



Forum: Special Conference 'Beyond Boarders' (SPECON)

Topic: Preventing Cross-Border Extremist and Terrorist Recruitment

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Position: Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Dominic Mikroloopoulos and I am currently attending year 11 at the Arsakeio-Tositseio Ekalis. It is my honor to be serving as Deputy President of the Special Conference on 'Beyond Boarders' in this year's St Catherine's British School Model United Nations Conference. My first conference dates back to 2023 and since then I've been immersed in a fascinating world of debate and knowledge. Every experience I've had as a delegate has been unique, offering something special each time.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate you on your upcoming participation in the conference. I encourage you to create lasting memories and enjoy the enriching debate experience this conference offers, as much as I've done throughout my journey as a delegate.

This study guide serves the purpose of introducing you to the second topic of SPECON's agenda. However, I strongly advise you to carefully study your topics and your country's stance regarding the topic of "Preventing Cross-Border Extremist and Terrorist Recruitment".

If you have any kind of question, conference or topic-related, feel free to contact me at dominicmikroopoulos@gmail.com or our President at casperli@campion.edu.gr.

See you soon!

Dominic Mikroloopoulos



TOPIC INTRODUCTION

It is well known that the long-term endurance of terrorist organizations heavily depends on their capacity to attract new members and maintain an ongoing terrorist recruitment cycle. Throughout the course of time, terrorist organizations have used a handful of ways to recruit new members, which were influenced by a variety of factors such as their ideologies, locations, even their objectives. In most cases, terrorist recruitment is a lengthy process that is often well-planned and carefully conducted by the full membership of a terrorist group with several different layers existing through which terrorist organisations try to extend their reach and expand.

Preventing terrorist recruitment is one of the most effective and least lethal ways of countering terrorism, and yet it is often overlooked by those combating terrorism, since more immediate solutions have been prioritized. It is essential since decreasing the numbers of terrorists recruited would not only lead directly to fewer terrorist attacks and casualties, but also give the opportunity to fewer resources including human and judicial ones as well as prison-related expenses, such as high-security housing being spent on investigating such attacks. Furthermore, such preventive activities would be strengthening peace and harmony in societies by eliminating the escalation of conflicts. For a successful counterterrorism policy, it is essential that the vicious cycle of terrorist recruitment is targeted at its core and interrupted.

Preventing terrorism and terrorist recruitment is a delicate practice that requires a professional approach and the involvement of a combination of well-informed and educated officers, specialists, experts and volunteers. Preventing recruitment before a prospective recruit is completely assimilated is essential. The objective of preventing terrorist recruitment is not to prosecute those who are being approached by terrorist recruiters, but rather to save them from being pulled into a terrorist group to begin with.

This topic has explicit links to the conference theme, 'Beyond Borders', as terrorist recruitment is a transnational threat that acknowledges no limits let alone borders. It is this characteristic itself that requires coordination within the international community by sharing ideas, strategies and will to confront the circumstances that fuel recruitment and dismantle the various channels through which such groups tend to grow. Ultimately, a unified and



sustained international approach that strengthens global security is essential to countering terrorist recruitment at its core.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Counterterrorism

“Strategies and approaches that ensure terrorists and terrorist organisations can not cause harm to civilians.”¹ Preventing recruitment shall be considered the most important factor of counterterrorism, since it assures the disruption of the group as a whole and not just their harmful practices.

Extremism

“Extremism is the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance that aims to either negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others or undermine, overturn or replace the system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights or intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve the results in those mentioned before” The core concept of extremist is directly linked to the topic of the conference, for it has not only constituted the basis for the creation and evolution of numerous terrorist organizations, but simultaneously the vilification of the ideas stemming from this ideology serves as a foundation for the recruitment of new members.²

Radicalization

“The action or process of making someone become more extreme on their political beliefs.”³. Preventing radicalization is an act of major importance in order for recruitment to be tackled at its early stages, since it will be reducing the pool of potential recruits.

¹ “What Is Counterterrorism? [Video] - the National Museum of American Diplomacy.” *U.S. Department of State*, U.S. Department of State, 7 May 2025, diplomacy.state.gov/teacher-resources/what-is-counterterrorism-video/

² Admin. “What Is Extremism? Definition of Extremist Ideology.” *Educate Against Hate*, 10 Apr. 2024, www.educateagainsthate.com/what-is-extremism/. Accessed 30 Nov. 2025.

³ “Radicalization.” *Cambridge Dictionary*, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/radicalization. Accessed 29 Oct. 2025.



Recruit

“An individual who has been selected, by recruiters, as a potential member for a terrorist organisation and is now in the process of recruitment.” They are the basic foundation for the survival of a terrorist group, and understanding how they are targeted will help develop the right strategies for preventing recruitment.

Recruiter

“An individual ,who is already a member of a terrorist organisation, and facilitates the recruitment of civilians.” They are the key to developing recruitment, since they are the ones pulling the strings when it comes to approaching new members.

Recruitment Financing

“Any funds used to, actively or passively, recruit members to join a terrorist organisation or to pursue its goals.”⁴ Having the ability to cut off recruitment financing will significantly weaken the ability of a terrorist group to recruit and radicalize new members.

Terrorism

“The unlawful use of violence or threat of violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies. Terrorism is often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs and committed in the pursuit of goals that are usually political.”⁵ If recruitment is decreased there will be much less individuals engaging in terrorist acts.

Terrorist groups

“Non state actors that use violence and fear to achieve their political, ideological, or religious objectives. These groups often operate outside the bounds of traditional state power and

⁴ *FATF Report Financing of Recruitment for Terrorist Purposes January ...*, www.fatf-gafi.org/content/dam/fatf/documents/reports/Financing-Recruitment-for-Terrorism.pdf. Accessed 29 Oct. 2025.

⁵ “Guides and Resources: Domestic & International Terrorism: Definitions.” *Libguides.com*, 2025, law-richmond.libguides.com/c.php?g=1447720&p=10759706.



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often target civilians to spread their message and further their agenda.”⁶ Preventing recruitment will weaken a terrorist group and gradually lead to its extinction.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Deadliest Terrorist Groups as of 2024

Islamic State and Affiliates

The Islamic State came to existence during the early days of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, as an anti-American group fighting under its own auspices. The organization grew out of an insurgency by Sunni Iraqis, who had been politically dominant under the rule of Saddam Hussein but had been repressed under the political system that replaced him. Formerly an affiliate of Al-Qaeda, ISIS began acting autonomously in 2013 and was disavowed by al-Qaeda in early 2014⁷. In June 2014, after making significant territorial gains in Iraq, the group proclaimed the establishment of a caliphate led by the leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.⁸ The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) reached its peak by early 2015, controlling over 41,000 square miles in Iraq and Syria and ruling over at least eight million people, but by mid-2015 the group had begun losing ground⁹. Today, the Islamic State and its affiliated chapters, including Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISK) and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWA), is still considered to be one of the most lethal terrorist networks, despite its partial decay. The group was responsible for 1,805 deaths across 23 countries, despite a 10%

⁶“Terrorist Groups - (Intro to Political Science) - Vocab, Definition, Explanations.” *Fiveable*, fiveable.me/key-terms/intro-to-poli-sci/terrorist-groups .

⁷ *Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant - Expansion, Terror, Insurgency* | Britannica, www.britannica.com/topic/Islamic-State-in-Iraq-and-the-Levant/ISIL-outside-of-Iraq-and-Syria.

⁸ Pandit, Puja. “Islamic State the Deadliest Terror Group in 2024 as Big Four Expands .” *Vision of Humanity*, 25 Mar. 2025,

www.visionofhumanity.org/islamic-state-the-deadliest-terror-group-in-2024-as-big-four-expands .

⁹ *Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant - Expansion, Terror, Insurgency* | Britannica, www.britannica.com/topic/Islamic-State-in-Iraq-and-the-Levant/ISIL-outside-of-Iraq-and-Syria.



decline from the previous year.¹⁰ IS continues to employ suicide bombings and armed assaults, particularly targeting military personnel and civilians¹¹.

Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM)

JNIM is a terrorist group based in Mali and active across much of West Africa, including parts of Burkina Faso and Niger¹². It formed in March 2017, when four Mali-based extremist groups, Ansar al-Din, al-Murabitun, Macina Liberation Front (MLF), and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) announced that they had merged, formalizing cooperation among them¹³. The formalization of JNIM united the aforementioned groups under the slogan “one banner, one group, one emir.”¹⁴ Through its growing influence, it also extended its appeal to include other ethnic groups in different parts of Burkina Faso. Today, operating in a competitive conflict environment alongside other insurgent actors, JNIM seeks to achieve hegemony as a non-state armed actor, and to challenge the authority of regional governments. It has recorded a significant rise in attacks, resulting in 1,022 deaths¹⁵. The group’s most devastating assault occurred in Centre-Nord, Burkina Faso, where up to 200 civilians were killed in a coordinated offensive.^{16 17}

¹⁰ *Combating the Spread of Terrorism by Targeting the World Wide Web*, ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/b63fe787-88d2-443e-a9ac-e0adbac2e214/UNSC-Study-Guide_final.pdf.

¹¹ *Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant - Expansion, Terror, Insurgency* | Britannica, www.britannica.com/topic/Islamic-State-in-Iraq-and-the-Levant/ISIL-outside-of-Iraq-and-Syria.

¹² Pandit, Puja. “Islamic State the Deadliest Terror Group in 2024 as Big Four Expands.” *Vision of Humanity*, 25 Mar. 2025,

www.visionofhumanity.org/islamic-state-the-deadliest-terror-group-in-2024-as-big-four-expands .

¹³ Nctc. “National Counterterrorism Center: Terrorist Groups.” *National Counterterrorism Center | Terrorist Groups*, www.dni.gov/nctc/terrorist_groups/jnim.html.

¹⁴ Nctc. “National Counterterrorism Center: Terrorist Groups.” *National Counterterrorism Center | Terrorist Groups*, www.dni.gov/nctc/terrorist_groups/jnim.html.

¹⁵ Ndour, Pape Abdou. “Non-State Armed Group and Illicit Economies in West Africa: Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam Wal-Muslimin (JNIM), Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime and ACLED, October 2023.” *WATHI*, 3 Nov. 2023,

www.wathi.org/laboratoire/choix_de_wathi/non-state-armed-group-and-illicit-economies-in-west-africa-jamaat-nusrat-al-islam-wal-muslimin-jnim-global-initiative-against-transnational-organized-crime-and-acled-october-2023/.

¹⁶ Ndour, Pape Abdou. “Non-State Armed Group and Illicit Economies in West Africa: Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam Wal-Muslimin (JNIM), Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime and ACLED, October 2023.” *WATHI*, 3 Nov. 2023,

www.wathi.org/laboratoire/choix_de_wathi/non-state-armed-group-and-illicit-economies-in-west-africa-jamaat-nusrat-al-islam-wal-muslimin-jnim-global-initiative-against-transnational-organized-crime-and-acled-october-2023/.

¹⁷ Nctc. “National Counterterrorism Center: Terrorist Groups.” *National Counterterrorism Center | Terrorist Groups*, www.dni.gov/nctc/terrorist_groups/jnim.html.



Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), also known as the Pakistani Taliban was formed in 2007 when several Pakistani extremist groups coalesced under the group's now-deceased founder, Baitullah Mehsud. Its stated objective is the overthrow of the elected government of Pakistan in order to establish an emirate based on its interpretation of Islamic law. To that end, TTP has worked to destabilize Pakistan by directly attacking the Pakistani army and assassinating politicians¹⁸. The group is also responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands Pakistani citizens since its founding while also claiming a failed bombing in New York City's Times Square in 2010. TTP primarily recruits from the former FATA and finances its operations through donations, extortion, kidnappings, and natural resource extraction. The group was responsible for 558 deaths in 2024, marking a 90% increase compared to the previous year¹⁹. The group intensified its attacks in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces, with its deadliest attack killing 25 people at a railway station in Quetta.²⁰

Al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab formed as a radical youth wing of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), which briefly controlled central and southern Somalia in 2006. After the ICU was removed from power by UN-backed Ethiopian forces in December 2006 and disbanded, al-Shabaab remained active and used foreign intervention to gain support for its struggle against occupying forces. The group publicly pledged loyalty to Al-Qaida in 2012²¹. It broadly seeks to overthrow the central government, expel foreign forces from Somalia, and ultimately establish an Islamic state in accordance with its version of sharia. To build its legitimacy among Somalis, the group provides services within its protection racket, such as dispute settlement, that the government has long struggled to deliver. As a result, it remains Somalia's most dangerous

¹⁸ Nctc. "National Counterterrorism Center: Terrorist Groups." *National Counterterrorism Center / Terrorist Groups*, www.dni.gov/nctc/terrorist_groups/ttp.html.

¹⁹ Pandit, Puja. "Islamic State the Deadliest Terror Group in 2024 as Big Four Expands ." *Vision of Humanity*, 25 Mar. 2025,

www.visionofhumanity.org/islamic-state-the-deadliest-terror-group-in-2024-as-big-four-expand

²⁰ Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) | Security Council, [main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/tehrik-e-taliban-pakistan-\(ttp\).](http://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/tehrik-e-taliban-pakistan-(ttp).)

²¹ Nctc. "National Counterterrorism Center: Terrorist Groups." *National Counterterrorism Center / Terrorist Groups*, www.dni.gov/nctc/terrorist_groups/al_shabaab.html.



militant organization, responsible for 96% of terrorist attacks in the country²². While the group's overall activity declined, it still accounted for over 400 deaths²³. The deadliest attack of the year occurred in Mogadishu, where a suicide bombing and armed assault on a hotel killed 37 people.²⁴

Boko Haram

Boko Haram is a terrorist group that was found in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf in northeastern Nigeria²⁵. The group's initial proclaimed intent was to uproot the corruption and injustice in Nigeria, which it blamed on Western influences, and to impose Sharia, or Islamic law. Thus, there is a fair consensus that, until 2009, the group conducted its operations more or less peacefully and that its radicalization followed a government clampdown in 2009, in which some 800 of its members were killed²⁶. The group's leader, Mohammed Yusuf, was also killed after that attack while in police custody. After that incident, Boko Haram appeared to be disbanded, or at least inactive, until the next year, when a video was made public in which Yusuf's deputy, Abubakar Shekau, declared that he was the group's new leader and vowed to avenge the deaths of Yusuf and the others.²⁷ Today, although Boko Haram's influence has waned compared to previous years, the group remains a significant threat in Nigeria and Cameroon. In 2024, Boko Haram was responsible for multiple deadly assaults, including an attack in Yobe State, Nigeria, where 100 to 150 civilians were killed.²⁸

²² "Al-Shabaab." *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-shabaab.

²³ Pandit, Puja. "Islamic State the Deadliest Terror Group in 2024 as Big Four Expands ." *Vision of Humanity*, 25 Mar. 2025, www.visionofhumanity.org/islamic-state-the-deadliest-terror-group-in-2024-as-big-four-expand

²⁴ "Al-Shabaab." *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-shabaab.

²⁵ Pandit, Puja. "Islamic State the Deadliest Terror Group in 2024 as Big Four Expands ." *Vision of Humanity*, 25 Mar. 2025, www.visionofhumanity.org/islamic-state-the-deadliest-terror-group-in-2024-as-big-four-expand

²⁶ *Boko Haram | History, Meaning, Insurgency, & Facts | Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/Boko-Haram.

²⁷ *Boko Haram | History, Meaning, Insurgency, & Facts | Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/Boko-Haram.

²⁸ Afzal, Madiha, et al. "Explaining the Emergence of Boko Haram." *Brookings*, 9 July 2018, www.brookings.edu/articles/explaining-the-emergence-of-boko-haram/.

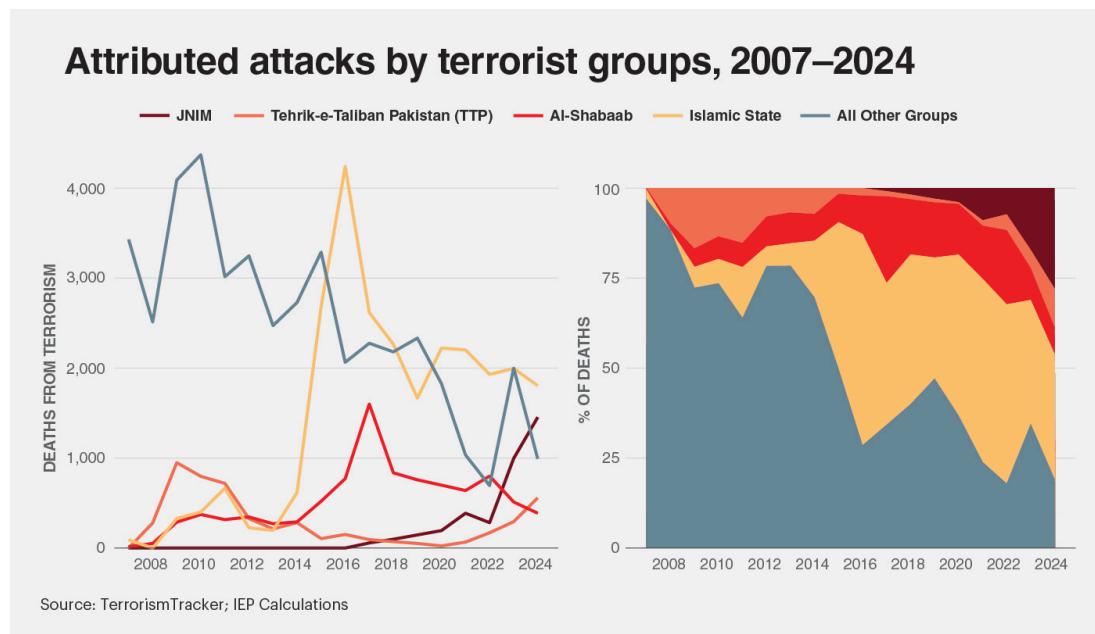


Figure 1: Shows the attributed attacks by terrorist groups between 2007-2024²⁹

Estimated deaths from terrorism by group 2007–2024

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

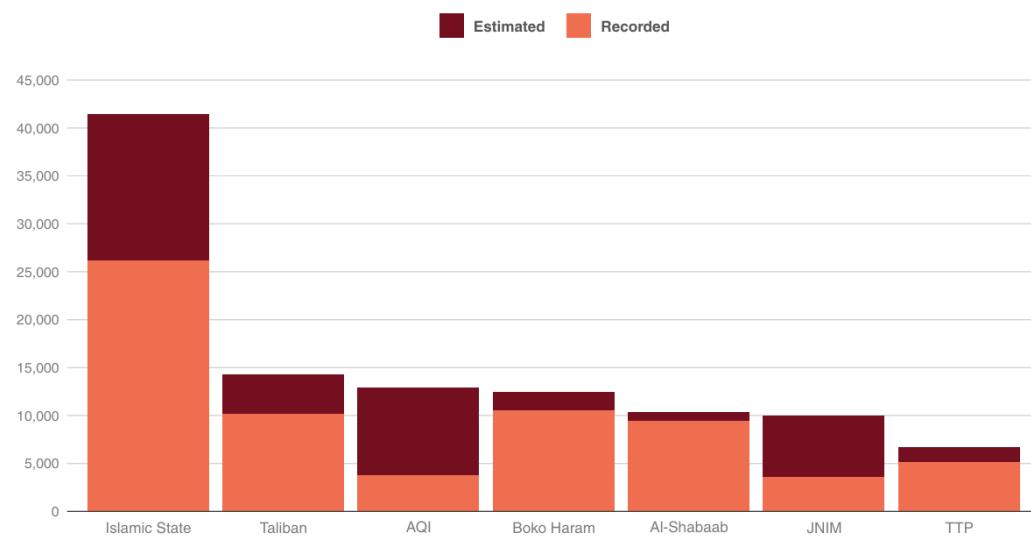


Figure 2: Shows the estimated and recorded deaths from terrorist groups between 2007-2024³⁰

²⁹ Pandit, Puja. "Islamic State the Deadliest Terror Group in 2024 as Big Four Expands ." *Vision of Humanity*, 25 Mar. 2025,

www.visionofhumanity.org/islamic-state-the-deadliest-terror-group-in-2024-as-big-four-expands

³⁰ Global Terrorism Index 2025,

www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Global-Terrorism-Index-2025.pdf.



Online Recruitment

Social networks have served as tools of terrorists, even with various security measures undertaken by the owners of the social networks. Al-Qaeda has had an Internet presence for nearly two decades. It is one of the first terrorist organisations to discover the social networks as a platform for their propaganda as well as anonymous communication and spread of information through their affiliates. It has been confirmed that both Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups use the internet to finance themselves from charities and direct money transfers through the Internet. Analysts found Al-Qaeda and various charities sharing the same bank account, where Al-Qaeda received the money people were “donating” for a charity. In order to quench the money flow a number of US based Islamic charities were shut down. It must be noted down that the Islamic State has succeeded in attracting a vast global audience by posting uncensored images of its brutal tactics online. It has encouraged its supporters to share these videos and promote the Islamic State in their communities. It is filled with educated young people radicalized through social media with different tactics that turn them against their families and friends, in order to isolate them and minimize other influences outside of the terrorist ideology³¹.

Individuals and groups that are targeted for recruitment

Family Members and Close Friends

Terrorists tend to recruit people whom they already know and trust, including family members and close friends. This is done so that the nature of their activities remains veiled and protected and reduces the risk of a complaint being filed to the authorities. The recruitment of family members and close friends is usually the first choice of recruiters, for two reasons. The first reason is that terrorist recruiters have already known their family members and close friends for years. Furthermore, in most cases, relationships and connections with family members and close friends generally would not raise suspicion if intelligence and law enforcement agencies are conducting investigations, since communications between friends and family members can easily be deemed non-suspicious. Second, most family members and close friends would be familiar and perhaps recognizable

³¹ *Combating the Spread of Terrorism by Targeting the World Wide Web*, ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/b63fe787-88d2-443e-a9ac-e0adbac2e214/UNSC-Study-Guide_final.pdf .



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believers in the ideology of a particular terrorist organization and already socially related to people who believe in similar ideologies and causes. According to data from various terrorist organization members, introduction to a terrorist organization took place with the help of friends 35 percent of the time and through family members 26.5 percent of the time³².

University and High School Students

Historically, universities and high schools have been fertile grounds for political and ideological movements and have been infiltrated by terrorist organizations, based on their locations and the opportunities they afford. This enables terrorist organizations to operate clandestinely in schools. Many young people are vulnerable and more at-risk for joining terrorist groups for a variety of reasons. Students sometimes establish close friendships with terrorist recruiters during and after class hours. The strong emotions and enthusiasm of some young people can drive them to make unwise choices; in addition, group thinking often preempts critical reasoning, so that some students may find themselves doing things with their group they would not consider doing alone. Many locally operating terrorist groups establish committees or appoint a member to organize the recruitment activities in high schools and universities. Recruiters try to find ways to spend time with students through a variety of activities, such as games, sports, and joint studying, so that they can eventually create a strong enough bond to be able to start recruiting. An ISIS fighter, a student from the University of Westminster in the UK, captured and held in prison in Syria, told the BBC that “he was one of at least seven students and ex-students from the University of Westminster to join ISIS.”³³

Terrorist Organization Attack and Recruitment Cycle

Beyond their ideologies, terrorist organizations thrive on four important elements to survive. Terrorist attacks are inherently designed as communication tools used to spread fear among the populace and convey a message through violence. As communication strategies, terrorist attacks first aim to present terrorist organizations as more powerful and sophisticated than they actually are. Second, attacks are carried out to hijack media coverage and help spread

³² Yayla, Ahmet. “A Case Study of Leftist Terrorism in Turkey.” *UNT Digital Library*, University of North Texas, 25 Sept. 2007, digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc2826/.

³³ “At Least Seven from My University Joined Is, Says Captured Fighter.” *BBC News*, BBC, www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47772772.amp.



their messages in the aftermath of an attack. Terrorist attacks may dominate for a short while the world agenda, leading to intense publicity through excessive media coverage. The coverage of a terrorist attack by the media gives a terrorist organization free TV airtime and print media coverage. Thus, the intended reaching out automatically occurs, and the organization may be able to start to recruit more members or reach out to new people to recruit. Not all terrorist organisations rely on patterns, but those who do usually tend to opt for fighters with irregular military experience as part of militia, terrorist insurgent or other armed rebel groups and members with variable educational background(more and less educated), thus an educational diversity be achieved

In the mind of an extremist and radicalized believer in the ideology of a terrorist organization, seeing coverage of a terrorist attack in the media can often become a spark and starting point, prompting that person to decide, “I should do something, too.”

The Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization Process

There are approximately eight stages of the terrorist recruitment and radicalization processes. These stages constitute essential milestones in becoming a member of a terrorist group and identify the activities by which authorities can intervene to interrupt the process.

The stages are:

Identifying the Candidate

The identification of the candidate is the first step in the recruitment process. There are two types of recruitment based on the policies and needs of a terrorist organization. The first type is “opportunistic recruitment,” where recruiters try to recruit people whom they already know, with whom they already have connections, or with whom they can connect through a variety of means. The second type of terrorist recruitment is targeted recruitment through “talent spotting.” In targeted recruitment, terrorist organizations tend to seek out people with special talents and qualities who can be assigned to work in certain units or areas that call for qualified members to carry out the assigned tasks.

Initiating Contact

At this stage, the recruiter initiates contact with his or her subject if it did not already pre-exist, or the recruiter might seek an intentional and focused connection with the subject.



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Obviously, there is no need to establish initial contact with a target subject if the recruiter already has a prior connection through family ties or friendships. However, in many cases, terrorist recruiters use a variety of tactics to establish sites to which they can attract new subjects for recruitment purposes, such as cultural centers, bookstores, cafes, youth centers, music concerts, after-class study sessions, and free courses.

Building Rapport and Friendship

Usually, recruiters seek ways to spend time with their subjects. At this stage, we often observe increased social activities between the subject and recruiter. Typically, the involvement of other players or terrorist-related entities is not observed at this stage. Recruiters usually focus on ascertaining whether or not they can trust their subjects and if it is worth continuing to work on them. Generally, recruiters, as with most terrorist organizations, are required at this point to report their progress in their recruitment efforts. In most cases, they must make a detailed report in order to get feedback and directions from their peers and unit leaders.

Advancing Friendship and Trust, Introducing Ideological Indoctrination, and Playing to Emotions

Recruiters, after ensuring that they can trust their subject and after receiving approval from the organization, start to deepen their friendship with the prospect, playing to the person's emotions by fostering the idea that they are close friends. The final goal at this stage is to build the utmost trust and affection between the parties so that the targeted subjects believe what they are being told by the recruiter and will not be able to say "no" or "deny the requests" of the recruiter, due to the affection that has grown between them.

Isolating the Recruited Person and Advancing Indoctrination to Networking with other Terrorists and Associations

During this stage, recruiters do their best to make sure that their subjects become true believers in the organization's ideology and in the meantime are isolated from previous social settings and start to associate with the recruiter's network. Places such as foundations, associations, bookstores, charities, Internet cafes, study groups, tea houses, music and dance



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courses, sports academies, language centers serve as meeting spots where known terrorist members are present while prospective recruits spend time there.

Reinforcing the Assumption of a New Identity

Terrorist candidates, at this stage, realize that they have fully associated themselves with the group and assumed the identity and accepted terrorist teachings imposed by the recruiter and by their new network of associates. If subjects make it through this step, it becomes very difficult for them to disassociate themselves from the group. This is often because of the close friendships and bonds developed and due to the ideological indoctrination. If a subject has passed the prior steps, it usually means that he or she will formally become a new member of the organization.

Introducing the Recruit to Simple Terrorist Activities Such as Demonstrations and Social Media Posts

The new recruits are welcomed into the group and assigned, in most cases, to a local sector of the terrorist organization. During this stage, the affiliations with the group are usually not visible to the outside world. If the group would like to reinforce the new member's identity and affiliation with the group, he or she will be asked to carry out seemingly innocent and harmless activities, such as being part of a demonstration, distributing pamphlets and booklets, writing graffiti, transporting books or funds, or engaging in other activities which would not be openly deemed illegal. This stage serves as a pathway to becoming a trusted member and affords opportunities for new recruits to prove themselves.

Assigning Candidates to Different Parts of the Terrorist Organization

At this final stage of the recruitment process, the candidates have proven themselves and are ready to be assigned to different parts of the organization. The assignments are usually done on a case-by-case basis, and different factors are taken into consideration before a newly recruited terrorist is relocated, which includes issues such as whether candidates are about to graduate from college or high school, whether they can cut their ties with their family, whether they have enough courage to live abroad under stressful conditions, and whether they possess the desire or physical strength to go through rigorous military-style training. It is common to observe certain behaviors if a newly recruited terrorist is going to be assigned abroad or relocate. In general, a newly recruited member is not sent abroad directly. Rather,



under normal circumstances, a newcomer is assigned to a local area to work in an unarmed unit, so that more senior members can observe, get to know, and test the recruit over time, and produce reports about his or her qualities and characteristics.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date of the Event	Event
17th July, 1998 ^{³⁴}	The International Criminal Court (ICC) adopted the “Rome Statute”, which categorised enlisting children under 15 into armed groups a war crime.
26th July, 2005 ^{³⁵}	UNSC 1612 Resolution was adopted and managed to create a mechanism to track the recruitment of children in conflicts.
24th September, 2014 ^{³⁶}	UNSC 2178 Resolution was adopted and required states to prevent and criminalise recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters.
July, 2017 ^{³⁷}	Redirect Method was launched and was the first programme to counter online terrorism by eliminating extremist content from searches.

³⁴ *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-05/Rome-Statute-eng.pdf.

³⁵ “Resolution 1612 (2005) /.” *United Nations*, United Nations, digitallibrary.un.org/record/554197?v=pdf.

³⁶ *S/RES/2178 (2014) / Security Council*, [main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/s/res/2178-\(2014\).](http://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/s/res/2178-(2014).)

³⁷ “The Redirect Method (TRM).” *Migration and Home Affairs*, home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/radicalisation-awareness-network-ran/collection-inspiring-practices/ran-practices/redirect-method-trm_en .



15th June, 2017 ³⁸	GIFCT was launched and became a massive tech industry collaboration in order for online terrorist recruitment content to be removed.
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MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America (USA)

The United States' approach to countering terrorism and extremist recruitment is rooted in the outputs of the September 11 attacks, which have fundamentally shaped American national security policy³⁹. Ever since, the USA has prioritized preventing terrorist threats from reaching its territory by externalizing danger and strengthening its global surveillance and intelligence capabilities. In pursuit of this objective, the government significantly expanded domestic security structures. The creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2002 centralized the establishment of the guidelines for issuing visas and the monitoring of their implementation by sending its own staff to consulates and embassies, allowing the USA to identify potential extremist activity. Intelligence coordination also became a priority, leading to the establishment of the Director of National Intelligence in 2004 to unify the efforts of 16 intelligence agencies in detecting and preventing terrorist recruitment and financing. To support these aims, the USA broadened its surveillance powers, including secret programs run by the National Security Agency (NSA). These initiatives were designed to track communications linked to extremist organizations; however, their secrecy and scale sparked national and international scrutiny. Following numerous class and individual lawsuits filed against cooperating telecommunications companies the government introduced, in 2008, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) Amendments Act, which after a reform in 2015 limited some domestic monitoring but maintained extensive powers to observe foreign individuals who might be involved in radicalization networks. While the United States defends these measures as essential to identifying terrorist recruiters and dismantling online and transnational extremist networks, it faces widespread criticism. Nonetheless, the USA

³⁸ Research, GNET. "Home." GIFCT.org/.

³⁹ "Anti-Terrorism Laws - 20 Years after 9/11."

[Home,ny.fes.de/article/anti-terrorism-laws-20-years-after-9-11.html](http://ny.fes.de/article/anti-terrorism-laws-20-years-after-9-11.html).



continues to argue that wide-ranging intelligence gathering and international monitoring remain necessary tools for preventing recruitment by terrorist groups and protecting national security⁴⁰.

Russian Federation

The core of Russian counterterrorism legislation is Federal Law No. 35-EZ on Countering Terrorism of March 10, 2006 granting extensive powers to national security agencies and providing the Supreme Court with the power to classify Russian and international organizations as terrorist. In the meantime, further decrees were subsequently issued to implement this law. Decree No. 2 116 of February 15, 2006, reorganized and centralized the responsibilities of the security agencies in combating terrorism. Furthermore, by the same decree, a new National Anti-Terrorist Committee (NATC) was created, whose chairman is also ex officio the director of the Federal Security Service (FSS) of the Russian Federation. The NATC became home to both the units of the anti-terrorist commissions (ATCs), whose task is to coordinate preventive counterterrorism measures, and the operational headquarters responsible for law enforcement. Financial rewards have also been provided, according to Decree No. 662 of November 11, 2006, in the event of cooperation with security agencies. Decree No. 352 of June 6, 2007, regulates the use of weapons and military equipment by the Russian armed forces in the fight against terrorism. Russia has also been active in the multilateral framework, especially in the international UN context. Together with the United States, Russia launched, among others, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) in July 2006, and has supported other international initiatives to ensure that nuclear materials do not fall into the hands of terrorists. Furthermore, the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF) on curbing money laundering and terrorist financing have been adopted into Russian law (Federal Law No. 51-03 of April 12, 2007; Federal Law No. 275-03 of November 28, 2007). The fact that fewer terrorist attacks have been carried out in recent years is credited by the Russian security authorities to the new security laws, which above all facilitated preventive measures⁴¹.

⁴⁰ FES, library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/18274.pdf .

⁴¹ FES, library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/18274.pdf .



The People's Republic of China

China's counterterrorism stance is rooted in a legal framework developed over the past four decades, through which the government prioritizes early prevention, strict punishment, and strong state control while emphasizing on the protection of human rights⁴². China maintains that countering recruitment and extremist ideology requires a comprehensive legal structure backed by coordinated state action. China's National People's Congress (NPC) introduced in 1997 amendments to the Criminal law with explicit penalties for forming, leading, or participating in terrorist organizations, marking the beginning of its modern approach to suppressing recruitment networks⁴³. Further revisions in 2001 criminalized terrorist financing following the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism⁴⁴, while also integrated terrorism as a predicate offence for money laundering, expanding its ability to disrupt financial channels used to support extremist groups⁴⁵. As a means to respond to evolving forms of extremism, China introduced Amendment IX in 2015, which caramelized the preparation for terrorist activities, advocating terrorism and extremism, inciting terrorism, and using extremism to undermine law enforcement, aiming to directly target the ideological and organizational processes through which terrorist recruitment often takes place. Lastly, the adoption of the Counterterrorism Law in 2015 consolidated China's position by defining its principles and national approach to counterterrorism. Chinese authorities present this framework as balancing prevention and punishment while upholding human rights, though international observers have raised concerns about the breadth of state authority in practice⁴⁶. Overall, China's stance reflects a belief that stopping terrorist recruitment requires a strong legal foundation, extensive preventive powers, and strict regulation of extremist activities at every stage, from ideology to financing to organisation. "Extremism is the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance that aims to either negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others or undermine, overturn or replace the system of liberal parliamentary democracy and

⁴² Full Text: China's Legal Framework and Measures for Counterterrorism_ 中华人民共和国国务院新闻办公室, www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/zfbps_2279/202401/t20240123_829679.html .

⁴³ "International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/law/cod/finterr.htm .

⁴⁴ "International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/law/cod/finterr.htm .

⁴⁵ FES, library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/18274.pdf .

⁴⁶ *United Nations S/RES/1373 (2001) Security Council Distr.: General*, www.unodc.org/pdf/crime/terrorism/res_1373_english.pdf .



democratic rights or intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve the results in those mentioned before.” The core concept of extremist is directly linked to the topic of the conference, for it has not only constituted the basis for the creation and evolution of numerous terrorist organizations, but simultaneously the vilification of the ideas stemming from this ideology serves as a foundation for the recruitment of new members.

European Union (EU)

The European Union has long been a major target of terrorist attacks and extremist networks, something that has pushed further for the adaptation of a strong stance toward countering radicalization and terrorist recruitment-especially online. Recognizing that modern recruitment relies heavily on digital platforms, the EU introduced Regulation 2021/784⁴⁷ in 2021 as part of its broader strategy to limit the spread of extremist ideology within its member states. This Regulation aims to eliminate the usage of online spaces by terrorist organizations in order for them to promote propaganda, radicalize vulnerable individuals, and facilitate or direct terrorist activities. It establishes rules to address the misuse of hosting services, requiring online platforms and hosting service providers (HSPs) to identify and ensure the quick removal of terrorist content online, while cooperating closely with national authorities and Europol. Moreover, by applying the definitions laid out in Directive 2017/541, the EU ensures that any material soliciting participation in terrorist groups, instructing on how to carry out attacks, or advocating violent action is classified as terrorist content. Such material, includes everything from text and images to videos, audio recordings and live transmissions of terrorist offences with the only exception being material, which is clearly disseminated for educational, journalistic, research, or awareness-raising purposes. Those measures apply to a wide range of hosting service providers operating within the Union, including social media platforms and video or audio-sharing sites where user-generated content is posted publicly, while private communication services such as emails, messaging apps, and cloud-storage infrastructures do, in principle, not fall under the Regulation. Through those regulations are reflecting the European Union's view that

⁴⁷ “Regulation - 2021/784 - En - EUR-Lex.” EUR, eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/784/oj/eng .



disrupting digital propaganda is the key to safeguarding security and preventing the spread of violent extremist ideology⁴⁸.

RELEVANT UN TREATIES CONVENTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism⁴⁹

The international Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism was adopted by the United Nations was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1999⁵⁰. Its purpose is to criminalise financing towards terrorism. Thus, within the Convention it is highlighted that any person who is keen to provide or collect funds with the intention of them being used in order for any act that causes death or serious body injuries to a civilian, to be carried out, shall be prosecuted. Moreover, it can be found that State Parties shall exchange information to assist one another in preventing terrorist financing, while also criminalizing terrorist funding in domestic law. Although indirectly, this Convention tackles the issue of terrorist recruitment to its core, since recruitment and financing are interdependent, one has no purpose without the other. Cutting off funds undermines the foundations that sustain recruitment, since terrorist organisations need the funds to produce propaganda, especially online ones, fund training camps and supply weapons.

Resolution 1373 of United Nations Security Council (UNSC)⁵¹

The Resolution 1373 of UNSC was adopted after the 9/11 attacks, and it has since become one of the most comprehensive tools to counter terrorism. This resolution among others, criminalizes the wilful provision or collection of funds, with the intention of those being used in order to carry out terrorist attacks. Furthermore, it demanded that funds, financial assets and other economic resources of those who commit terrorist acts and those who act on behalf of terrorist organisations are to be frozen. Lastly, it denied safe havens to terrorists

⁴⁸ "Fight against Terrorism - Dissemination of Content Online." EUR, eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/fight-against-terrorism-dissemination-of-content-online.html.

⁴⁹ *International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism*, treaties.un.org/doc/db/Terrorism/english-18-11.pdf.

⁵⁰ *International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism*, treaties.un.org/doc/db/Terrorism/english-18-11.pdf.

⁵¹ *United Nations S/RES/1373 (2001) Security Council Distr.: General*, www.unodc.org/pdf/crime/terrorism/res_1373_english.pdf.



and those who act at the direction of them. This Resolution, while targeting attacks, also ambushes the environment that enables terrorist recruitment to flourish. It forces states to block money flow towards terrorist organisations, highlighting the key role of funding when it comes to recruiting, while also preventing groups from establishing physical spaces to recruit, since it demands states to refuse shelter or travel opportunities.

Resolution 2178 of United Nations Security Council (UNSC)⁵²

The Resolution 2178 of UNSC⁵³ was adopted in 2014 as a response to the rise of foreign terrorist fighters. It calls upon all Member States to prevent recruitment, radicalization to terrorism, organization and travel of individuals who take part in terrorist acts that take place abroad and adopting laws to prosecute recruiters and funders of foreign fighters. This resolution is directly aimed at preventing recruitment, since it demands that States criminalise it. Moreover it attempts to address the root causes of recruitment by forcing States to counter extremist narratives.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Global Programme on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE)

The programme on PCVE is a programme which aims to build the capacity of beneficiaries and partners to become more resilient to violent extremism and reduce the threat of terrorism⁵⁴. It is delivered through the United Nations Counter Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) within the United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT). It delivers globally informed and locally tailored capacity building across four key portfolio areas. Firstly, when it comes to online radicalization and strategic Communication it provides interactive training on PCVE strategic communication initiatives, since it is believed that strategic communication can help

⁵² "Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014) [on Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Foreign Terrorist Fighters]." *Refworld*, 24 Sept. 2014, www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unsc/2014/en/101718 .

⁵³ "Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014) [on Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Foreign Terrorist Fighters]." *Refworld*, 24 Sept. 2014, www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unsc/2014/en/101718 .

⁵⁴ "Global Programme on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) | Office of Counter-Terrorism." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/counterterrorism/preventing-violent-extremism .



reduce the threat of terrorism. The second area that the programme is focused on is youth engagement. It acknowledges that the youth are often at the forefront of challenges related to violent extremism as they are both targeted as recruits and impacted by terrorist violence and promises to invest in young people as positive agents of change in the fields of strengthening UN-wide efforts in peace and security. Lastly, the programme not only provides tailored technical support to ensure that Member States and regional organizations are given the chance to implement and measure PCVE national and regional action plans but it also aims to generate dialogue around emerging topics, such as the nexus between violent extremism and video games, artificial intelligence and mental health.

UK's Prevent Strategy

Prevent strategy is a law that was presented to parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department in June 2011⁵⁵. It came as a response to the numerous terrorist attacks that the UK faced especially from Al Qaida, its affiliates and like-minded organizations⁵⁶. The program, which sits under the wider counter-terrorism framework, Consent, aims to prevent individuals from adopting extreme ideologies and engaging in terrorist practices. The novelty of Prevent is that it addresses all forms of terrorism including extreme right-wing nonviolent organizations. The Strategy highlighted that a response to the ideological challenges imposed by terrorism was urgent. Under Prevent public sector organizations are subject to a duty to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Ever since 2015 Prevent has been legally embedded for many organizations, making it no longer optional, as it was in 2011. Although, despite the changes and improvements throughout the years, Prevent has remained extremely controversial since many critics argue that the metrics for "prevention" are not clear enough and that the strategy is not sufficiently evidence-based⁵⁷.

Saudi Arabia's deradicalization programme

The deradicalization program started in Saudi Arabia in 2004, led by the interior ministry, after a series of terrorist attacks began in Riyadh, which would last until 2005. Rather than depending

⁵⁵ *Prevent Strategy*, assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a78966aed915d07d35b0dcc/prevent-strategy-review.pdf .

⁵⁶ *Statement on Prevent Strategy for Counter-Terrorism - UK Parliament*, www.parliament.uk/business/news/news-by-year/2011/june/statement-on-prevent-strategy/ .

⁵⁷ *Implementation of the Prevent Strategy - House of Commons Library*, commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2017-0036/ .



solely on security measures, Saudi Arabia started to focus on designing rehabilitation programs, directed at extremists inside the Saudi prisons. The deradicalization program is extensive in its scope. Not only does it focus on providing thousands of beneficiaries six-weeks rehabilitation courses and consultations with medical, psychological, and social experts, but it also directs its attention to reintegrating the released prisoners into the society. Firstly, it solely focused on the terrorists who had been implicated in carrying out attacks on the Saudi soil, but then it gradually included detainees from Guantánamo Bay, and returning foreign fighters from conflict areas like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Libya. Right now Saudi Arabia has one of the most successful deradicalization programs, which can lead the way and work as an example for more countries⁵⁸.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Prevention of Terrorist Attacks

The appropriate authorities (i.e. international organisations, regional bodies and national authorities) must carry out intelligence and preventive counterterrorism operations, implement measures to halt the formation of terrorist cells determined to carry out attacks or other terrorist activities, and closely monitor the actions of terrorist organizations, by financing tracking and international information-sharing to identify and disrupt potential threats. Preventing attacks is vital to undermining terrorist propaganda and keeping eliminating the organization's massive media coverage in a way both enables individuals to get informed but also lowering the chances of one being radicalised and recruited due to constant exposure.

Control of the Terrorist Use of the Internet

Terrorist organizations use the internet, social media, and peer-to-peer platforms extensively for a variety of purposes such as reaching out to potential recruits and new members as well as distributing propaganda and other materials, including videos, journals, or pdf books. Thus, it is essential to carry out local, regional, and globally coordinated activities so that terrorists cannot utilize digital media for their activities, which include identifying potential recruits, by monitoring suspicious online activities and analyzing extremist content

⁵⁸ "Security Web Portal: News." *Regional Cooperation Council*, www.rcc.int/swp/news/198/why-saudi-arabias-deradicalization-program-is-successful.



engagement. Also, limiting the use of social media platforms and peer-to-peer communication applications by terrorists can help authorities fight back against terrorist recruitment, both in the long and short run. Governments along with security agencies may jointly work together either by enforcing stricter user-verification and/or detection tools to prevent terrorists from using mainstream communication channels for recruitment. In the meantime they may well remove extremist content from the platforms. It is of major importance to limit terrorists' access to the internet without affecting the general public. Thus the collaboration with tech companies aiming to create and develop transparent reporting mechanisms that track the widespread of extremist ideologies and suspicious communications is essential.

Intervention in Terrorist Recruitment

The foremost critical aspect of preventing terrorist recruitment is intervention. The goals of the authorities and teams intervening should be clearly defined and specified, and they should be openly communicated in this case, mostly to the parents and other family members. Intervention and prevention programs aimed at intervening at the very early stages of the recruitment process, when terrorists are attempting to identify a prospect and establish contact, are essential. They need to be carefully designed, and stakeholders must work with the competent authorities and communities (i.e. international organisations, regional bodies and national authorities), in order to locate individuals who are being targeted for recruitment.

Counterterrorism orIntelligence Investigations and Operations

Counterterrorism operations, investigations, and intelligence collection activities are great opportunities to undermine and interrupt terrorist recruitment activities. Furthermore, counterterrorism operations reveal new names associated with terrorist organizations in almost every case. Each counterterrorism operation is a new opportunity to uncover new and unknown names of people who are associated with a terrorist group and whose connections can improve the authorities' grasp of the organization, whether the people are subject to recruitment or part of the recruitment teams.



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