



International Terrorism and Global Security: A Threat to Global Peace

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Abstract	Article History
<p>International terrorism is one of the major threats to global peace and security in the 21st century, which surpasses conventional military conflicts in scope and unpredictability. This paper examines the evolution of transnational terrorism, with a specific focus on the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as a destabilising force on an exceptional scale. Through a review of empirical and theoretical literature, the study analyses the socio-political and economic dimensions of ISIS's operations, exploring how its territorial pursuits, extremist ideology, and transnational networks have disrupted regional balances in Iraq, Syria, and the broader Middle East while generating cascading security consequences worldwide. The paper further interrogates the definitional complexity of terrorism and evaluates the adequacy of international responses, as well as UN Security Council mechanisms and coalition strategies. Findings underscore that poverty, political marginalisation, and inequitable global power structures serve as fundamental enablers of terrorist recruitment and radicalisation. The study recommends reinforced international cooperation, inclusive multilateral alliances, and structural reforms addressing the socioeconomic conditions as effective measures for combating terrorism worldwide.</p> <p>Keywords: Terrorism, Peace, Global Security, ISIS</p>	<p>Received: 09 Apr 2026 Accepted: 15 May 2026 Published: 22 May 2026</p>  <p>Scan QR Code to view¹</p> <p>License: CC BY 4.0²⁴</p>  <p>Open Access article.</p>
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Introduction

Since the turn of the century, events unforeseen by earlier generations have reshaped global affairs. Beyond rapid technological change, one of the most profound and destabilising developments has been the rise of terrorism as a central international security challenge. Violent extremist activity now reaches across borders and societies, inflicting large-scale human suffering and steadily undermining international stability. The principal threat to peaceful global order today often originates not from conventional interstate rivalries but from transnational dangers that spring from states with weak governance and limited capacity. As noted in scholarship on fragile states, poorly governed countries can become conduits for weapons trafficking, violent nonstate actors, and other risks that spill beyond their borders and threaten broader international peace and security. Ongoing political conflict and civil wars—particularly acute in parts of the Middle East—have produced dire humanitarian outcomes and heightened global anxieties about security. In several conflict zones, Islamist militant groups have linked into broader transnational terrorist networks and, over the past decade, have carried out attacks that killed civilians in multiple countries. Those campaigns of violence have generated

widespread disorder and eroded the peace that many communities once enjoyed. Although politically motivated violence has afflicted societies for centuries, the last few decades have seen it assume a new prominence as both a domestic and international security crisis, demanding sustained attention from policymakers and civil society alike. The Security Council, for instance, condemned explicitly in the strongest terms these perturbing terrorist attacks and regarded "such acts, like any act of international terrorism, as a threat to international peace and security" (Varku & Kauppi, 2009).

International terrorism has evolved dramatically and traumatically since the September 2001 attack. Movements, leaders, targets, tactics and arenas of operations have all proliferated in ways unimagined in 2001. The emergence of the Islamic State has transformed the world of terrorism. After capturing parts of Iraq and Syria in 2014, the Islamic State attracted tens of thousands of foreigners who sought to build a new Islamic society in a modern caliphate (Idahosa & Adebayo, 2016). They included engineers, accountants, teachers, grandparents and teenage girls as well as fighters. They reinvigorated existing ISIS movements and galvanised a

new wave of support for ISIS generally. ISIS's priority has been to destabilise regimes to control territory as quickly as possible. Its strategy is methodical even as its warfare has been irregular since its establishment (Schmitt, 2016).

Widespread protests against Bashar al-Assad's government and the subsequent descent into full-scale civil war created fertile conditions for the Islamic State (ISIS) to grow. Many young Syrians, outraged by state violence and disenfranchised by prolonged repression, became receptive to militant recruitment. Harsh security measures and indiscriminate crackdowns by state forces pushed some recruits toward extremist groups as a means of fighting back; meanwhile, the conventional opposition appeared fragmented, weak, or compromised by foreign backers in the eyes of many locals. With multiple external powers intervening for strategic reasons, a sense of victimhood and abandonment spread among civilians who sought protection, vengeance, and the restoration of basic rights—appeals that ISIS exploited to expand its ranks and local influence.

Globally, the emergence of ISIS alarmed governments and societies as the group carried out large-scale atrocities against those who resisted or failed to conform to its ideology. At its height, the organisation controlled vast swathes of territory, assembled an unusually large fighting force for a non-state actor, and accumulated substantial financial resources, creating an unprecedented security challenge. ISIS's doctrines rest on distorted readings of religion that mainstream Muslim scholars and communities reject; many Muslim voices denounce the group as heretical and murderous for perverting faith to justify brutality. The group's territorial strategy and propaganda have made it difficult to eliminate, with consequences that extend beyond immediate conflict zones—disrupting regional stability, impeding trade and investment, and contributing to broader economic and humanitarian harm.

Across the globe, terrorism has continued to elicit a great attraction, especially at a safe distance, but it is not an easy topic for discussion and explanation. According to Laqueur (1997), the fascination it exerts and the difficulty of interpreting it have the same roots: it is unexpected, shocking and outrageous. Contemporary analyses of the problem of terrorism have usually found a middle ground between the perceptual extremes that are inherent in the amorphous ideas of terror. Their networks have extended beyond the level any security network could comprehend and monitor. Thus, there are many submissions to why there are terrorist attacks.

Throughout the globe, security challenges have become a major source of worry for every state. It has, to a large extent, become a source of nightmares for inhabitants. Many have lost both their lives and properties to these effects, and it has continued to elicit global concern that every country is bent on finding a solution to the effects of terrorism. This has in recent times assumed a wide variation to the extent that it is happening at every nook and cranny of the globe, especially where there are Islamic practices. It has established fear across nations as they lack a clear view of the next victim of the attack. There have been several efforts to put this practice in check, but it remains very far from being a reality.

Unfortunately, the world is living in fear because the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has taken over global security and continues to threaten the lines. The continuous attitude of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) relating to the inhabitants of the states of Iraq and Syria and other nations in the international community has continued to threaten security. By extension, the activities of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) against other nations of the world have assumed political, economic and socio-cultural impacts threatening the corporate existence of globality.

Again, the wave of terrorism has assumed a tremendous variation, inflicting fears and insecurity across the globe. The major causes were attributed to poverty caused by Western imperial states, continuous domination and the desire to unite the globe under a singular religious unit called Islam. These fundamentalists have assumed a sophisticated dimension; everything they do is becoming sophisticated: technology, modus operandi and timing. They have placed the United Nations Security Council on its toes, wondering when the global guerrilla warfare will end. Their activities have inflicted unimaginable pain on mankind, with their attendant destruction of lives and property worth billions of dollars across the globe.

The conflicts that have convulsed the Middle East, together with the global expansion of jihadist groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIS, mark a dramatic resurgence of large-scale, high-casualty violence after a period of relative decline. Events since the early 2000s — intensified by the aftershocks of the Arab Spring — have transformed regional instability into threats with transnational consequences, forcing analysts and policymakers to rethink assumptions about peace and security. Hard-fought, prolonged wars now afflict states including Syria, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, Palestine, Somalia, and Sudan, producing vast humanitarian needs and demonstrating how modern conflicts can evade traditional peacemaking tools and international mechanisms. These wars have also enabled violent nonstate actors to entrench themselves and project danger beyond their immediate theatres. Groups rooted in local grievances — from Hamas and Hezbollah to ISIS and other affiliated jihadist networks — have fought sustained campaigns against state authorities, generating displacement, civilian suffering, and spillover insecurity that reach far beyond national borders. Scholars note that globalised Islamist extremism has opened or reinforced new arenas of armed confrontation, often aligning with existing fault lines of instability. Critically, many of these movements have become more active in densely populated lower- and middle-income states, where governance weaknesses and social grievances increase their ability to recruit, operate, and expand regional and international influence. Although similar studies have been done on the issue (Idahosa and Adebayo, 2016; Suror & Guido, 2017; Kihanga, 2015), very few scholarly works have emphasised Syria alone, and none have emphasised how the Syrian conflict has expanded terrorism in the world and the effectiveness of international responses to ISIS terrorist activities.

Terrorism is a controversial concept; this is because it has definitional pluralism and perceptual ambiguity. In fact, it is a

nebulous concept (Arowolo, 2013). Terrorism is not a fixed or singular phenomenon; it evolves, adopting new tactics, structures, and motivations across time and places. Different groups employ terroristic tactics for a wide array of aims—political, religious, or social—and the label itself is deeply contested and emotionally charged. For some actors or communities, violent campaigns are framed as resistance, liberation, or a struggle for dignity and survival; for others, the same actions are abhorrent criminality. This contested moral and political terrain makes any compact, universally accepted definition difficult. International bodies and scholars, nonetheless, converge on several core elements. Modern terrorism typically involves the deliberate use or threat of violence against civilians or other non-combatants to produce fear and exert pressure for political or ideological ends. Such acts are characterised by intentional targeting (or reckless disregard) for civilian safety, the aim of intimidating a population, and the goal of coercing governments, institutions, or societies to act—or desist—from specific courses of action. In short, terrorism blends unlawful violence with a strategic intent to influence outcomes beyond the immediate victims, using terror as a means of political communication.

Global Security

It is germane to note that the world is at large faced with numerous challenges occasioned by several attacks from Islamic fundamentalists in Syria and the Levant championed by Islamic fundamentalists. Global security is the peaceful intercourse of all nations for a parallel advancement of individuals to societal well-being and quality of life, and actions taken by nations to guarantee shared sustainability, safety, and continuity that challenge mutual security (Osuchukwu et al., 2025). According to them, some measures needed to enforce global security include military action, diplomacy, policy development and implementation, management processes, technology changes or developments, etc. Understanding global security depends on how we define and interpret the concept of peace. Because scholars and practitioners approach peace from different theoretical and disciplinary angles, the term has been deployed in political, legal, and security debates in ways that sometimes conflict. This plurality of meanings shapes how threats to peace are identified, which countermeasures are deemed legitimate, and what kinds of peacebuilding efforts receive support. Consequently, there is no single, uncontested definition—grasping what is meant by “peace” is a necessary first step before one can judge whether a given peace is desirable or harmful. Debate often centers on whether peace should be understood narrowly as the absence of direct violence and armed conflict (commonly called negative peace) or more broadly to include the presence of social justice, equitable institutions, and stable governance (positive peace). Under the broader conception, peace is not merely the cessation of hostilities but a set of political and social conditions—embodied in laws, institutions, formal procedures, and informal norms—that secure justice, reduce structural violence, and sustain long-term stability.

Socio-Political and Economic Impact of International Terrorism on Global Security

Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Likewise, the actions of ISIS on the global community have had a direct impact on the security of most nations across the globe. Its various manifestations are enormous, to the extent that efforts are made to combat or arrest the dynamics of its various structures of attack on other nations, inhabitants, and governments. From our previous reviews on their various formations, it is obvious that terrorism (ISIS) has assumed a multidimensional form to engage in global activities. A critical instance could be deciphered from a recent comment that the Nigerian armed group, which is faced with setbacks from a growing regional offensive, pledges allegiance to ISIS (Aljazeera.com, 2015).

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and his organisation are unusual among terrorists in the explicit articulation of their ambitions, agenda, priorities, and strategy (Allison, 2014). It is noticeable that there is a high level of alignment between what they say and what they do. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)'s self-proclaimed mission is to create an Islamic state, one governed according to their interpretation of Islam. To achieve that objective, they organise fighters prepared to strike with vividly brutal strokes that are aimed at terrifying and intimidating their adversaries, whether they are individuals from Western states or even from the Muslim world.

From the economic dimension, it must consider the impact beyond the rise of oil price and the decrease of the exports of Iraqi oil; thus, the food and energy production, gas reserves, and government programs are also within the scope of this analysis. The estimated reserves of oil and gas in the ISIS-controlled territory are estimated at 11 (Lewis, 2014). This situation requires immediate attention due to the lackadaisical management of such reserves by the organisation. It rendered the entire territory in a dire situation concerning power generation and investment, which will be supported by the KRG in the north or by the Baghdad government in the south of Iraq. It has also created a polarisation of the state and government. The implication is very obvious, as currently, Iraq is divided chiefly into three major areas controlled by different actors and organisations: the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Kurdish Region Government (KRG), and the government in Baghdad (Gunter, 2014).

Again, outside Iraq's borders, Turkey is currently going through difficult times. Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek has accurately said, adding that he has hunted the country's trade routes and export market. For some time, Şimşek said effects had been felt on the foreign-exchange deficit, growth, and inflation (Reuters, 2016). Apart from the appalling humanitarian situation of the 18,000 Palestinians and Syrians in the camp, the outcome in Yarmouk threatens to be a turning point for the areas around Damascus. For two years, ISIS has sought to establish a stronghold for itself with little success. In Hajar Al Agwad, rebel forces, primarily Jaish al Islam, tried relentlessly to prevent ISIS from establishing a foothold. Most of the camps are now under the control of ISIS.

Thus, the above presents some characteristics and manifestations that emphasise the unfeasibility of the Islamic

State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)'s economic situation. First, the maintenance of the conflict itself is expensive. The UN, through its Security Council, is striving to cease the 'black economy' that sustains the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)—mostly derived from the oil resources under its control (Al Khatteeb, 2014). On a second note, an unknown portion of the funds gathered by ISIS is directed to the Sunni government; otherwise, the organisation would end up without any popular assistance. Third, it is unbelievable that the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) leaders are prone to corruption. Fourth, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)-controlled territory is in the worst economic situation in Iraq, which poses several hindrances to the purchase of imported power and food (Gunter, 2014).

International Terrorism and Global Security

Terrorism disturbs peace and kills innocent citizens. Terrorists have ulterior motives for launching any such attacks (Wilkinson, 2006). However, innocent civilians pay the price for it. With slow response and other pressing issues like environmental damage, sanitation, and food security to deal with, the issue has become an everlasting one.

The motives behind terrorism have diversified over time. While religion has long been a driving factor for some groups, political objectives now also frequently underpin violent campaigns. Religious conflict is often instrumentalised to fracture social cohesion and provoke intercommunal hostility—triggering riots, discriminatory policies, or entrenched antagonism between faith communities. Beyond immediate violence, terrorism erodes public order and imposes long-term costs: weakened economies, strained democratic institutions, large-scale displacement, and the breakdown of normal civic life. Young people suffer acutely when schools close or educational opportunities vanish, degrading human capital and leaving a generation vulnerable to criminality and radicalisation. Case studies of contemporary jihadist movements underscore these dynamics. Research on the Islamic State (ISIS) identifies its core ambitions as state-building through territorial conquest in parts of the Middle East and the export of its ideology to affiliated groups elsewhere. ISIS proved adept at exploiting conflict environments, forming partnerships with like-minded militants and adapting tactics to shifting conditions—thereby posing a novel and severe threat to international peace. Analysts have argued that degrading ISIS required sustained military pressure to dismantle its territorial control and the governance structures that sustained its appeal.

In Iraq and neighbouring countries, ISIS's ascendancy produced sweeping consequences: mass atrocities, sectarian cleansing, population displacement, and dramatic shifts in local power balances. Its campaign destabilised borderlands, altered demographic patterns, and amplified pressures for political fragmentation. Such developments not only imperil national recovery but also complicate regional security arrangements and humanitarian responses. Public opinion data collected across Muslim-majority states indicate that support for extremist groups is a minority phenomenon. Large-scale surveys conducted in the mid-2010s found that favorable attitudes toward ISIS were limited in most surveyed countries,

with the proportion of sympathisers typically in the low single digits and only a small number of countries registering higher percentages. These findings illustrate that while extremist organisations can attract attention and recruits, they do not represent the views of the majority in Muslim societies; attitudes, however, vary by country and by subgroup, reflecting local grievances, political contexts, and exposure to violence.

Scholars examining the Islamic State's global impact conclude that combating such movements requires a multifaceted response—combining military, political, and social measures—to address the immediate security threat and the underlying conditions that enable violent extremism to spread.

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is an Islamic extremist group operating in Iraq (and Syria). The group consists mostly of the very poor and very low-income earners, with a huge burden of illiteracy. It also encompassed a large number of unemployed degree holders and undergraduates from universities and polytechnics. This set of people tore their certificates and abandoned "education for Islamic fundamentalism as an elixir to their problems. It is established with the major objective of Islamising the country, which the extremists believe is corrupt, secular, and upholds the principles of modernity, which is influenced by Western values. They believe that the government is run by infidels who should be purified and that the government should be replaced by an Islamic system that is based on Sharia principles. They deliberately employed the barbaric practice of terrorism, targeting and killing non-combatants with impunity to achieve their goals. These killings were targeted at only the masses (citizens and expatriates), and government institutions were the targets. The group has also been linked with some major Islamic fighters in Africa, like Anser Dine in Mali, Al Shabbab in Somalia, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Boko Haram in Nigeria, etc.

Thus, from the above-stated submission on the import and purport of conflict with its attendant coverage, it is obvious to note that the nature and operations of ISIS have their evolution rooted in the extent to which inequalities in power and reward are built into all political structures. Individuals and groups that benefit from any particular structure strive to see it maintained, leaving the rest of the people to wallow under excruciating economic conditions. The implication is that scarce resources provided the platform for the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism, and both have continued to determine the direction and dimension of terrorism across the globe.

True, lasting security depends on fairness and justice across the world, combined with deep reforms to the international frameworks that shape economic and political relations. That means reworking systems of trade, aid, and debt management so poorer and marginalised nations are not locked into dependence and vulnerability. It requires a swift transition away from economies built on fossil fuels, decisive and transparent moves toward eliminating nuclear arsenals, stronger international controls on biological and chemical weapons, and a reallocation of resources away from traditional

military spending toward investments that build human and societal resilience. Sustainable security addresses the root structural weaknesses in both national institutions and global governance. It calls for institutional reforms that enable long-term, coordinated responses rather than short-term crisis management. At the same time, it connects broad, systemic drivers of insecurity—such as unequal economic relationships, environmental degradation, and resource competition—to the everyday concerns of people on the ground, including corruption, violent crime, and social exclusion. Development policy, therefore, becomes an instrument of peace: by reshaping development programs to target the drivers of instability directly, donors and governments can reduce the conditions that produce conflict and make societies safer. In other words, security and development are inseparable. Underdevelopment fosters the conditions that lead to instability, and conversely, development strategies designed with security objectives in mind can mitigate those risks. Shifting the emphasis from purely military responses to investments in governance, economic opportunity, public services, and community-level safety strengthens resilience and addresses the underlying causes of insecurity rather than merely treating its symptoms.

Conclusion

Contemporary international terrorism, especially that represented by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), represents one of the most serious threats to global security and peace in the current millennium. This research shows that the development of terrorism in the international context is neither accidental nor random. Rather, it results from systemic issues associated with the structure of the international system, political marginalisation, economic deprivation, and ideological manipulation of religious grievances. The emergence of ISIS as a pseudo-state actor controlling large territories, possessing significant financial assets, and engaging in acts of violence in different parts of the world has changed the face of global security.

From the perspective of the socio-economic dimension of terrorism, the threat posed by ISIS should be assessed in terms of far-reaching consequences. While the direct damage inflicted on the populations of Iraq, Syria, and the Middle East region is undoubtedly devastating, it is the ripple effects of ISIS activities that should be highlighted. In addition to disturbances in the energy market, political polarisation and tensions, and population displacements, it includes the radicalisation of youth in different countries around the world. The fact that ISIS has affiliates in countries such as Nigeria (Boko Haram) and Somalia (Al-Shabaab) demonstrates the transnational nature of the threat, thus making regional or unilateral actions insufficient for tackling it.

One of the key obstacles to an effective international response to terrorism relates to definitional complexity and controversies. Since there is no internationally agreed-upon definition of the phenomenon, it becomes difficult to create a consistent and unified framework for counter-terrorism measures. Nonetheless, empirical research and theoretical insights show a common pattern regarding the causes of international terrorism. More specifically, poverty, political

marginalisation, and inequality in global politics represent structural preconditions for recruitment and radicalisation. Failing to address the problem of terrorism in its entirety, focusing exclusively on its symptoms will yield only temporary success.

While the international community has taken some important steps through the UN Security Council, various coalitions, and other forums to combat ISIS, their implementation remains uneven and incomplete. As this research shows, the process of addressing the challenge is hindered by conflicting national interests and a reluctance to engage in long-term structural reforms necessary for building sustainable peace. The fact that ISIS was rejected nearly unanimously in countries with predominant Muslim populations (as demonstrated by Pew Research Center's survey) is another piece of evidence indicating that ISIS's ideology is merely a distortion rather than a mainstream phenomenon.

In summary, winning the fight against international terrorism is impossible without a paradigm shift. What is needed is a new model of security, which could be referred to as "sustainable security". It would include recognition of the interdependence between development and security, adoption of multilateralism, and willingness to implement structural reforms in global trade and politics. Only through these measures can the international community disrupt the network of terrorist organizations while eliminating the root causes of their activities.

Recommendations

1. Confronting extremism has increasingly relied on international cooperation coalitions with both regional and international allies. But sustaining partnerships often involves compromises; each country has its priorities, political realities, and strategies for protecting its interests. These can cause conflicts. Brokering common approaches and building the counter-terrorism capacity of partners can get sticky. Allies have used the terrorist threat to gain political support, financial resources, military equipment, or intelligence to address tangential issues. The governments of the world should understand that establishing an alliance of countries that share the common goal of effectively countering global terrorism would be one step in creating a broad-based and international response to terrorism. Such an alliance could reflect the NATO model, but, unlike NATO, would include Third World, Arab, and Muslim states in addition to Western countries for effectiveness. The UN must make efforts to eradicate radical Islamic terrorism and encourage democracy in the Muslim world. This should start with a long and thorough stage of pragmatic liberal education and legal restrictions on incitement to violence and terrorism. Such efforts can take place both within Muslim countries and internally in Western states with large Muslim communities.
2. There should be a serious attempt by the United Nations to enthrone equality and equity among the nations of the world and to reduce the continuous advancement of poverty in the weaker states. The world we live in today is divided into the "Haves" and the "Have Nots." In this case,

a serious attempt should be made by the United Nations Assembly towards eradicating this continued marginalisation to enhance as well as achieve equity among nation-states.

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