries saw a decline in terrorist violence between 2016 and 2017, this overall trend was largely due to dramatically fewer attacks and deaths in Iraq. Twenty-four percent of all deaths in terrorist attacks in 2017 were perpetrator deaths, down from 26 percent in 2016. This statistic was historically much lower but began to increase in the 2000s, largely due to shifting tactics in Afghanistan and, to a lesser extent, in Iraq in the 2010s.

- In several countries, including Kenya, Somalia, and the United Kingdom, the number of terrorist attacks and total deaths increased in 2017.

- Although terrorist attacks took place in 100 countries in 2017, they were concentrated geographically. Fifty-nine percent of all attacks took place in five countries (Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Pakistan, and the Philippines), and 70 percent of all deaths due to terrorist attacks took place in five countries (Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, and Syria).

- The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) was responsible for more attacks and deaths than any other perpetrator group in 2017. However, ISIS carried out 23 percent fewer terrorist attacks and caused 53 percent fewer total deaths, compared to 2016. ISIS and groups that have pledged allegiance to ISIS carried out attacks in more than 20 countries in 2017. The most active ISIS affiliates were located in Afghanistan/Pakistan, Egypt, and West Africa.
Key Conclusions in State Department Report for 2017 - III

• The number of kidnapping victims and hostages declined 43 percent between 2016 and 2017, a notable shift from previous years which saw sharp increases in the number of kidnapping victims and hostages, primarily due to attacks involving exceptionally large numbers of victims.

• In 2017, a total of 8,584 terrorist attacks occurred worldwide, resulting in more than 18,700 deaths and more than 19,400 people injured. These casualty figures include more than 4,400 perpetrator deaths and 1,400 perpetrator injuries. The prevalence of perpetrator deaths and injuries was historically much lower but began to increase in the 2000s, largely due to shifting tactics in Afghanistan and, to a lesser extent, in Iraq in the 2010s. In addition, more than 8,900 people were kidnapped or taken hostage. In this report we describe patterns of worldwide terrorist activity with respect to changes during the year, geographic concentration, casualties, perpetrator organizations, tactics, weapons, and targets.

• On average, there were 715 terrorist attacks, causing 1,563 deaths, injuring 1,623 people, and involving 745 hostages or kidnap victims per month, worldwide in 2017. There were 2.3 deaths and 2.5 people injured per attack, including perpetrator casualties.

• ...terrorist violence peaked in May and June 2017 with more than 800 attacks worldwide each month and more than 4,000 casualties (people killed or injured) each month. This pattern is largely a result of trends in Afghanistan and Iraq, where more than one-third (36%) of all terrorist attacks and nearly half (47%) of all deaths from terrorist attacks took place in 2017

• In Afghanistan, the number of attacks increased 69 percent, from 68 attacks in April to 115 attacks in May. Likewise, the total number of people killed or injured in terrorist attacks in Afghanistan during this time increased 344 percent, from 331 to 1,468.

• In Iraq there was a particularly sharp increase in violence in June, when the number of attacks increased 26 percent to 234, from 186 in May. The total number of people killed or injured increased 54 percent from 883 in May to 1,363 in June.

• Of the 18,753 people killed in terrorist attacks in 2017, 4,430 (24%) were perpetrators of the attacks. Perpetrators killed themselves intentionally in suicide attacks, unintentionally while attempting to carry out attacks, or they were killed by security forces or victims responding to attacks. This is a 34 percent decrease in the number of perpetrator deaths, compared to 2016.

• ...the global trends in terrorist attacks observed in 2017 are the continuation of an overall pattern of decline that began in 2014 following a rapid increase in terrorist violence. This rapid increase was largely the result of violence carried out by ISIS and allied groups including Boko Haram in Nigeria, as well as the Taliban in Afghanistan. Likewise, the subsequent decline was primarily the product of decreasing levels of violence by these same groups. Despite these patterns, these groups remained several of the deadliest terrorist groups in the world in 2017.
Key Conclusions in State Department Report for 2017 - IV

• Terrorist attacks took place in 100 countries in 2017; however, they were heavily concentrated geographically. Fifty-nine percent of all attacks took place in five countries (Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Pakistan, and the Philippines), and 70 percent of all deaths due to terrorist attacks took place in five countries (Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, and Syria).

• Attacks
  o Overall, global patterns resulted in a 23 percent decrease in terrorist attacks worldwide between 2016 and 2017.
  o Many countries that have routinely experienced large numbers of terrorist attacks in recent years observed considerable decreases in total attacks in 2017, compared to 2016. Most notably, this includes Iraq, which experienced more terrorist attacks than any other country each year since 2013. There were 1,951 terrorist attacks in Iraq in 2017. While this number was exceptionally high in comparison to other countries, it represents a 34 percent decrease from 2,969 attacks in Iraq in 2016.
  o Other countries that saw especially sharp declines between 2016 and 2017 include Turkey (-71%), Yemen (-62%), and Syria (-61%). Note that each of these locations suffers from deteriorating conditions for independent free press, so these trends should be interpreted with caution.
  o Several countries that were not among those with the most attacks nonetheless saw considerable increases in 2017, including Sri Lanka (+3,900% from one attack in 2016 to 40 in 2017) and Nepal (+474% from 43 attacks in 2016 to 247 attacks in 2017). In both of these locations terrorist violence was almost entirely limited to non-lethal attacks. In addition, in 2017 the number of terrorist attacks increased in Kenya (+68%) and France (+59%), for example.

• Deaths
  o In several of the locations that experienced the most terrorism in 2017, a decrease in terrorist attacks coincided with a decrease in the total number of people killed in terrorist attacks. These countries include Iraq (-56%), Syria (-48%), Nigeria, (-16%), and Pakistan (-11%).
  o Certain countries saw sharp increases in the number of total deaths due to terrorist attacks in 2017.
    o This includes several locations where terrorist violence has been especially deadly in recent years, such as Egypt (+124%), Somalia (+100%), and the Philippines (+20%).
    o It also includes several locations where the number of people killed in terrorist attacks had been relatively low in 2016, such as the United Kingdom (+356%, from nine people killed in 2016 to 41 people killed in 2017), and Iran (+289%, from nine people killed in 2016 to 35 people killed in 2017).
  o In 2017, 24 percent of all deaths from terrorist attacks worldwide were perpetrator deaths, down from 26 percent in 2016; however, the prevalence of perpetrator deaths varied geographically.
    o The percentage of people killed in terrorist attacks who were carrying out the attack was highest in the West Bank and Gaza (62%; 21 of 34 total deaths) and Afghanistan (46%; 2,142 of 4,672 total deaths).
    o In contrast, perpetrator deaths were relatively uncommon for terrorist attacks in Colombia (0%; 0 of 44 total deaths), Sudan (0%; 0 of 96 total deaths), Libya (3%; eight of 233 total deaths), and Thailand (3%; one of 40 total deaths).
    o Although Afghanistan experienced a 13 percent decrease in terrorist attacks in 2017, these attacks remained very deadly and the total number of people killed in terrorist attacks in Afghanistan increased 2 percent in 2017, as the percentage of perpetrators killed in terrorist attacks decreased to 46 percent from 51 percent in 2016.
**Key Conclusions in State Department Report for 2017 - V**

- In Iraq, after the number of perpetrators killed in terrorist attacks increased 79 percent between 2015 and 2016, perpetrator deaths decreased 61 percent between 2016 and 2017.

**Injuries**
- The total number of people injured due to terrorist attacks worldwide declined 43 percent in 2017. However, this global statistic obscures a great deal of regional variation. For example, Turkey (-91%), Libya (-75%), and Iraq (-69%) saw particularly large decreases in the number of people injured in 2017.
- By contrast, there were large increases in the total number of people injured due to terrorist attacks in Spain (+2,675%; from four in 2016 to 111 in 2017) and the United Kingdom (+1,572%; from 18 in 2016 to 301 in 2017).

**Kidnapping Victims and Hostages**
- Following several years of sharp increases in the number of people held hostage or kidnapped in terrorist attacks, there was a 43 percent decline worldwide between 2016 and 2017.
- In 2016, there were three countries in which more than 1,000 people were kidnapped or taken hostage: Iraq (8,598 victims), Afghanistan (1,694 victims), and Syria (1,406 victims). Each of these locations saw a steep decline in the number of people kidnapped or taken hostage in terrorist attacks in 2017.
  - In Iraq and Syria – where there were especially rapid increases in mass-casualty hostage-taking events coinciding with the expansion of ISIS in recent years – the number of hostages declined 78 percent between 2016 and 2017.
  - In Afghanistan, there was a 51 percent decline in the number of people taken hostage or kidnapped in terrorist attacks between 2016 and 2017.
- Despite these dramatic declines in key locations, other countries saw sharp increases in the number of people held hostage or kidnapped in terrorist attacks in 2017.
  - For example, in Indonesia at least 1,300 were held hostage in two terrorist attacks targeting villages in Papua in November 2017, compared to two victims in 2016.
  - Likewise, in Central African Republic there were at least 1,050 people taken hostage in terrorist attacks in 2017, including approximately 1,000 people held hostage for two days in May during an attack targeting Muslim civilians and a United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) base. This represents a 1,054 percent increase in the number of people taken hostage or kidnapped, compared to 2016.
  - Other countries that saw sharp increases in the number of people held hostage or kidnapped include Democratic Republic of the Congo (+51%; from 379 victims in 2016 to 574 victims in 2017), Myanmar (+1,648%; from 27 victims in 2016 to 472 victims in 2017), and the Philippines (+87%; from 218 in 2016 to 408 in 2017). In Venezuela, more than 300 people were held hostage during a terrorist attack on the National Assembly building in July 2017.
(Less State Terrorism and Civil War/Counterinsurgency)

111,855 Incidents Total

Source: START Data Base, August 4, 2018,
https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2017&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&asmSelect1=&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=
Decline in Total Terrorist Incidents versus Declines in Incidents from Primary Threats: 2011-2017

Total Incidents All Perpetrators (81,989)

Total Incidents (13,151) Involving Primary Threats: (Al-Qaida; Al-Qaida Kurdish Battalions (AQKB); Al-Qaida in Iraq; Al-Qaida in Lebanon; Al-Qaida in Saudi Arabia; Al-Qaida in Yemen; Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP); Islamic State of Iraq (ISI); Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL); Taliban; Taliban (Pakistan))

Source: START data base, advanced search option, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?
### Incidence, fatality and injury from terrorist attacks, World

The total number of recorded terrorist incidents, fatalities and non-fatal injuries by country or region. This includes fatalities or non-fatal injuries of both victims and perpetrators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Attacks</th>
<th>Total Deaths*</th>
<th>Deaths per Attack*</th>
<th>Total Injured*</th>
<th>Injured per Attack*</th>
<th>Total Kidnapped/Hostages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>18753</td>
<td>25722</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>19461</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>8937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>11150</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td></td>
<td>33932</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>15564</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Max Roser, Mohamed Nagdy and Hannah Ritchie, “Terrorism,” Our World In Data, January, 2018, https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism
(Less State Terrorism and Civil War/Counterinsurgency)

Number of terrorism-related incidents
The total number of terrorism-related incidents per year. The source defines a terrorist attack as: "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation."

Source: Adapted from Max Roser, Mohamed Nagdy and Hannah Ritchie, “Terrorism,” Our World In Data, January, 2018, https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism
Global Trend in Terrorist Fatalities by Key Target Country: 1970-2016
(Less State Terrorism and Civil War/Counterinsurgency)

Source: Adapted from Max Roser, Mohamed Nagdy and Hannah Ritchie, “Terrorism,” Our World In Data, January, 2018, https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism
START – The Global Terrorist Threat in 2012
(Measured in density and seriousness of incidents)

Source: START Database; https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/images/START_GlobalTerrorismDatabase2012dataset_Map.jpg
START – The Global Terrorist Threat in 2017
(Measured in density and serious of incidents)

Each recorded terrorist attack involves one or more tactics in a continuous sequence of actions. Shown in Figure 3, the most commonly used tactic in 2017 involved explosives (47%), followed by armed assaults (22%), which almost always involved firearms.

In addition to the tactics shown in Figure 3, there were 93 unarmed assaults in 2017—attacks aimed at harming people without the use of explosives or firearms. Unarmed assaults primarily involved melee weapons, chemical weapons, or vehicles as weapons. There were also 56 hijackings carried out in 2017, primarily targeting cars, trucks, and buses as well as several boats and cargo ships. Each of these comprised one percent or less of all tactics.

The lethality of terrorist tactics varied considerably. On average, attacks in which hostages were taken were by far the deadliest in 2017. Kidnappings resulted in four deaths per attack, on average, and barricade incidents resulted in 11 deaths per attack. The tactics that were least likely to be deadly were unarmed assaults (85% nonlethal) and facility or infrastructure attacks (97% nonlethal).

The number of suicide attacks decreased 11 percent, from 698 in 2016, to 620 in 2017. Suicide attacks in 2017 killed more than 5,100 people, including more than 1,300 perpetrators. Suicide attacks took place in 30 countries in 2017, up from 26 in 2016. More than two-thirds of the suicide attacks in 2017 took place in Iraq (216 suicide attacks), Afghanistan (108), and Nigeria (108). On average, suicide attacks in 2017 were 4.7 times as lethal as non-suicide attacks.

Although the use of vehicles as contact weapons (as opposed to VBIEDs) remained exceptionally rare, the number of attacks involving vehicles as contact weapons did increase, from 14 in 2016 to 25 in 2017. In 2016, these attacks were especially lethal, causing more than 100 deaths. In 2017 more than 50 people were killed in attacks involving vehicles as contact weapons.

Source: U.S. State Department, *Annex of Statistical Information*, September 2018
Targets Worldwide in 2017

Each attack in the Statistical Annex includes information on up to three different targets and/or victims. Fewer than 1,000 terrorist attacks in 2017 involved multiple types of targets. The types of targets attacked in 2017 are shown in the Table.

Two-thirds of all targets attacked in 2017 were classified as either private citizens and property (40%), police (18%), or general government targets (11%), as shown in the Table.

The private citizens and property targeted in terrorist attacks in 2017 most frequently included unnamed civilians (26%), followed by attacks that targeted villages or towns (19%).

Terrorist attacks that targeted police in 2017 were most frequently aimed at security forces (36%), followed by police buildings such as headquarters or stations (28%), and vehicles or convoys on patrol (22%).

The general government targets attacked in 2017 were most often government employees (33%), political entities including politicians, parties, rallies, and meetings (28%), or government buildings, facilities, or offices (16%).

The overall decline in terrorism between 2016 and 2017 impacted nearly all types of targets, with few exceptions. These include attacks targeting “violent political parties” that engage in both electoral politics and terrorist attacks, which doubled in 2017, and attacks against tourists which, although relatively rare, increased 27 percent in 2017.

Source: U.S. State Department, *Annex of Statistical Information*, September 2018
Trends by Region
Three regions clearly dominate: Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

- Correlation does not mean causation, but regions with high poverty and corruption levels, and poor governance, rule of law, security, and development ratings by country do generally show higher rates of terrorism.
- However, nations vary sharply in both levels of terrorism, and the level of potential causes of terrorism within given regions and broad groups in terms of religion and culture.

As noted earlier, regional data do not include acts of State Terrorism or civil war/insurgency/control related acts of terrorism.

- U.S. combat countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen still have high figures for terrorism even though combat-related acts are not included.

The data on Russian and East Asia (China) seem to undercount because media are tightly controlled and do not fully report.

Data on deaths do not include the impact of conflicts or state terrorism and would be sharply different if they did.

All data shown involve serious uncertainties, but injury data are particularly suspect.

In practice, significant casualties occur from displacements (IDPs) and forced refugee status -- including accidents, illness, lack of medical care, and malnutrition. These deaths and injuries – as well as lasting impacts of stress – cannot be estimated. All data-based estimates of terrorism tend to be major undercounts.

MENA now dominates, followed by South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia.
START – Shifts in Terrorist Incidents by Region:
(Less State Terrorism and Civil War/Counterinsurgency)

1970-2017
181,691 Incidents

2000-2017
111,855 Incidents

Adapted from START Global Terrorism Data Base,
https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?chart=regions&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&dtp2=all; 3.8.18

10/9/2018
Terrorist Deaths by Region: 1970-2016 (Less State Terrorism and Civil War/Counterinsurgency)

MENA now dominates, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia

Source: Adapted from Max Roser, Mohamed Nagdy and Hannah Ritchie, “Terrorism,” Our World In Data, January, 2018, https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism
Clashes *Within* a Civilization: Incidents in Muslim or Largely Muslim States
Key Issues

• The ties between terrorism and Islamic extremism since 2001 have been striking. There are obvious reasons why the vast majority of Muslims reject such links as having nothing to do with the legitimate values of Islam, but the following data show that the links are all too real.

• At the same time, virtually all of the terrorist activity occurs within a limited range of Muslim states, and consists of extremists attacking fellow Muslims in a focused search for power. The data do not reflect a clash between civilizations, but rather a clash within one.

• Extremist rhetoric from terrorist and violent groups within Muslim and heavily Muslim states attacking non-Muslims usually involved minor levels of actual effort, and limited planning and execution of outside activity. A far larger effort goes into actual attacks on other Muslims for being heretics.

• Almost all actual attacks on non-Muslims by organized Islamic extremists are on local non-Muslim minorities.

• If one ignores Iraq and Syria – most all of the terrorism consists of Sunni attacks on fellow Sunnis, although Sunni vs. Shi’ite and other sectarian violence is a key factor, and if state terrorism was included, Syria’s “secular” government would be a key source of violence and killings.

• Tribalism and ethnic struggles are also key sources – especially between Arab and Kurd.

• Religious extremism is a key factor motivating a small number of extremists, but the vast majority of terrorism in Islamic states occurs in the poorest and least developed, worst governed and most corrupt, and most ethnically/tribally/sectarian divided, “failed states.”

• Muslims are also victims in cases not shown in the following data, particularly in China, India, and Myanmar, and to a lesser degree in the Philippines, and Thailand.

• The alienation of Muslims – and indoctrination of “lone wolves” in the West is a source of terrorism, but the numbers involved are negligible compared to terrorism in the Islamic world or other causes of violence and death in the West.
ODNI Map of Violent Extremist Operating Areas in 2017
Terrorist Incidents in Muslim Countries or Highly Islamic Areas in ODNI
Map of Violent Extremist Operating Areas
(Less State Terrorism and Civil War/Counterinsurgency)

74,882 – 67% of World Total of 111,041
Director of National Intelligence Director Daniel R. Coats, *Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, ODNI, March 6, 2018 and: Adapted from Max Roser, Mohamed Nagdy and Hannah Ritchie, “Terrorism,” Our World In Data, January, 2018, [https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism](https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism);
Trend in Terrorism in All Muslim States or with Large Muslim Populations: 2001-2017: All START Incidents
(Less State Terrorism and Civil War/Counterinsurgency)

Years: (between 2001 and 2017)
All incidents regardless of doubt.

Country: (Afghanistan; Bahrain; Central African Republic; Chad; Djibouti; Egypt; Eritrea; India; Indonesia; Iran; Iraq; Israel; Jordan; Kazakhstan; Kuwait; Kyrgyzstan; Lebanon; Libya; Malaysia; Mali; Mauritania; Morocco; Nigeria; Pakistan; West Bank and Gaza Strip; Qatar; Saudi Arabia; Somalia; Sudan; Syria; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan; United Arab Emirates; Uzbekistan; Yemen; Western Sahara; North Yemen; South Yemen)

Source: START Data Base, September 26, 2018,
https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2017&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&asmSelect1=&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=
MENA & South Asian Trends in Incidents and Violence: 2000-2017
(Less State Terrorism and Civil War/Counterinsurgency)

Adapted from START Global Terrorism Data Base,
https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?chart=casualties&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=2000&end_yearonly=2017&dtp2=all&region=10; 3.8.18
The Limited Impact of Al Qaida, ISIS, and the Taliban
Key Issues

• As noted earlier, it is unclear that the START data shown earlier in Figure Three at the beginning of this analysis reflect a realistic decline in activity in 2017. These were new peak fighting years for both movements, although ISIS suffered serious defeats during the course of the year.

• It is impossible to get a realistic picture of the threat posed by ISIS, Al Qaida, and the Taliban using the START or other data bases that exclude wartime violence and terrorism related to combat operations.

• At the same time, the START data still make it clear that ISIS, Al Qaida, and the Taliban account for only a limited portion of the levels of terrorism on a global level, and that total defeat of these movements would still leave a massive mix of terrorist and extremist threats.

• Eliminating ISIS (ISIL/Daesh), Al Qaida, and the Taliban would have a major impact on several key movements but would not begin to defeat terrorism in any general sense. START estimates that:
  
  o ISIS and its affiliates accounted for only 5.3% of the total global terrorist incidents between 2000 and 2017, and 12.1% of the attacks and 26.9% of the deaths in 2017.
  
  o Al Qaida and its direct affiliates accounted for 2,120 of the 111,855 incidents in 2000-2017 (1.9%), and 55 of the 10,900 incidents in 2017 (0.5%).
  
  o The Taliban accounted for 7,557 of the 111,855 incidents in 2000-2017 (6.8%), and 8.3% of the attacks and 18.6 of the deaths in 2017.

• It is also unclear that a defeat of ISIS, Al Qaida, and the Taliban center would eliminate terrorism or extremism even in the countries where they are most active, much less have a major impact on their affiliates in other countries – which could continue or change their name.
Worldwide Terrorism: ISIL, Al Qaida
Shares of Total Incidents: 2000-2017

Total: 111,855 Incidents

ISIL: 5,894 Incidents = 5.3%

Al Qaida: 2,120 Incidents = 1.9%

Taliban: 7,557 Incidents = 6.8%

Note: (Islamic State in Bangladesh; Islamic State in Egypt; Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS); Islamic State of Iraq (ISI); Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)). Al Qaida includes: (Al-Qaida; Al-Qaida Kurdish Battalions (Al-Qaida; Al-Qaida Kurdish Battalions (AQKB); Al-Qaida Network for Southwestern Khulna Division; Al-Qaida Organization for Jihad in Sweden; Al-Qaida in Iraq; Al-Qaida in Lebanon; Al-Qaida in Saudi Arabia; Al-Qaida in Yemen; Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP); Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent; Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM))

# Worldwide Terrorism: Taliban, ISIL, and Al Qaida as % of Total Attacks and Deaths in 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>ISIL</th>
<th>Al Qaida</th>
<th>Taliban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deaths</td>
<td>26,445</td>
<td>7,120</td>
<td>Not in Top 15</td>
<td>4,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacks</td>
<td>10,900</td>
<td>1,321</td>
<td>Not in Top 15</td>
<td>907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Direct ISIL, Al Qaida, and Taliban Attacks on the United States and Europe: 2000-2017 – START Total

On United States: 5 of 475 Incidents
On Western Europe: 34 of 3,200 Incidents
On Eastern Europe: 4 of 4,013 Incidents

Note: Years: (between 2000 and 2015). All incidents regardless of doubt. Perpetrators: (Al-Qaida; Al-Qaida Kurdish Battalions (AQKB); Al-Qaida Network for Southwestern Khulna Division; Al-Qaida Organization for Jihad in Sweden; Al-Qaida in Iraq; Al-Qaida in Lebanon; Al-Qaida in Saudi Arabia; Al-Qaida in Yemen; Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP); Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent; Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM); Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS); Islamic State of Iraq (ISI); Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL); Taliban; Taliban (Pakistan))

Syria & Iraq Terrorism: ISIL, Al Qaida, versus All Incidents in Syria and Iraq: 2012-2017

Total: 18,802 Incidents
ISIL: 5,437 Incidents = 28.9%
Al Qaida: 386 Incidents = 2.1%

Source: START Data Base, START, University of Maryland, August 2018,
Trends in the Threat to the U.S. and Europe
The U.S. and Europe see terrorism as a major threat, which it is in a region that has been largely free of serious conflict since 1945. They have also devoted major resources to fighting terrorism both in terms of internal security and in wars to contain its major sources outside the West from strike targets in the U.S. and Europe.

This activity has not prevented some major terrorist successes within the U.S. and Europe, and attacks that produced serious casualties.

At the same time, the levels of attack and casualties from all forms of terrorism have been low by the standards of many other regions.

- In site of events like the 9/11 attacks, only 0.58% (648) of the total terrorist incidents between 2000 and 2017 occurred in North America.
- Only 0.42% (475) occurred in the U.S.—although the events of 9/11 are still one of the worst attacks on record in terms of total casualties.
- Only 2.9% (3,200) of the total terrorist incidents between 2000 and 2017 occurred in Western Europe.
- Only 3.6% (4,013) of the total terrorist incidents between 2000 and 2017 occurred in Eastern Europe.
- STRT indicates that direct ISIL, Al Qaida, and Taliban attacks on the United States and Europe accounted for 1% or less of the incidents between 2000 and 2017.

The totals for NATO countries have been dominated by Turkey, and in part are the result of state terrorism caused by Erdogan’s provocation of the Kurds as part of his political maneuvering to gain Presidential powers.

If one examines the START incident count for both Western and Eastern Europe, three countries (Turkey, Russia, and the Ukraine) account for 5,352 out 7,213 incidents (74%) between 2000 and 2017. The trends in casualties are similar.
Trend in Terrorist Incidents in U.S. and Western and Eastern Europe – 2000-2017

Source: START Data Base, September 26, 2018,
https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2017&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&asmSelect1=&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=
Trend in Terrorist Casualties in U.S. and Western and Eastern Europe: 2000-2017

Source: Adapted from Max Roser, Mohamed Nagdy and Hannah Ritchie, “Terrorism,” Our World In Data, January, 2018, https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism;
START: 475 Incidents out of a Worldwide Total of 111,855 in in 2000-2017: 0.4%
Incidents and Casualties in Western Europe: 1990-2017

START: 3,200 Incidents out of a Worldwide Total of 111,855 in in 2000-2017: 2.8%

Incidents and Casualties in Eastern Europe (Includes Russia, Ukraine, Belarus): 1990-2017

START: 4,013 Incidents out of a Worldwide Total of 111,855 in in 2000-2017: 3.6%

Source: Adapted from Max Roser, Mohamed Nagdy and Hannah Ritchie, “Terrorism,” Our World In Data, January, 2018, https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism; and START Data Base, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=2000&end_yearonly=2017&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&country=228&asmSelect1=&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=
Incidents and Casualties in Selected Target Countries: 1990-2017
(Belgium; France; Germany; Italy; Spain; Turkey; United Kingdom)

Including Turkey: 4,801 Incidents out of a Worldwide Total of 111,855 in 2000-2017: 4.2%

Less Turkey: 2,278 Incidents out of a Worldwide Total of 111,855 in 2000-2017: 2.0%

Terrorist Incidents in NATO Europe: 2000-2016

Source: Adapted from Max Roser, Mohamed Nagdy and Hannah Ritchie, “Terrorism,” Our World In Data, January, 2018, https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism
Europol vs. START Estimate of Terrorist Attacks in EU in 2017

Europol Estimate for 2017
Total is 205 attacks in 2017

START Estimate for 2000-2017
Total is 295 attacks in 2017, 44% Higher

In Western and Eastern Europe, only three countries (Turkey, Russia, and the Ukraine) account for 5,352 out of 7,213 incidents (74%) between 2000 and 2017.

Trend in Non-Combat and State Terrorism in Ongoing U.S. “Wars”
Key Issues

• As noted earlier, START does not attempt to estimate terrorism committed by states or attempt to count all acts committed in combat. It states that it has three criteria for including incidents as terrorist:
  o The violent act was aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal;
  o The violent act included evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) other than the immediate victims; and
  o The violent act was outside the precepts of International Humanitarian Law insofar as it targeted non-combatants.

• START also states that, “In consultation with the U.S. Department of State, START determined that it was appropriate to include in the Statistical Annex dataset only those events for which all three criteria were met in order to adhere to the definition established in the U.S. Code. In addition, the Statistical Annex dataset.”

• The START database does show that it counts large numbers of attack on the Afghan military, but far fewer for attacks on the Iraqi military, and very few for Syria. The fact it does not count State terrorism means that it sharply undercounts incidents and casualties for Syria.

• This does not affect the value of the START data in assessing the patterns of non-state terrorism, but it does limit it value in assessing terrorism and extremism in the countries where the U.S. is actively fighting.

• This section presents some summary data for 2012-2017 – a time frame that includes the peak combat period in Syria, since the U.S. changed its strategy in Afghanistan to keep its forces there, after it and resumed a major combat role in Iraq.

• There data illustrate the trends START does assess, but the reader needs to be careful in using such data, and pay careful attention to both definitions and caveats that START presents in its database, and should carefully consult the incident descriptions listed in its search criteria.
START Estimate of Terrorism in Countries where U.S. has Played Some Combat Role Major Insurgencies and Civil Wars: 2012-2017

(49,626 Non-Combat or State Terrorism Incidents: 62% of a Worldwide Total of 79,613)

START Estimate of Terrorism in Countries where U.S. has Played a Major Combat Role During 2012-2017

(28,497 Non-Combat or State Terrorism Incidents: 36% of a Worldwide Total of 79,613)

Estimate of Terrorism Fatalities in Countries where U.S. has Played a Major Combat Role During 2012-2017

(28,497 Non-Combat or State Terrorism Incidents: 36% of a Worldwide Total of 79,613)

Why Does this War End?
Trends in Iraq
Key Issues

The data for Iraq illustrate several key points:

• The trends in a given state must often be linked to those in neighboring states. Iraq and Syria are essentially one war zone for ISIS, with heavy outside impact on their neighbors and vice versa.

• Once again, it is clear that focusing on ISIS does not reflect the realities of terrorism and extremism. ISIS accounted for 28.7% of the incidents between 2012 and 2017. Al Qaida accounted for 2.3%.

• There again are major differences between the State Department Annex of statistical Information estimates and those of Our World in Data, although they supposedly used the same data base for 2006.

• The relatively flat line between 1970 and 2003 may be more a function of the limits to the data base than history. There were extensive terrorist incidents in the fighting between the Iraqi government and Kurdish rebels, and between the government and Iraqi elements supporting Iran during the Iran-Iraq War.

• There is no precise way to breakout the Iraqi Body Count data to identify the role of ISIS and other terrorist/extremist groups in inflicting total civilian casualties, but IBC estimates civilian dead at 16,383 in 2016, and most did die as a result of ISIS or other terrorist actions. START reports only 9,762 fatalities, while Our World in data reports 12,187.

• The UN OCHA estimates of the humanitarian crisis in Iraq as of late 2017 provide a clear indication of the extent to which simply looking at fatalities, injuries, and kidnappings/hostage taking grossly underestimates the impact of terrorist/extremist action in war zones.
Terrorist Incidents in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Iran, and Jordan: 1970-2016

Number of terrorism-related incidents

The total number of terrorism-related incidents per year. The source defines a terrorist attack as: "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation."

Source: Adapted from Max Roser, Mohamed Nagdy and Hannah Ritchie, “Terrorism,” Our World In Data, January, 2018, https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism
Incidents and Casualties in Iraq: 1970-2016

Iraq Terrorism: ISIL, Al Qaida, versus All Incidents in Iraq: 2012-2017

Total: 16,779 Incidents
ISIL: 4,811 Incidents = 28.7%
Al Qaida: 386 Incidents = 2.3%

Note: (Islamic State in Bangladesh; Islamic State in Egypt; Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS); Islamic State of Iraq (ISI); Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)). Al Qaida includes: (Al-Qaida; Al-Qaida Kurdish Battalions (AQKB); Al-Qaida Network for Southwestern Khulna Division; Al-Qaida Organization for Jihad in Sweden; Al-Qaida in Iraq; Al-Qaida in Lebanon; Al-Qaida in Saudi Arabia; Al-Qaida in Yemen; Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP); Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent; Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM))

Civilian Deaths from Terrorist Insurgencies: Iraq

Humanitarian Crisis in Iraq: Late 2017

Why Does this War End?
Trends in Syria
Key Issues

The data for Syria illustrate several key points:

• The START data totals for incidents and casualties do not count massive acts of state terrorism by the Assad regime.

• The trends in a given state again must be linked to those in neighboring states. Syria is heavily influenced by Iran, Russia, Turkey, and the Hezbollah.

• ISIS is responsible for only 626 – or 31.3% -- of the 2,003 incidents during 2012-2017.

• A range of affiliates of Al Qaida committed substantial acts of terrorism, but the level of affiliation is unclear. The START data base does not credit Al Qaida proper as having been responsible e for any attacks in Syria.

• There again are differences between the State Department Annex of statistical Information estimates and those of Our World in Data, although they are supposedly using the same data base for 2016. START reports 365 attacks in 2016, while Our World in Data reports 472. START reports 2,119 fatalities, while Our World in Data reports 2,775. START reports 2,726 injuries, while Our World in Data reports 2,936.

• The SOHR and UN estimates of wartime civilian fatalities are heavily driven by acts of state terrorism by the Assad Regime .

• The UN OCHA estimates of the humanitarian crisis in Syria in 2017 again provides a clear indication of the extent to which simply looking at fatalities, injuries, and kidnappings/hostage taking grossly underestimates the impact of terrorist/extremist action in war zones.
Syria Terrorism: ISIL, Al Qaida, versus All Incidents in Syria: 2012-2017

Total: 2,003 Incidents

ISIL: 626 Incidents = 31.3%

Al Qaida: 0 Incidents = 0.0%

Note: (Islamic State in Bangladesh; Islamic State in Egypt; Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS); Islamic State of Iraq (ISI); Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)). Al Qaida includes: (Al-Qaeda; Al-Qaida Kurdish Battalions (AQKB); Al-Qaeda Network for Southwestern Khulna Division; Al-Qaeda Organization for Jihad in Sweden; Al-Qaeda in Iraq; Al-Qaeda in Lebanon; Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia; Al-Qaeda in Yemen; Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP); Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent; Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM))


State Department Annex of Statistical Information

Civilian Deaths in Terrorist Insurgencies: Syria

SOHR: Syrian Observatory for Human Rights

Range of Estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Casualties</th>
<th>Time period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syrian Centre for Policy Research</td>
<td>470,000 killed</td>
<td>15 March 2011 – 11 February 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN and Arab League Envoy to Syria</td>
<td>400,000 killed</td>
<td>15 March 2011 – 23 April 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syrian Observatory for Human Rights</td>
<td>353,583-498,598 killed</td>
<td>15 March 2011 – 11 March 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violations Documentation Centre</td>
<td>163,024 killed</td>
<td>15 March 2011 – 27 June 2018</td>
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</table>

Humanitarian Crisis in Syria: Late 2017

Why Does this War End?
Trends in Afghanistan
Key Issues

The data for Afghanistan illustrate several key points:

• Once again, it is clear that focusing on a few key non-state actors like the Taliban does not reflect the realities of terrorism and extremism in Afghanistan. START estimates that the Taliban accounted for 59.1% of the incidents between 2012 and 2017. Al Qaida accounted for none. ISIS/ISIL/Daesh does not seem to have been counted.

• The trends in a given state must often be linked to those in neighboring states. Afghanistan is heavily influenced by the developments in Pakistan, India, and Central Asia; and increasingly by those in Iran, Russia, and China.

• The estimates from 1979 on through 2001 seem far too low, given the levels of actual terrorism in the fighting between the Russian and Afghan factions fighting during this period.

• There again are differences between the State Department Annex of statistical Information estimates and those of Our World in Data, although they are supposedly using the same data base for 2016. START reports 1,343 incidents in 2016, while Our World in Data reports 1615. START reports 1,343 fatalities, while Our World in Data reports 6,119. START reports 5057 injuries, while Our World in Data reports 6,485.

• The UN estimates of wartime civilian fatalities are notably lower than the START and Our World In Data estimates of those inflicted in terrorism.

• The UN OCHA estimates of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan in 2017 again provide a clear indication of the extent to which simply looking at fatalities, injuries, and kidnappings/hostage taking grossly underestimates the impact of terrorist/extremist action in war zones.
Afghan Terrorism: Taliban, ISIL, Al Qaida, and Total Incidents: 2012-2017

Total: 9,695 Incidents

Taliban: 5,827 Incidents = 59.1%

ISIL: No data

Al Qaida: 0 Incidents = ?

Note: Taliban includes Taliban, Taliban Pakistan. Islamic state includes (Islamic State in Bangladesh; Islamic State in Egypt; Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS); Islamic State of Iraq (ISI); Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)). Al Qaida includes: (Al-Qaida; Al-Qaida Kurdish Battalions (AQKB); Al-Qaida Network for Southwestern Khulna Division; Al-Qaida Organization for Jihad in Sweden; Al-Qaida in Iraq; Al-Qaida in Lebanon; Al-Qaida in Saudi Arabia; Al-Qaida in Yemen; Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP); Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent; Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM))

Terrorist Incidents in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and South Asia: 1970-2016

Number of terrorism-related incidents
The total number of terrorism-related incidents per year. The source defines a terrorist attack as: "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation."

Source: Adapted from Max Roser, Mohamed Nagdy and Hannah Ritchie, “Terrorism,” Our World In Data, January, 2018, https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism
Terrorist Deaths in Afghanistan Central and South Asia: 1970-2016

Number of fatalities from terrorism-related attacks
Total number of fatalities per year from terrorist attacks. This represents the number of total confirmed fatalities for the incident. This includes all victims and attackers who died as a direct result of the incident.

Source: Adapted from Max Roser, Mohamed Nagdy and Hannah Ritchie, “Terrorism,” Our World In Data, January, 2018, https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism
Incidents and Casualties in Afghanistan: 1970-2016

Incidence, fatality and injury from terrorist attacks, Afghanistan

The total number of recorded terrorist incidents, fatalities and non-fatal injuries by country or region. This includes fatalities or non-fatal injuries of both victims and perpetrators.

State Department Annex of Statistical Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Attacks</th>
<th>Total Deaths*</th>
<th>Deaths per Attack*</th>
<th>Total Injured*</th>
<th>Injured per Attack*</th>
<th>Total Kidnapped/Hostages</th>
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</table>

Civilian Deaths in Terrorist Insurgencies: Afghanistan

Humanitarian Crisis in Afghanistan in 2018

Source: HNO, http://www.refworld.org/docid/5b0678957.html
Incidents and Casualties in Pakistan: 1970-2016

Source: Adapted from Max Roser, Mohamed Nagdy and Hannah Ritchie, “Terrorism,” Our World In Data, January , 2018, https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism
Why Does this War End?
Trends in Yemen
Key Issues

The data for Yemen illustrate several key points:

• The trends in a given state must often be linked to those in neighboring states. The role of state actors like Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE have been critical, and once again raises the issue of state terrorism.

• Unlike most recent conflicts, there is no credible estimate of wartime civilian fatalities. Figures as high as 50,000 seem likely, many from terrorism, but the available estimates of such terrorism seem far too low.

• As is the case in some other countries, the relatively flat line between 1970 and 2003 may be more a function of the limits to the database than history. The database does not total North and South Yemen in the days before their unification, and media reporting was very limited.

• The UN OCHA estimates of the humanitarian crisis again provide a clear indication of the extent to which simply looking at fatalities, injuries, and kidnappings/hostage taking grossly underestimates the impact of terrorist/extremist action in war zones.
Incidents and Casualties in Yemen: 1970-2017

Source: Adapted from Max Roser, Mohamed Nagdy and Hannah Ritchie, “Terrorism,” Our World In Data, January, 2018, https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism; and START Data Base, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=2000&end_yearonly=2017&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&country=228&asmSelect1=&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=
Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen at End 2017

Source: https://www.unocha.org/yemen
Illustrative Trends in Other Wars
Key Issues

These data provide snapshots of the trends in other wars and center of terrorist activity.

They illustrate the sharp differences between countries, as well as the level of the challenge in the cases where U.S. forces provide support or perform a train and assist role.
Incidents and Casualties in Egypt: 1970-2017

Incidents and Casualties in India: 1970-2017

Source: Adapted from Max Roser, Mohamed Nagdy and Hannah Ritchie, “Terrorism,” Our World In Data, January , 2018, https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism; and START Data Base, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=2000&end_yearonly=2017&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&country=228&asmSelect1=&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=
Incidents and Casualties in Libya: 1970-2017

START: 2,235 Incidents in 2000-2017

Source: Adapted from Max Roser, Mohamed Nagdy and Hannah Ritchie, “Terrorism,” Our World In Data, January, 2018, https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism; and START Data Base, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=2000&end_yearonly=2017&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&country=228&asmSelect1=&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=
Incidents and Casualties in Mali: 1970-2017


START: 3,826 Incidents in 2000-2017

Incidents and Casualties in Philippines: 1970-2017


START: 3,973 Incidents in 2000-2017

Incidents and Casualties in Turkey: 1970-2017