

## *Research Report*

COMMITTEE : Security Council

ISSUE : Establish international cooperation to stop the development of terrorist networks on the Internet.

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# *Establish international cooperation to stop the development of terrorist networks on the Internet.*

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between terrorism and the internet is significant. Indeed, the use of the Internet has immensely benefited modern society, especially in the aspect of facilitated communication and effortless access to numerous sources of information. However, terrorist groups worldwide have taken advantage of this effective means of communication to spread their messages to wider audiences across the globe. The manipulation of the Internet to recruit terrorists and incite them to commit acts of terrorism has allowed terrorists to strengthen their movements internationally. The mass media's coverage of acts of terrorism plays a part in the effectiveness of the use of the Internet as a tool used to spread terrorism. The censorship of acts of terrorism by the mass media may encourage more drastic acts, but mass media coverage of these acts is also the primary goal of many terrorist organizations.

## KEY WORDS

**Terrorism** : Terrorism is the illegal use of violence and intimidation during peacetime, or hostility towards non-combatants in the case of a war, commonly with religious or political aims.

**Radicalism** : Radicalism consists of views and opinions that are extreme, and beyond the norm of their era.

**Cyberterrorism** : Cyberterrorism is the use of the Internet with the goal of organizing acts of violence that engender injuries or deaths. Its purpose is to obtain political or religious achievements. Cyberterrorism can also consist of the significant disruption of computer networks through the medium of malicious software, such as computer viruses, for example.

**State terrorism** : State terrorism defines the acts of terrorism conducted by a state against its own citizens or another state.

**Recruitment for terrorism** : Recruitment for terrorism is to engage someone to commit or participate in a terrorist offence, or to join an organization/group/association with the intention of committing terrorist offences.

## OVERVIEW

### ORIGINS

Since the late 1980s, the internet has proven to be a very effective medium of communication, accessible to a constantly increasing audience across the globe. The progress made in the domain of technology allows individuals to communicate while remaining relatively anonymous to an almost limitless audience worldwide. The benefits of Internet technology are numerous. However, it must also be recognized that the same technology that facilitates effortless communication can also be exploited for the purposes of terrorism. In this aspect, the origins of online terrorist networks are rooted in the global use of the Internet.

### ECONOMY

The impact of terrorism on a country's economy is significant. Acts of terrorism often result in the physical destruction of economic resources and infrastructures that directly benefit the economy of a country. Furthermore, terrorism severely damages the tourism industry, which has serious repercussions on the economy. In 2016, in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Nice, France, cancellations of holiday trips to Europe created a considerable dent in the country's tourism industry income. Around 8% of France's GDP is provided by the tourism industry, and during the month after the attack in Nice, a consequential decline in the amount of visitors to France proves how terrorism creates a psychological response in the population that reflects fear and wariness of travel. International trade, which is a major part of the economy, is also disrupted by terrorism, because of compromised trade routes and distribution systems.

### SOCIETY

The impact of terrorism on society is severe and persistent. Terrorism aims to create terror, a feeling of insecurity and vulnerability within a society; it promotes the idea that leaders can no longer protect their people. Oftentimes, it provokes the unravelling and exploitation of established political structures and systems. It touches members of society in a universal way: individuals change their customs and daily routines; they become acutely aware of the threat of terrorism in their day-to-day lives. The wary mindset of individuals is reflected in professional situations and workplaces: companies adopt new regulations and sometimes begin monitoring their staff based on notably religious criteria that can be highly intrusive and discriminatory. Terrorism in the world we know today is quickly growing into a global phenomenon that heavily influences diplomacy and war.

Various societies have recognized themselves as victims of terrorism, and prioritize remembrance. This strongly influences history through the medium of the creation of memorials and memorial projects, as well as museums. Terrorism affects certain communities more than

others, such as Jewish and Muslim populations in societies in which they are the minority; terrorism dehumanizes or marginalizes minority groups due to prejudices that are stressed by acts of terrorism.

### ENVIRONMENT

The direct impacts of terrorism on the environment are abrupt and disastrous. The use of explosive materials in rural areas generates significant damage to the environment. Acts of terrorism destroy the ecosystem and are often the cause of defoliation. The disposal of military equipment and the destruction of natural resources, such as oil fields, are also the result of terrorist activity.



*Oil well fires rage outside Kuwait City in the aftermath of Operation Desert Storm.*

Terrorism has effects on landscapes that are sometimes as devastating as natural disasters, such as earthquakes or volcanic eruptions. The indirect impacts of terrorism on the environment are longer-lasting than the direct ones.

Populations fleeing their countries are oftentimes the result of terrorism in a country; consequently, refugee camps are built to provide shelter for those who are in need of it. Whether these settlements are temporary or permanent, they have a drastic impact on the environment, notably due to the destruction of vegetation and exploitation of natural resources that these camps instigate. In countries where agriculture is a major activity, land abandonment and subsequent degradation are a common impact of the aftermath of terrorism.

## MAIN INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

### SECURITY COUNCIL, COUNTER-TERRORISM COMMITTEE

In the wake of the attacks led by terrorist group al-Qaeda against the United States on September 11 2001, the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) was founded on September 28 2001. The Committee was established by Security Council resolution 1373; its function is monitoring the implementation of resolution 1373. This resolution requests countries to reinforce a number of measures intended to enhance their legal ability to counter terrorist activities in their regions and across the globe.



A focus area of the Counter-Terrorism Committee is the abuse of information and communications technologies (ICT) by terrorists and terrorist groups. Two meetings have been organized by the Committee on the theme of the exploitation of ICT in ways that benefit terrorist networks; in December 2015, a meeting on “Preventing terrorists from exploiting the Internet and social media to recruit terrorists and incite terrorist acts, while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms”, and another in December 2016 on “Preventing the exploitation of ICT for terrorist purposes, while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms”.

### THE TALIBAN

The Taliban is an Islamic fundamentalist group that ruled Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001, when a U.S.-led invasion toppled the regime for providing refuge to al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. The group regrouped in Pakistan and has since led a rebellion against the government of Afghanistan and the ISAF, a NATO-led military mission based in Kabul.

The Taliban formerly prohibited media consisting of photography, movies and use of the Internet. Presently, the group’s perspective has radically shifted to one that favours the use of ICT. The Taliban possesses multiple Internet domains, Taliban members use email to communicate with journalists; an official “media committee” has been established by the Taliban. A professional production studio has been set up by the Taliban to produce videos that are distributed on Taliban websites. These films reach worldwide audiences through social media outlets, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Social-media networks serve as the Taliban’s communication centres but also serve as media to reach foreign financing opportunities and terrorist sympathizers across the world. Pictures, videos and text materials in Arabic, Pashto, Dari, Persian, Urdu and English are provided by the Taliban’s social-media platforms. On account of the limited access to the Internet in Afghanistan, the primary group targeted by the Taliban’s online networking is foreigners. To reach Afghans, the Taliban utilizes pamphlets, brochures, mobile radio, audio and video CDs, magazines and religious sympathizers.

### ISIL

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL, is a fundamentalist militant group that was founded in 1999. Emerging in 2010, ISIL was formed by the remaining members of the

extremist militant organization al-Qaeda in Iraq and disaffected members of the US-trained Sons of Iraq. Over the course of the past two years, a dramatic decline in ISIL activity in Syria and Iraq is due to the military success of local forces and a US-led international coalition.

To an even greater degree than the majority of foreign terrorist organizations, ISIL has persistently used the Internet to communicate and spread its message to a global audience. It's ISIL's widespread reach through the Internet - and particularly social media - which is most concerning, as the group aggressively exploits this technology as part of its nefarious strategy of radicalization.

Indeed, ISIL favours online over in-person recruitment; the organization uses social media to attract foreign fighters, women and children by offering a glamorised depiction of life as part of this terrorist group. ISIL blends traditional media platforms, articles, and social media campaigns that reach a worldwide audience in a matter of seconds - no matter the format, the message of radicalization spreads at an alarming speed. Unlike other terrorist groups, ISIL has constructed a narrative that touches on all facets of life - from career opportunities to family life to a sense of community. There is no set profile for the susceptible consumer of this propaganda; it is seen by many who click through the Internet every day and participate in social networks. However, one trend continues to rise - the youthful populations on the Internet. Certain children and young adults are drawing deeper into the ISIL narrative, mainly due to the fact that these individuals are often comfortable with virtual communication platforms, specifically social media networks. Nevertheless, ISIL continues to disseminate its terrorist message to all social media users, regardless of their age.

### **AL-QAEDA**

Al-Qaeda is a transnational extremist Islamist militant organization, founded by Osama bin Laden in the late 1980s. Originally, al-Qaeda was a network that provided support for Muslims fighting against the Soviet Union during the Afghan War (1979-1989).

Upon the withdrawal of the Soviet Union in 1989, al-Qaeda dispersed but continued to oppose what its leaders considered corrupt Islamic regimes and foreign presence in Islamic lands - the United States, for instance. For a period in the early 1990s, al-Qaeda was based in Sudan, before eventually reestablishing its headquarters in Afghanistan around 1996, with the support of the Taliban militia. In 2001, militants associated with al-Qaeda carried out the September 11 attacks against the United States. Within weeks, the United States government retaliated by attacking Taliban and al-Qaeda forces in Afghanistan. This resulted in the deaths of thousands of militants and many members of these groups were captured; the remainder and their leaders were driven into hiding. Al-Qaeda increasingly utilized the Internet as an extensive venue for communication and recruitment, and as a platform for video messages, broadcasts and propaganda. Osama bin Laden was killed by United States military forces on May 2, 2011, after the U.S. intelligence located him residing in a secure compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.



*September 11 attacks, United States, 2001*

It's speculated that al-Qaeda terrorists used the Internet to plan their operations that were carried out on September 11, 2001. Confiscated computers from Afghanistan were reported to reveal that al-Qaeda was compiling data about targeted individuals and exchanging encrypted messages via the Internet. Al-Qaeda members operating in the United States have reportedly been using Internet-based phone services to communicate with members overseas since September 16th, 2002. For this reason, it's inferred that the Internet is being used as a tool to facilitate the planning of acts of terrorism: it provides anonymity, control resources and other measures that facilitate coordination and integration of attack options.

### **INTERPOL**

International Criminal Police Organization, or INTERPOL, is an intergovernmental organization comprising 194 member countries. Its goal is to help police to work together by enabling them to share and access data on crimes and criminals, and a range of technical and operational support. In each member country, an INTERPOL National Central Bureau, or NCB, provides the central point of contact for the General Secretariat and other NCBs. An NCB is run by national police officials. A communications system called I-24/7 connects all the member countries, allowing them to contact each other, and to access databases and services in real-time, from central and remote locations. INTERPOL offers investigative support such as forensics, analysis and

assistance in locating fugitives around the world. It supports national efforts in combating crimes across three global areas: terrorism, cybercrime and organized crime. Due to the increasingly international aspect of today's crimes, it is crucial that police across the world remain coordinated in maintaining global security - even between countries which do not have diplomatic relations. INTERPOL prioritizes politically neutral actions that are taken within the limits of existing laws in different countries.



INTERPOL allows police forces across the globe to share data and signals on transnational terrorist organizations and networks to improve their understanding of their methods, motives and financing, and conclusively, ways to identify and arrest suspects. The Organization supports its member countries by preventing, preparing for and responding to terrorist attacks; to do this, it has put in place prevention and response mechanisms, and improved coordination among the agencies concerned - including police, customs, border controls, public health professionals, the military, intelligence services and environmental management. The Organization incorporates three elements into their prevention methods: information sharing and intelligence analysis, capacity building and training, and operational support.

### **UNODC**

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a United Nations office that was established in 1997. Its activity primarily focuses on preventing the impact of drugs, organized crime, corruption and terrorism on states across the world. It strives for the provision of health, security and justice by tackling these threats, and promoting peace and sustainable well-being as deterrents to them. However, the scale of these problems is too great for the Office to counter alone: the UNODC offers practical assistance to states in need and encourages transnational approaches to action. The Office is committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals at its core. Indeed, this agenda recognizes the importance and significant role of justice systems and responsiveness to drug use in the context of sustainable development. The five normative areas of activity that are addressed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime are transnational organized crime, corruption, criminal justice systems, world drug problem and terrorism.



Given the complexity of the threat of terrorism, the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the UNODC values strong coordination and cooperation within national governments, between states and organizations at the regional and international level. This cooperation is essential to effectively implement terrorism prevention measures. The Terrorism Prevention Branch, or TPB, plays a crucial role in the implementation of a legal counter-terrorism framework, comprising of conventions, protocols and resolutions - specifically 19 universal legal instruments against terrorism, along with the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions and the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The TPB has been an essential United Nations entity providing legal counter-terrorism assistance to UN Member States.

## **TIMELINE**

### **SEPTEMBER 11 2001**

On September 11 of 2001, 19 militants associated with the extremist group al-Qaeda hijacked four aeroplanes and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States. Two of the four planes were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. A third plane hit the Pentagon, the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense and a symbol for the U.S. military, outside Washington DC. Because of a delay in the plane's takeoff, the fourth plane never reached its target, but instead crashed in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. These terrorist attacks resulted in nearly 3000 deaths; they triggered major U.S. military initiatives to counter the threat of terrorism and defined the presidency of George W. Bush, President of the United States from 2001 to 2009.





*“The September 11 attack against the Pentagon”*

These acts of terrorism were reportedly financed by Osama bin Laden, the leader of the terrorist organization al-Qaeda. The attacks were allegedly acts of retaliation for the United States’ support of Israel, its involvement in the Persian Gulf War and its continued military presence in the Middle East.

#### **CHARLIE HEBDO - JANUARY 2015**

The Charlie Hebdo shooting was a series of terrorist attacks in France in January 2015 that resulted in 17 deaths. The Paris offices of Charlie Hebdo, a satirical magazine, were the target of a terrorist attack on January 7 of 2015. The Algerian-French brothers Chérif and Saïd Kouachi, armed with assault rifles, entered the magazine offices and killed Frédéric Boisseau, the caretaker. They forced cartoonist Corinne Rey to enter the security code that granted them access to an editorial meeting. They killed police officer Franck Brinsolaro, who had been detailed to protect Charlie Hebdo editor. The brothers asked for four of Charlie Hebdo’s cartoonists - Jean Cabut, Georges Wolinski, Bernard Verlhac, and Philippe Honoré - by name, and killed them as well. They killed Charlie Hebdo’s editor, Stéphane Charbonnier; two columnists, Bernard Maris and Elsa Cayat; copy editor Mustapha Ourrad, and journalist Michel Renaud, a guest at the meeting.

Chérif and Saïd Kouachi fled the scene as the police arrived, and killed police officer Ahmed Merabet, who was on patrol in the area. Authorities found an identity card in the brothers’ abandoned getaway car that allowed them to identify them. On January 8, the police continued to chase the brothers, who had robbed a service station 72 kilometres northeast of Paris.

On January 9, the fugitives were forced off the road by a police roadblock 35 kilometres Northeast of Paris; an exchange of gunfire ensued and the brothers took cover in a print works building, taking Michel Catalano, the owner, hostage. An employee of the company, Lilian Lepère, took refuge under a sink in the upstairs of the building. An 8-hour siege followed, during which Lepère continuously relayed information to the police.

During a short phone interview with BFM TV, a French news and weather channel, Chérif referred to himself and his brother as defenders of the Prophet Muhammad, sent by al-Qaeda. The brothers said they were prepared to die as martyrs and were killed in a shoot-out that ensued upon their emergence from the building.

The second series of attacks committed by Aleby Coulibaly was found to be coordinated with the Kouachi brothers' attacks. A video emerged after the attacks revealing that Coulibaly pledged allegiance to ISIL instead of al-Qaeda.

In the morning of January 8, Coulibaly killed policewoman Clarissa Jean-Philippe and injured a man in Southern Parisian suburbs. On January 9, Coulibaly entered a supermarket in the city of Paris and took the owner hostage to demand that the police release the Kouachi brothers from where they were besieged. After the Kouachis' deaths, special forces entered the supermarket, shooting Coulibaly and freeing 15 hostages. Four of the hostages were found to have been killed by Coulibaly.



*“Je suis Charlie”*

The response to these attacks was one of solidarity, with thousands of people marching in the streets of French cities, using the slogan “Je suis Charlie” (“I am Charlie”). Messages of solidarity spread worldwide on social media. Following a spike of Islamophobic incidents in the aftermath of the attacks, a new slogan was popularized: “Je suis Ahmed”, in remembrance of Ahmed Merabet, the Muslim police officer killed by the terrorists. This slogan highlighted the perceived difference between religion and militant fundamentalism.

These incidents were significant because of the meaning behind the attacks; the targeting of Charlie Hebdo was a symbol of the constraint of freedom of expression.

## RELEVANT UN TREATIES AND EVENTS

### SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CTC, DECEMBER 2015

On 17 December 2015, the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee held a meeting on the theme of "Preventing Terrorists from Exploiting the Internet and Social Media to Recruit Terrorists and Incite Terrorist Acts, While Respecting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms". This meeting addressed the increasing threat posed by the use of the internet and social media for terrorist purposes, and the need to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement officials to monitor and confront that threat. The theme of this meeting also evoked the need to respect international human rights standards. The committee recognized that when content is removed from the internet under the pretense that it incites or glorifies terrorism, states must still comply with international human rights when taking actions. Member states must remain consistent with freedom of speech whilst putting in place legal frameworks that respond to the threat of dissemination of terrorist content on the Internet. Different sectors, private and public, must undertake further research to improve their understanding of the patterns in terrorists' use of the internet and social media for radicalization that leads to terrorism; incitement to terrorism; training; recruitment; provision of travel assistance to foreign terrorist fighters; and the coordination, planning and financing of terrorist activities.

### THE UN'S GLOBAL COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is a resolution adopted by the United Nations' General Assembly on September 8 of 2006. The strategy is a unique global instrument; its purpose is to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter the threat of terrorism. The General Assembly reviews the Strategy every 2 years, making it a living document attuned to Member States' counter-terrorism priorities.

Clause 12 (b) of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy encourages member states to use the internet as a tool for countering the spread of terrorism, as a form of retaliation against the exploitation of the internet by terrorist organizations with the goals of radicalization, recruitment and financing.

### SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1373 (2001)

The Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) encourages all Member States to prioritize cooperation and communication in order to intensify and accelerate the process of exchange of operational and essential information concerning the use of ICT by terrorist groups. This resolution contributes to the effectiveness of measures of which the goal is to suppress terrorist recruitment worldwide.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The complex nature of terrorist activity renders it difficult to predict it, and consequently, to prevent it. For this reason, the solutions to terrorism remain adaptable depending on specific cases, groups and states.

Nevertheless, there are measures that must be taken in order to lessen the damage caused by the threat of terrorism, specifically the development of terrorist networks on the Internet. A

significant element of counter-terrorism actions is the improvement of international cooperation and communication on the topic of terrorism. All states affected by terrorism must contribute to its prevention across the world - whether it's by contributing information to international databases or by supporting other states that require assistance.

Additionally, states throughout the world must recognize the crucial role of the Internet in the development of terrorist groups. To take action specifically against the exploitation of the Internet, this technology must be viewed as a possible direct threat to the security of a nation; counter-terrorism actions must take into account the threat of terrorist presence on the internet and must be valued as much as military counter-terrorism retaliations.

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