



TOPIC A

Terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa Region



DISEC
Disarmament and International Security Committee



Head Chair: Santiago Malfetano
Deputy Chair: Laura Lommi



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Introduction

Terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is a significant issue characterized by various groups and motivations with a history rooted in regional conflicts and external interventions.

The region has witnessed a substantial rise in terrorist attacks during the past century, which contributes to a high percentage of the global conflict deaths and economic costs. This affects not only the nations of the region, but also others through trading and humanitarian relations.

Definition of Key Terms

- **Terrorism**

A method of coercion that utilizes or threatens to utilize violence to obtain political or ideological goals. It is distinguished from “ordinary” violence by the terrorist “triangle”: A attacks B, to convince or coerce C to change its position regarding some action or policy desired by A. The attack spreads fear as violence is directed against innocent victims, which in turn puts pressure on third parties such as governments to change their policy or position.

- **Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism (ERWT)**

Those involved in Extreme Right-Wing activity and use violence to further their ideology. These tend to incline towards nationalistic, racial or supremacist ideologies.

- **Left Wing, Anarchist and Single-Issue Terrorism (LASIT)**

Encompasses a wide range of ideologies, including those from the extreme political left-wing as well as anarchists who seek to use violence to advance their cause or to overthrow the State in all its forms.

- **Global terrorism index (GTI)**

The Unit of measurement used to compare terrorism levels in nations from around the world, established by four indicators: incidents, fatalities, injuries and hostages. A five-year weighted average is applied to measure the impact of terrorism in each nation. After all of these, each nation gets a score in a scale of 0 through ten, where the higher the number, the larger the presence of terrorism.

- **Terrorism motivations**

These tend to fall into one or more categories: political, religious or social. This first one is driven by political goals, such as overthrowing a government or gaining political power. The second seeks to expand or establish religious beliefs or ideologies, and the last one is driven by social or ideological grievances, such as racial or ethnic inequality.

Background information

Terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has a complex history and is fueled by a variety of factors, including political instability, religious extremism, and socioeconomic disparities. While terrorism-related deaths have decreased in recent years, the threat remains significant. European colonialism and the subsequent struggle for power in the region have contributed to political instability and resentment. Poverty, lack of opportunity, and social inequality can contribute to radicalization and make individuals more susceptible to extremist ideologies. Terrorist groups often utilize online platforms and social media to recruit new members and spread their ideology. They may operate across borders, making it difficult to effectively counter their activities.

Major Parties Involved

- **Somalia**



With an overall GTI score of 7.61, this country in the region of north Africa has its federal government opposed by terrorist groups like Al Shabab, who continue to carry out frequent attacks, including in the capital Mogadishu.

- **Syrian Arab Republic**



With an overall GTI score of 8.1, the armed group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) is designated as a terrorist organization by the UN Security Council and a dominant force in Syria following the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime.

- **Israel**



With an overall GTI score of 7.46, the state of Israel has faced repeated attacks by the terrorist group HAMAS which has led in several ways to confrontations with other middle eastern nations.

- **France**



One of the main imperialist countries during the colonialism era, France has made continuous efforts to fight terrorism in the MENA area and blocking the advance of terrorist groups in the region through stabilization and reconstruction.

- **United States of America**



Having faced attacks from terrorist groups from both national and international nature, like the attacks on the twin towers in 9/11 or the KKK group which rose after the civil war.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Legal frameworks have been developed to criminalize terrorist acts, such as the UAE's Federal Law Number 7 of 2014 on Combating Terrorism Offences. Internationally, organizations like NATO have implemented programs like the Defense Against Terrorism Program of Work (DAT POW) to develop comprehensive counterterrorism measures. Regional initiatives like the Arab Strategy to Combat Terrorism (1997) and the Convention of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on Combating International Terrorism (1999), were adopted by the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) respectively.

However, in North Africa, the efforts have primarily focused on security measures, including military interventions and collaborations. The rise of military juntas in some countries and increased cooperation with Russia have further complicated the situation. Several countries, including France, have deployed troops in North Africa to combat terrorist groups, particularly in the Sahel region. Organizations like the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S) aim to enhance regional cooperation in fighting terrorism. Some military interventions have faced challenges, with the end of French operations in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, and the withdrawal of US troops from Niger leaving a power vacuum.



Initiatives like the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) have focused on strengthening capabilities to address terrorism.

Possible Solutions

- Improved intelligence sharing between countries in the region and with international partners can help prevent attacks and disrupt terrorist networks.
- Strengthening border controls and prevent the movement of foreign fighters and illicit materials, such as developing and deploying effective technologies and strategies to detect and neutralize explosives.
- Protecting critical infrastructure and combating the use of online platforms for radicalization and recruitment is crucial, as well as enhancing military capabilities to respond to terrorist threats and conduct targeted operations maintaining respect for human rights and the rule of law.
- Promoting a more tolerant and inclusive interpretation of religious texts and beliefs can help counter the spread of extremist ideologies.
- Working with internet services to remove terrorist content and combat the spread of extremist propaganda online can be as essential as fostering dialogue and understanding between different religious and cultural groups.
- Promoting transparent, accountable, and inclusive governance can help address the grievances that can be exploited by terrorist groups. Investing in economic development and ensuring that all segments of society have equal opportunities and are represented in decision-making processes can help reduce the appeal of terrorism.
- Addressing poverty, unemployment, and other socio-economic problems can help reduce the grievances that can be exploited by terrorist groups.
- Investing in education and skills development can help empower individuals and create opportunities for a better future.
- Cooperation between countries in the MENA region and with international partners is crucial for sharing information and best practices in counterterrorism.

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