www.gfprjournal.com
GFPR
GLOBAL FOREIGN POLICIES REVIEW

ISSN-P : 2788-502X
ISSN-E : 2788-5038

GLOBAL FOREIGN POLICY REVIEW (GFPR)

VOL. IX ISSUE I, WINTER (MARCH-2026)

GFPR

GLOBAL FOREIGN POLICY REVIEW

HEC-RECOGNIZED CATEGORY-Y

HumanityPublications
sharing research
www.humapub.com
US | UK | Pakistan

DOI (Journal): 10.31703/gfpr
DOI (Volume): 10.31703/gfpr.2026(IX)
DOI (Issue): 10.31703/gfpr.2026(IX-I)

Double-blind Peer-review Research Journal
www.gfprjournal.com

Humanity Publications (HumaPub)
www.humapub.com
Doi: https://dx.doi.org/10.31703

Title: The Global War on Terror: Terrorist Adaptation and Emerging Security Challenges

Abstract

The Global War on Terror (GWOT), launched after the September 11 attacks, remains one of the longest counterterrorism campaigns in modern history. Although it significantly weakened Al-Qaeda's central leadership, it failed to reduce terrorism. Instead, terrorist organizations adapted by adopting decentralized networks, diversifying tactics, emerging technologies, and ungoverning spaces to sustain their operations. This paper examines terrorist adaptation through the lens of organizational resilience and introduces the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC), a conceptual framework explaining how extremist groups evolve under prolonged military, intelligence, and financial pressure. It further argues that the resurgence of great power competition, coupled with advances in generative artificial intelligence, commercial drones, and additive manufacturing, has created new opportunities for terrorist innovation and operational effectiveness. The study concludes that effective counterterrorism strategies should move beyond targeting leaders and organizations, focusing instead on disrupting the adaptive processes that enable terrorist groups to survive, evolve, and perpetuate violence globally.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Commercial Drones; Counterterrorism; Decentralization; Emerging Security Challenges; Global War on Terror; Islamic State; Organizational Adaptation; Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC); Violent Extremism

Authors:

Anum Saba: MPhil Scholar, Peace and Conflict Studies, National Defense University (NDU), Islamabad, Pakistan.

Syed Kaleem Imam: (Corresponding Author) Former Federal Secretary/IGP/UN Police Commissioner, Pakistan.
(Email: skimam98@hotmail.com)

Pages: 66-80
DOI:10.31703/gfpr.2026(IX-I).07
DOI link: https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gfpr.2026(IX-I).07
Article link: https://gsrjournal.com/article/the-global-war-on-terror-terrorist-adaptation-and-emerging-security-challenges
Full-text Link: https://gsrjournal.com/article/the-global-war-on-terror-terrorist-adaptation-and-emerging-security-challenges
Pdf link: https://www.gssrjournal.com/jadmin/Auther/31rvIolA2.pdf

Global Foreign Policies Review

p-ISSN: 2788-502X **e-ISSN:** 2788-5038
DOI(journal):10.31703/gfpr
Volume: IX (2026)
DOI (volume):10.31703/gfpr.2025(IX)
Issue: I Winter (March-2026)
DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gfpr.2025(IX-I)

Home Page
www.gfprjournal.com
Volume: IX (2026)
https://www.gfprjournal.com/issue
Issue: I-Winter (March-2026)
https://www.gfprjournal.com/issue/9/1/2026
Scope
https://www.gfprjournal.com/about-us/scope
Submission
https://humaglobe.com/index.php/gfpr/submissions

Scan the QR to visit us

Humanity Publications (HumaPub)
www.humapub.com
Doi: https://dx.doi.org/10.31703

Citing this Article

Article Serial	06
Article Title	The Global War on Terror: Terrorist Adaptation and Emerging Security Challenges
Authors	Anum Saba Syed Kaleem Imam
DOI	10.31703/gfpr.2026(IX-I).07
Pages	66–80
Year	2026
Volume	XI
Issue	I

Referencing & Citing Styles

APA	Saba, A., & Imam, S. K. (2026). The Global War on Terror: Terrorist Adaptation and Emerging Security Challenges. *Global Foreign Policies Review*, *9*(1), 66-80. https://doi.org/10.31703/gfpr.2026(IX-I).07
CHICAGO	Saba, Anum, and Syed Kaleem Imam. 2026. "The Global War on Terror: Terrorist Adaptation and Emerging Security Challenges." *Global Foreign Policies Review* 9 (1):66-80. doi: 10.31703/gfpr.2026(IX-I).07.
HARVARD	SABA, A. & IMAM, S. K. 2026. The Global War on Terror: Terrorist Adaptation and Emerging Security Challenges. *Global Foreign Policies Review,* 9**,** 66-80.
MHRA	Saba, Anum, and Syed Kaleem Imam. 2026. 'The Global War on Terror: Terrorist Adaptation and Emerging Security Challenges', *Global Foreign Policies Review*, 9: 66-80.
MLA	Saba, Anum, and Syed Kaleem Imam. "The Global War on Terror: Terrorist Adaptation and Emerging Security Challenges." *Global Foreign Policies Review* 9.1 (2026): 66-80. Print.
OXFORD	Saba, Anum and Imam, Syed Kaleem (2026), 'The Global War on Terror: Terrorist Adaptation and Emerging Security Challenges', *Global Foreign Policies Review,* 9 (1), 66-80.
TURABIAN	Saba, Anum and Syed Kaleem Imam. "The Global War on Terror: Terrorist Adaptation and Emerging Security Challenges." *Global Foreign Policies Review* 9, no. 1 (2026): 66-80. https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gfpr.2026(IX-I).07.

Global Foreign Policies Review
ISSN-P : 2788-502x | DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gfpr.2026(IX-I).07 | ISSN-E : 2788-5038
www.gfprjournal.com

The Global War on Terror: Terrorist Adaptation and Emerging Security Challenges

Anum Saba[1] **Syed Kaleem Imam** (Corresponding Author)[2]

[1] MPhil Scholar, Peace and Conflict Studies, National Defense University (NDU), Islamabad, Pakistan.
[2] Former Federal Secretary/IGP/UN Police Commissioner, Pakistan.
(Email: skimam98@hotmail.com)

Abstract

The Global War on Terror (GWOT), launched after the September 11 attacks, remains one of the longest counterterrorism campaigns in modern history. Although it significantly weakened Al-Qaeda's central leadership, it failed to reduce terrorism. Instead, terrorist organizations adapted by adopting decentralized networks, diversifying tactics, emerging technologies, and ungoverning spaces to sustain their operations. This paper examines terrorist adaptation through the lens of organizational resilience and introduces the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC), a conceptual framework explaining how extremist groups evolve under prolonged military, intelligence, and financial pressure. It further argues that the resurgence of great power competition, coupled with advances in generative artificial intelligence, commercial drones, and additive manufacturing, has created new opportunities for terrorist innovation and operational effectiveness. The study concludes that effective counterterrorism strategies should move beyond targeting leaders and organizations, focusing instead on disrupting the adaptive processes that enable terrorist groups to survive, evolve, and perpetuate violence globally.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence; Commercial Drones; Counterterrorism; Decentralization; Emerging Security Challenges; Global War on Terror; Islamic State; Organizational Adaptation; Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC); Violent Extremism*

Introduction

The terrorist attack of 11 September 2001 changed the world's security paradigm and led to the launch of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), one of the longest and most resource-intensive counterterrorism efforts in modern history (Cronin, 2003; Hoffman, 2006). The GWOT was an effort by the United States to destroy the terrorist groups, remove their safe havens, stop future attacks, and improve security in other countries (Burke, 2004; Cronin, 2009).

The campaign had significant tactical victories over the course of more than 20 years. Since 2001 the Taliban regime has been ousted from Afghanistan, top terrorist leaders have been arrested or killed and international intelligence cooperation has been increased, and Osama bin Laden's death in 2011 has provided a symbolic and operational setback for Al-Qaeda (Burke, 2004; Cronin, 2009; Hoffman, 2006). But these successes did not stamp out terrorism. Rather, terrorist groups showed great resilience and flexibility in changing their structures, strategies and technologies. Al-Qaeda became less hierarchical and more decentralized, and a hybrid model of insurgency, territorial governance and global recruitment was developed by the Islamic State (ISIS) (Sageman, 2004; Sageman, 2008; Stern & Berger, 2015).

Existing scholarship has largely focused on the GWOT as a series of military operations, the decapitation of leadership, cooperation in intelligence, and national counterterrorism policy (Cronin 2009; Hoffman, 2006).

These studies, however, focus less on a more basic question did the GWOT itself accelerate the evolution of the terrorist organizations?

This article contends that GWOT served not only as a counterterrorism campaign, but also as an evolutionary catalyst. The military, intelligence, economic and political pressure on terrorist organisations was constant, which meant they had to change their tactics instead of going away. The study thus proposes the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC) to explain this process. TAC views terrorist organisations as adaptive systems that change when they experience environmental shocks, based on organizational ecology (Kaldor, 2012; Ou et al., 2024). Based on the longitudinal evidence derived from Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, the paper explores four aspects of adaptation: organizational restructuring, technological innovation, operational transformation and geographic expansion. It contends that the concept of terrorism as an adaptive process offers a more robust basis for the analysis of the evolution of political violence in the twenty-first century.

Literature Review

Existing Scholarship

The Global War on Terror has produced a vast literature on ideology, organization, military operations, intelligence and counterterrorism policy. Some of the seminal works are: Burke's *Al-Qaeda* (2004), Sageman's *Understanding Terror Networks* (2004) and *Leaderless Jihad* (2008), Hoffman's *Inside Terrorism* (2006), and Stern and Berger's *ISIS* (2015). Collectively, these studies provide an understanding of the ideology, organization and the way modern terrorist groups function (Burke, 2004; Hoffman, 2006; Sageman, 2004, 2008; Stern and Berger, 2015).

The field has been influenced by a number of theoretical perspectives. Rapoport's (2001) Four Waves Theory is an explanation of successive generations of ideologies of terror. According to Cronin (2009), there are six ways in which a terrorist campaign may come to an end. Sageman's network theory shows how the counterterrorism pressure led to a decentralized organizational structure and Kaldor's concept of new wars to the convergence of political, criminal and military violence.

Moreover, recent scholarship has begun to focus less on the effectiveness of the GWOT, and more on the long-term consequences. More and more studies have come to the conclusion that the campaign was not eliminative but transformative. This change is reflected in a recent special issue of the *European Journal of International Security* (2025), *What the War on Terror Leaves Behind*, which focuses on the continuing institutional and security legacy of the GWOT.

Research Gaps

Despite this rich literature, five important gaps remain. First, GWOT theory has failed to adequately account for the shift in the Sahel of Africa to become the world's most active terrorist theatre. While the Libya intervention of 2011 has been cited as a factor contributing to the spread of insecurity in 2011 in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and coastal West Africa, the impact of the intervention has not been systematically explained (Institute of Economics and Peace, 2025; Sadaghashvili, 2025).

Second, the development of the connection between AI and terrorism has outpaced the existing research. Generative AI, commercial drones, 3D printing, and automated propaganda are new forms of adaptation within the realm of GWOT that have not been fully explored (Clarke and Broekaet, 2025; Ganaie, 2025; Minniti, 2025; Soufan Center, 2025).

Third, there has been a lack of theoretical attention to the concept of counterterrorism fatigue. With great power competition becoming a Western governments' new priority, counterterrorism efforts have lessened, leaving security gaps that terrorist groups have seized (House of Common Library, 2025; ICCT, 2025).

Fourth, there was no analytical framework to account for the GWOT's impact on organizational, geographic, operational and technological adaptation. Most research studies have focused on each of these dimensions individually (Feyyaz and Phillips, 2024; Ou et al., 2024).

Finally, recent studies have pointed to the advent of a fifth wave of terrorism, defined by the continuation of Salafi-jihadist movements, the increasing influence of Iranian proxy groups and the rise of far-right violent

extremism (Kara, 2025; Cengiz, 2025). This article seeks to add to that discussion by claiming that the GWOT itself was a significant evolutionary force towards this new stage.

Theoretical Framework: Adversarial Co-Evolution

Concept and Biological Analogy

The underlying idea of this study is adversarial co-evolution, a process whereby two competing actors adjust continually to each other's moves. The concept is derived from evolutionary biology, in which selection pressures are exerted by interacting species, and result in ongoing adaptation, which can be likened to an evolutionary arms race (Kaldor, 2012; Ou et al., 2024).

For instance, predators and prey. Predators get faster and/or keener senses, prey get keener sense of danger and escape. Both sides remain the same, both change to meet the other. A similar process exists between bacteria and antibiotics. If an antibiotic is used extensively, it can kill most of the bacteria, but also can allow resistant strains of bacteria to survive and multiply. As the treatment continues over time, the effectiveness is reduced as the bacteria become resistant. This article posits that the same took place during the Global War on Terror (GWOT): constant military operations, intelligence operations, financial sanctions, and leadership targeting inflicted heavy pressure on the terrorist organizations. Many did not go away but changed their structures, tactics, technologies and areas of operation.

Relationship with Existing Theories

The proposed framework does not replace existing theories of terrorism; rather, it builds on these by offering an integrated explanation of terrorist adaptation. It takes into account Rapoport's Four Waves Theory and posits that the GWOT accelerated organizational change and hybridized the ideological waves, leading to the potential emergence of a fifth wave of terrorism (Kara, 2025; Cengiz, 2025).

It also draws on Sageman's network theory which describes the transition of hierarchies to networks. This article builds on this claim by demonstrating the role played by digital communication, social media, encrypted platforms, artificial intelligence, and other new technologies in further boosting the adaptability of terrorists (Lakomy, 2024; Clarke & Broekeat, 2025; Minniti, 2025). The framework thus merges the theories in a wider model of ongoing adaptation between terrorist organizations and counterterrorism agencies.

Testable Propositions

The adversarial co-evolution framework provides four testable propositions.

1. Organizational Adaptation: Centrally managed terrorist groups under pressure of counterterrorism operations are likely to become more decentralized and resilient with the introduction of networks and franchises (Sageman, 2008; Feyyaz & Phillips, 2024).
2. Geographic Adaptation: Military pressure and territorial safe haven loss causes the terrorist group to move, not disappear, to a more permissive environment (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2025; House of Common Library, 2025).
3. Ideological Adaptation: Leadership decapitation leads to organizational weakness, but usually creates a fragmentation and hybridization of the organization and the rise of new extremist organizations instead of ideological defeat (Rapoport, 2001; Kara, 2025).
4. Technological Adaptation: Governments are creating new tools for counterterrorism, and terrorist groups are using new technology, including AI, commercial drones, encrypted communications and 3-D printing (Minniti, 2025; Soufan Center, 2025; Clarke & Broekeat, 2025).

The following sections will explore these propositions based on the experience of Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram.

Structural Adaptation: From Hierarchy to Terrorist Ecosystems:

From Hierarchy to Adaptation

Prior to September 2001, Al-Qaeda was a very centralized organization. It had a defined chain of command, training camps in Afghanistan, seasoned operational planners, communications and a central financial support. The 9/11 attacks were carried out in this manner, and thus involved a significant amount of planning, coordination, funding, and direct supervision by senior leaders (Burke, 2004; Cronin, 2003).

It was an irony that it is these strengths that turned out to be Al-Qaeda's greatest weaknesses. It was a centralized organization that was vulnerable to military action, intelligence gathering, financial sanctions and targeting of leadership. With the constant pressure of counterterrorism, the organization did not go away, but instead had to adjust. This was the dawn of a new era of modern terror. The GWOT did not end the threat, it just altered the way that terrorist organizations operate.

The Franchise Model

While counterterrorism pressure can break leadership and operational infrastructures, it often fails to stop ideology, grievances, or recruitment networks. Terrorist groups do not vanish but rather usually transform into another organizational structure (Cronin, 2009).

Al-Qaeda responded by changing from a hierarchical organization into a network of regional affiliates. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Shabaab, and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) operated with a high degree of autonomy and had a similar ideology, strategic direction, and organizational identity (Burke, 2004; Sageman, 2008).

This article calls this transformation "a franchise ecosystem." Affiliated groups had local political and security contexts and were decentralized, ideologically bound and trained, and shared objectives. This decentralized organization was much more robust than the original hierarchy.

ISIS: A Return to Centralization

In the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS), there was a partial restoration of the centralized control. ISIS is different from Al-Qaeda, which is decentralized, and created a territorial "caliphate" that includes administrative structures, tax collection, courts, police, and military units (Stern and Berger, 2015).

ISIS was not an evolutionary reversal, but rather another step in the evolutionary process. It knew that decentralized networks were not enough to give the legitimacy, governance ability, financial resources or symbolic appeal of territorial control. ISIS mired itself in both insurgency and state-building, bringing in thousands of foreign fighters and making significant money coming out of taxes, extortion, oil production, and other economic activities (Stern and Berger, 2015; Clarke, 2024).

The territorial caliphate was ultimately broken up, but many of its organizational innovations have remained alive in the regional affiliates, online networks and virtual communities.

The Terrorist Ecosystem

The most important structure of the post-GWOT era is the rise of what this study terms the terrorist ecosystem. This model does not take a formal organization or even a network as the basic unit of analysis. Rather, it's a broader ecosystem of extremist ideas, digital platforms, encrypted communications, online communities, and self-radicalized individuals that facilitates terrorism. Violence may manifest itself without necessarily being a member of, or communicating with, a known terrorist group (Lakomy, 2024; Ganaie, 2025).

It's more than Sageman's idea of leaderless jihad. Terrorist organizations are increasingly operating as brands, rather than command structures, of ideology. They inspire, propagate, give advice and directions on technical aspects and explain what happens in the operations; individuals and small cells organize attacks independently in digital environments (Lakomy, 2024; Minniti, 2025).

The attack in New Orleans in January 2025 is a good example of this shift. The available evidence indicates that the attacker was radicalized mainly via online sources, was influenced by propaganda from Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) and was reportedly using generative artificial intelligence in the preparation for the attack (Atlantic Council, 2025; Minniti, 2025). The attack shows the extent to which digital technologies have made it

easier to operate without a central control system and physical structure, whether or not every operational decision was made by a terrorist organisation.

This is the highest level of terrorist adaptation from an adversarial co-evolutionary point of view. Traditional counterterrorism plans were based on the idea of destroying groups by going after the leaders, the money, communications and hideouts. The terrorist ecosystem, however, may not involve a formal organization to disrupt, a specific leadership to kill or a fixed headquarters to destroy. The challenge has now moved from the battle against organizations to comprehending and interfering with adaptive ecosystems. It is important to understand this structural transformation as it will help in the explanation of the geographic, technological and operational adaptations which are discussed in the following sections.

Geographic Adaptation: The Sahel as the New Epicenter of Terrorism

Geographic Displacement

Geographic displacement is one of the key impacts of continuing counterterrorism pressure. Terrorist groups seldom vanish when they lose safe haven in one region, and they move to where the state is not strong and counterterrorism capability is not high. Geographic displacement is the spatial aspect of the terrorist adaptation in the framework of adversarial co-evolution (Cronin, 2009; Kaldor, 2012). Terrestrial locations such as ungoverned space, porous borders, weak governance, local grievances, and limited security infrastructure are conducive to regrouping, recruiting, and expansion by terrorist groups. Continuing military pressure rarely eradicates terrorism, but rather pushes it into more tolerant areas.

Libya and the Sahel: A Turning Point

The NATO bombing of Libya in 2011 was a pivotal moment in African security. When the Libyan state lost control, vast quantities of arms – small arms, heavy ammunition and advanced military hardware – were thrown onto the broader Sahel.

Thousands of Tuareg fighters who had been fighting for Muammar Gaddafi in his army returned to northern Mali with weapons, combat experience and networks. Their return helped to fuel the rebellion of 2012, the loss of state control in northern Mali and the proliferation of armed Islamist groups in the area (House of Common Library, 2025; Institute of Economics and Peace, 2025).

Meanwhile, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) went from being a relatively local insurgent movement to a regional network. A few of these other groups subsequently merged to become Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), the leading jihadist group in the Sahel (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2025; ICCT, 2025). Libya is an example of how heavy pressure on the counterterrorism front in one theatre can inadvertently open the door to terrorist expansion in other regions.

The Sahel: The New Epicenter of Global Terrorism

The Sahel has become the most important geographical legacy of the Global War on Terror. The region has seen over half of the world's total fatalities from terrorism in 2024, and Burkina Faso was the most terrorism-affected country for the second year in a row, according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025. JNIM, which was responsible for over 280 attacks in Burkina Faso in the first half of 2025, nearly twice the number of attacks it carried out in the same period in 2024, was estimated to have caused 8,800 deaths in the Sahel. The Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP) also grew during the same period, from an estimated 425 fighters to 2,000-3,000 fighters with a vastly greater influence in the Liptako-Gourma tri-border region (House of Common Library, 2025; ICCT, 2025).

The movement of the focus of global jihadist violence to the African Sahel is evident in these developments. There was no sustained counterterrorism pressure that was able to eliminate terrorist organizations. They, in turn, moved, restructured and grew in areas of low governance, high political volatility, and low state capacity (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2025).

Implications for the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle

The central argument of this study is confirmed by the experience of the Sahel. While tactical success can be

achieved through counterterrorism pressure in one area, this can also lead to strategic displacement if the political, governance and security issues are not addressed (Cronin, 2009).

Geographic displacement is not an accidental by-product of the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC), but an expected part of organizational adaptation. With the pressure on, terrorist groups look for new operating bases where they can establish new leadership, recruit backers, reestablish financial support and operate freely (Ou et al., 2024; Feyyaz and Phillips, 2024). How adaptation can turn regional instability into a global security challenge is evident in the emergence of the Sahel as the world's most active terrorist theatre.

Strategic and Technological Adaptation

The Democratization of Violence

The most important effect of GWOT has been the change in the way terrorists operate. The growing sophistication of the attacks, which were centralised and coordinated, was becoming more difficult due to improved intelligence, stronger border controls, financial surveillance and international cooperation by law enforcement agencies (Cronin, 2009; Hoffman, 2006).

Terrorist groups did not give up on violence, but evolved the very structure. They began to move to the easier attacks that didn't need a lot of planning, very little money, and not a lot of communication. They were more likely to ramp, knife, shoot at soft civilian targets, and so on, because they didn't need to have a lot of bomb-making skills, or external funding, or a lot of organizational help (Hoffman, 2006; Sageman, 2008).

It is a tactical adaptation, from an adversarial co-evolution point of view. Terrorists learned to create smaller signatures that are harder to detect, yet have an even greater psychological impact as governments got better at intercepting communications, disrupting financial networks and monitoring weapons procurement. Terrorism was becoming more decentralized, cheap, and easy, essentially democratizing violence.

From the Digital Caliphate to AI-Enabled Terrorism

Terrorism is one of the most obvious examples of adversarial co-evolution, as the digital transformation of terror has occurred. From 2014 to 2019, ISIS built up one of the most advanced online propaganda networks among non-state actors. The organization recruited thousands of members from around the globe through professional videos, multilingual publications, social media campaigns and targeted messaging (Stern and Berger, 2015; Lakomy, 2024).

Terrorist organisations learned to evolve again as governments and technology companies stepped up content moderation and took extremist content off the web. They switched to encrypted messaging services, created online communities that were harder to watch and infiltrated, and decentralized communications networks (Lakomy, 2024).

Artificial Intelligence is the next step in the evolution of this. Studies from 2025 reveal that ISIS-K has started leveraging generative AI, deepfake technology, and AI-powered chatbots for its propaganda, radicalization, and in evading counterterrorism monitoring (Minniti, 2025). Likewise, Soufan Center (2025) suggests that AI is likely to not be an independent technological invention but will be a part of the planning, recruitment, communication, and influence operations of terrorists.

Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC) is a cycle in which artificial intelligence is an innovation in the current phase of terrorism. Each new capability in counterterrorism generates opportunities for new technological adaptations.

Financing Innovation

One of the successes of the GWOT was financial disruptions. International efforts through the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) and other regulatory measures have severely cut into many of the traditional funding sources for terrorist groups (U.S. Treasury, 2024). However, financial constraints did not stop the funding of terrorism, they changed it.

Terrorist groups began to diversify their financing by using cryptocurrencies, platforms in the field of decentralized finances, self-financing by individual supporters, online fundraising, extortion, kidnapping, taxation and exploitation of natural resources in the area under their control. A number of these techniques are

now being used by ISIS affiliates in Africa and elsewhere around the world in conflict zones (U.S. Treasury, 2024; ICCT, 2025).

Financial innovation is another step in the process of adaptation, from the point of view of the adversarial co-evolution. Meanwhile, as governments tighten their financial controls, terrorist groups are finding other ways to raise money and create more viable and difficult-to-disrupt funding streams.

Implications for the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle

The evidence in this segment supports the main thesis of this study. The Global War on Terror has not only limited the capability of terrorists, but it has transformed the organization, funding, message and operational model of terrorist groups.

Strategic, technological and financial adaptations reveal that terrorist organisations react to continuous external pressure by ongoing innovations and not by organisational collapse. Simpler attack methods, digital ecosystems, AI and other financing methods are not stand-alone developments. They are aspects of the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC) that are interconnected and represent stages (Lakomy, 2024; U.S. Treasury, 2024).

It is important to understand these adaptive processes to develop future counterterrorism plans. Policies that are just about removing leaders or organisations can have important tactical effects, but only policies that are able to anticipate and disrupt the dynamics of continuous adaptation and regeneration of terrorist organisations can have an effective impact (Clarke and Broekaet, 2025; Soufan Center, 2025).

Ideological Adaptation: Fragmentation and Hybridization:

From a Unified Ideology to a Fragmented Landscape

Prior to the Global War on Terror (GWOT), Al-Qaeda advanced a fairly coherent ideology of Salafi-jihadism. It aimed to fight the 'far enemy' namely the U.S. and its allies that it considered as the main hurdle in the path of Islamic rule in the Muslim world. While there were some internal conflicts regarding the "far enemy" and the "near enemy", the organization had a common ideological vision which was maintained through a centralized leadership (Burke, 2004, Sageman, 2004).

This cohesion was eroded over time, as a result of the counterterrorism pressure. The ideological power was also diffused, with the fragmentation and decentralisation of terrorist groups. Global narratives were being more and more localized into regional political, ethnic and social grievances. Thus, ideology was decentralised, more flexible and more responsive to the local circumstances (Kaldor, 2012; ICCT, 2025).

Ideological fragmentation is another step in the process of adaptation from an adversarial co-evolutionary point of view. The ideological diversification was linked to the decentralization of the organizations, which helped terrorist groups to stay alive and develop in various political and geographical landscapes (Sageman, 2008; Feyyaz and Phillips, 2024).

Toward a Fifth Wave of Terrorism?

In the face of the shifting ideological climate, questions have been raised about the arrival of a fifth wave of terrorism, following the well-known Four Waves Theory of Rapoport (Rapoport, 2001). The persistence of Salafi-jihadist movements, most notably in Africa; the growing role of Iranian-backed proxy groups; and the rise of transnational far right violent extremism are all three interrelated trends that are increasingly impacting contemporary terrorism. These developments no longer fall into the former wave categories (Kara, 2025; Cengiz, 2025).

This segment is part of that discussion, and it is suggesting that the Global War on Terror was an evolutionary catalyst. The counterterrorism pressure has been ongoing but has not been able to remove the political, social and governance factors that support violent extremism by destroying centralized organizations. Rather, it hastened the ideological pluralization, organizational innovation, and hybrid political violence.

A potential 5th wave, within the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC), can be seen as the result of ongoing adaptation under a sustained counterterrorism pressure (Kara, 2025; Cengiz, 2025).

The Rise of Hybrid Extremism

One of the least explored aspects of the GWOT has been the evolving dynamic between Islamist terrorism and other types of violent extremism, such as far-right groups.

Throughout the GWOT, counterterrorism policies had been mainly directed at Islamist terrorism. Although this focus was understandable in the wake of the September 11 attacks, it led to a neglect of other new extremist threats at key points in their development (Toros and Burnett, 2025).

Concurrently, the long-term nature of the conflict, polarization, the securitization of Muslim identity and the growth of digital environments provided opportunities that various extremist movements could exploit. The far right started to use tactics such as decentralization, recruitment via the Internet, digital propaganda, and social media, which were used by jihadist groups (Cengiz, 2025; Toros and Burnett, 2025).

While the goals of many of today's extremist groups are different, they have a great deal in common when it comes to organizational and operational traits. They use online communities that are decentralized, self-radicalized individuals, encrypted communications, and loosely connected networks instead of traditional hierarchical groups (Lakomy, 2024; Cengiz, 2025).

Adversarial co-evolution would explain this convergence, as it is an adaptation to the same technological and security landscape. Similar organizational models have emerged independently for different extremist ideologies, as they are subjected to similar counterterrorism pressures and take advantage of the same digital opportunities.

Implications for the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle

The ideological developments of this chapter support the main argument of this study. Terrorist groups were not just weakened by the Global War on Terror, they were reshaped by it.

The processes of fragmentation, hybridization, local adaptation and convergence of extremist movements illustrate the evolution of ideology in relation to organization, geography, strategy, technology, and financing. These trends are not in isolation but rather phases of the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC).

To understand terrorism, it is therefore necessary to look beyond any single organisation and consider the wider adaptive processes which constantly reconfigure violence and violent extremism. Future counterterrorism strategies should not be based on the assumption of a static environment, but should be oriented towards countering the adaptive dynamics of the environment.

Comparative Case Studies

Afghanistan–Pakistan: The Original Theatre

Afghanistan and Pakistan are the original theatre of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and are an example of both the successes and failures of GWOT. The first campaign was successful in a number of important tactical objectives. The ousting of the Taliban government, the destruction of Al-Qaeda's training bases and the arrest or killing of numerous high-ranking terrorist leaders (Burke, 2004; Hoffman, 2006; Cronin, 2009).

However, these achievements failed to bring strategic stability. The Taliban have re-taken power in Afghanistan in 2021 after over 20 years of conflict. Although the country has made some pledges under the Doha Agreement, Al-Qaeda continued to operate in the country and Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) became one of the most dangerous terrorist groups in the region. ISIS-K is the main security threat to the de facto authorities of Afghanistan, according to the United Nations (2025), which has proved itself able to target beyond South Asia, such as in Iran, Russia and Europe (Sadaghashvili, 2025).

The Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC) highlights that, in the Afghanistan–Pakistan context, continuous military pressure can cause terrorist groups to weaken, but it does not guarantee the elimination of the political, ideological and governance factors that enable them to resurgence (Cronin, 2009; Sageman, 2008).

Iraq–Syria: Organizational Innovation

The Iraq-Syria situation is one of the most obvious examples of unintended consequences in the GWOT.

Political instability, the collapse of state institutions and conditions that allowed for the emergence of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), and the subsequent evolution into the Islamic State (ISIS), were all a result of the 2003 invasion of Iraq (Sadaghashvili, 2025).

ISIS has developed a new organizational model, which combines insurgency, territorial control, governance, taxation and global recruitment. ISIS was at its most powerful from 2015 to 2017, when it held territory bigger than the United Kingdom, had an estimated 40,000 foreign fighters, and had the capacity to attack or inspire attacks in Paris, Brussels, Nice and other international cities (Stern and Berger, 2015).

Adversarial co-evolution suggests that continuing counterterrorism pressure can lead to organizational innovation, not organizational collapse, as ISIS demonstrates.

The Sahel: Geographic Adaptation

In the Sahel, geographic adaptation is the most apparent during the GWOT. The fall of Libya in 2011 helped to spread weapons, battle-tested fighters and extremist networks throughout Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and the region, as discussed in Chapter 5. A favorable environment for the expansion of terrorism was provided by weak governance, porous borders, and decreasing international involvement (House of Common Library, 2025; Institute for Economics and Peace, 2025; Sadaghashvili, 2025).

Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP) turned the region into the world's most active hub for terrorist violence (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2025).

Another significant GWOT legacy is strategic neglect in the Sahel. International counterterrorism operations continued to focus on South Asia and the Middle East, while the poor governance in the Sahel was a relatively underdeveloped area, leaving space for extremist groups to move, regroup and grow (House of Common Library, 2025).

In the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle, the Sahel is a case in point of how continued pressure in one theatre can inadvertently push terrorism toward more hospitable environments.

Western Democracies: Ideological Convergence

Another important aspect of the ideological convergence in the adaptation of terrorist groups is seen in western democracies. During the majority of the GWOT, intelligence and security agencies were mainly concerned with Islamist terror. This focus diminished the consideration of other new forms of violent extremism at a key time in their development, understandable after 9/11 (Toros and Burnett, 2025).

Meanwhile, ongoing conflict, polarisation, the securitization of Muslim identities and the rise of digital ecosystems provided opportunities for various extremist movements to capitalize on. Far right groups began to use online recruitment, digital propaganda, decentralised structures and social media methods that had been pioneered by the Jihadist organisations (Lakomy, 2024; Cengiz, 2025).

While the ideological goals are distinct, both share an increasing reliance on a similar organizational structure that involves a decentralized network, self-radicalization, grievance narratives, encrypted communications and digital mobilization (Cengiz, 2025; Toros and Burnett, 2025).

This convergence, from the point of view of an adversarial co-evolution, shows that different extremist ideologies evolve in a similar manner under the same technological and security context.

Comparative Insights

Taken together, these case studies illustrate that the process of adaptation by terrorists seems to run on well-defined tracks regardless of geographic, ideological, and organizational variations.

The Afghanistan–Pakistan case is an example of organizational resilience. Iraq–Syria shows organizational innovation. Geographic displacement is accentuated in the Sahel. Western democracies show signs of convergence in ideology and adaptation to the digital age (Clarke, 2024; Stern and Berger, 2015).

All these cases can be brought together to reinforce the main point of this article: the GWOT was not just a counterterrorism campaign, but an evolutionary catalyst as well. Terrorism did not disappear due to sustained military, intelligence, financial and technological pressure. Rather, it facilitated adaptation on various levels

which lent weight to the explanatory power of the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC) (Cronin, 2009; Feyyaz & Phillips, 2024).

Table 1

Comparative Evidence Supporting the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC)

Case Study	Primary Adaptation	Illustrative Outcome	TAC Dimension
Afghanistan–Pakistan	Organizational resilience	Survival and regeneration of Al-Qaeda and emergence of ISIS-K	Structural adaptation
Iraq–Syria	Organizational innovation	Evolution of AQI into ISIS and territorial state-building	Structural adaptation
Sahel	Geographic displacement	Expansion into weak governance spaces	Geographic adaptation
Western Democracies	Ideological convergence	Growth of decentralized digital extremism and far-right mobilization	Ideological adaptation

Source: *Developed by the author.*

The Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC): An Integrated Model:

Conceptual Foundation of the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle

The foregoing analysis shows that terrorist groups do not just withstand the pressure of counterterrorism, they evolve in response to it. Based on the principle of adversarial co-evolution, this article suggests that Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC) is an integrated model to understand how persistent counterterrorism pressure can have unintended effects on organizational adaptation.

The TAC considers terrorism as an ongoing adaptive process, rather than a static threat as is done in traditional approaches. Each large-scale counterterrorism (CT) operation alters the operating context. Many of the organisations are weakened or destroyed; those that survive adapt their structures, strategies, technologies, financing and ideology to deal with new constraints. These adaptations result in new forms of terrorism, which in turn elicit new counterterrorism responses, and hence a spiral of action, adaptation and innovation (Cronin, 2009; Feyyaz & Phillips, 2024; Ou et al., 2024).

Table 2

The Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC)

Stage	Counterterrorism Effect	Terrorist Adaptation	Strategic Outcome
1. Counterterrorism Pressure	Military operations, intelligence, financial sanctions, border controls and law enforcement	Increased pressure on terrorist organizations	Operational disruption
2. Organizational Disruption	Leaders eliminated, networks disrupted, safe havens denied	Organizations seek new ways to survive	Reduced capability but continued existence
3. Adaptation	Existing methods become less effective	Decentralization, geographic relocation, diversified financing, technological adoption and ideological adjustment	Greater resilience

Stage	Counterterrorism Effect	Terrorist Adaptation	Strategic Outcome
4. Innovation	New operating environment	Franchise networks, virtual ecosystems, AI-enabled propaganda, self-radicalized actors and hybrid organizations	New operational capabilities
5. Diffusion	Successful innovations spread	Expansion through affiliates, digital platforms, encrypted communication and transnational networks	Wider geographic and operational reach
6. Counter-Adaptation	Governments develop new policies, technologies and partnerships	Terrorist organizations begin adapting again	The cycle continues

Source: *Developed by the author*

Significance of the Model

The Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC) provides a framework to understand why tactical victories against terrorism do not necessarily lead to strategic victories. While counterterrorism activities can kill leaders, they can also stimulate pressures that lead to change within the surviving organizations, as they seek to develop new tactics and strategies to operate without their leadership. Terrorist organizations do not just vanish, but instead are more likely to become decentralized, technologically sophisticated, geographically spread and operationally resilient (Crnin, 2009; Sageman, 2008).

In all the case studies studied in this article, the same thing applies: counterterrorism pressure did not stop terrorism, it altered it (Sageman, 2008; Clarke, 2024).

This is confirmed by the evidence in this study. Al-Qaeda is no longer a centralised organization, but has become a network of franchises. ISIS had a governance system in place for the territories before it fractured into regional affiliates. Terrorism activity moved from Afghanistan and Middle East to Sahel. Recruitment, operations and financing were revolutionized by digital platforms, AI, encrypted communications and cryptocurrencies. Meanwhile, extremist ideologies became more disjointed, mixed and increasingly came together in a common digital ecosystem (Ganaie, 2025; Institute for Economics and Peace, 2025).

The TAC shows that these are not stand-alone trends, but rather are related phases of the adaptive process. To understand terrorism, it is therefore necessary to look beyond the individual organizations and how violent extremism constantly changes.

Theoretical Propositions

The Terrorist Adaptation Cycle suggests the following four research propositions.

Proposition 1: Counterterrorism pressure leads to adaptation rather than extinction of an organization (Cronin, 2009; Feyyaz & Phillips, 2024; Sageman, 2008).

Proposition 2: Terrorist adaptation is a phenomenon that happens at the same time on the organizational, geographic, technological, financial, strategic, and ideological levels (Ou et al., 2024; Feyyaz & Phillips, 2024).

Proposition 3: Successful innovations rapidly diffuse via digital platforms and transnational networks, thereby speeding up the learning and resilience of organizations (Clarke and Broekaert, 2025; Lakomy, 2024).

Proposition 4: Counterterrorism can only be effective if it is able to look ahead for future adaptations, not only for current threats (Clarke and Broekaert, 2025; Ganaie, 2025).

The Next Phase of Terrorist Adaptation

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the next phase in the ongoing process of mutual evolution between terrorist groups and counterterrorism agencies. AI can disrupt the entire lifecycle of terrorism, from propaganda and

recruitment to planning, funding, and operational assistance, unlike other technologies (Clarke and Broekaert, 2025; Ganaie, 2025; Minniti, 2025).

AI can be used by terrorist groups to deliver personalized propaganda messages on an unprecedented scale by identifying vulnerable individuals and crafting messages that resonate with their beliefs, emotions, and online behaviour. Extremist content is also harder to detect, verify and remove as it is increasingly produced by AI. Operationally, AI can help with attack planning, target selection and cyber operations and the deployment of autonomous or semi-autonomous systems, thus eliminating the need for specialist expertise (Ganaie, 2025; Minniti, 2025).

In the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC), artificial intelligence (AI) marks the next stage of terrorist innovation. Terrorist groups are using AI more and more to counteract the increased digital surveillance and content moderation by governments. The battle will thus not be so much against the current technology as against the next wave of technological adoption (Clarke and Broekaert, 2025).

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The Global War on Terror (GWOT) was the first international security campaign of the early twenty first century. It unleashed an unprecedented amount of military, intelligence, financial and diplomatic resources and it changed the course of international security. It has been successful in the tactical arena, for example, by disrupting terrorist networks, killing key leaders and by enhancing international cooperation in counterterrorism.

However, the findings of this study indicate that the GWOT also had an unintended consequence. It was not so that it abolished the terrorism but it rather hastened the process of its evolution. Terrorist organisations adapted by changing their structures, geographic locations, technologies, sources of funding and ideologies.

This article suggests that these developments can be understood in the light of the Terrorist Adaptation Cycle (TAC). The study shows how an ongoing pressure of counterterrorism can serve as a strong evolutionary force, using the concept of adversarial co-evolution. Survivors become more decentralized, resilient and innovative in the new political, technological and operational landscape.

There are three findings of particular importance. First, the emergence of the Sahel as the world's most active terrorist theatre shows that counterterrorism pressure can be ongoing and may displace, rather than eradicate, terrorism. One of the hallmarks of the GWOT legacy is geographic adaptation.

Second, artificial intelligence is NOT a future issue. It is already being used for terrorist propaganda, recruitment, communication and operational planning. Future counterterrorism efforts need to be able to proactively anticipate technological adaptation as opposed to merely reacting to it.

Third, counterterrorism can no longer focus exclusively on dismantling organizations. It should also focus on the political, institutional and governance environment that enables the resurgence and adaption of terrorism.

These findings have several policy implications.

1. Evaluation of counterterrorism strategies should not be limited to the immediate operational outcome; long term adaptive consequences should be factored in as well. Tactical wins that have unintended consequences of increased or more persistent threats should be identified as strategic risks.
2. Planning should be beyond the level of individual theatres of operation. Terrorist groups are increasingly going to places where the governments are weak and state capacity is low. So it is important to invest more in governance, institution building, and regional stability in addition to security operations to be effective counterterrorism.
3. Future strategies should also be ideologically neutral. Counterterrorism strategies designed mainly to counter Islamist terrorism will likely not be enough to deal with more and more hybrid and diverse forms of violent extremism.
4. Lastly, governments need to invest in technological innovation. Terrorist groups are utilizing artificial intelligence, digital platforms, autonomous systems and new technology and counterterrorism agencies have to change accordingly, while adhering to the rule of law and the safeguarding of fundamental rights.

5. The main lesson of the GWOT, in other words, is not that terrorism is able to withstand military pressure. But it is that terrorism is able to adjust to it. It is important to grasp the nature of this adaptive process to inform sound counterterrorism policies in the coming decades.

The Terrorist Adaptation Cycle offers one framework for understanding that evolution. It takes the focus off of defeating individual organisations and onto predicting the processes of constant change in violent extremism. With the advent of artificial intelligence, geopolitical rivalry and fast-paced technological advances, the next step might be to prepare for adaptation rather than the prevention of the next attack.

References

Algemeiner. (2025, December 2). *Africa becomes center of global terrorism amid ISIS revivals, Al Qaeda alliances*. https://www.algemeiner.com/2025/12/02/africa-becomes-center-global-terrorism-isis-revivals-al-qaeda-alliances/

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Atlantic Council. (2025, January 2). *Experts react: What the New Orleans attack tells us about terrorism in 2025*. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/experts-react/experts-react-what-the-new-orleans-attack-tells-us-about-terrorism-in-2025/

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Burke, J. (2004). *Al-Qaeda: Casting a shadow of terror*. I.B. Tauris.

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Cengiz, M. (2025, July 25). Forecasting the fifth wave: Emerging terrorist threats in a changing world. *Small wars Journal*. https://smallwarsjournal.com/2025/07/25/forecasting-the-fifth-wave-emerging-terrorist-threats-in-a-changing-world/

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Clarke, C. P. (2024, March). *The Islamic State five years after the collapse of the caliphate*. Foreign Policy Research Institute. https://www.fpri.org

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Clarke, C. P., & Broekaert, C. (2025, May). *The pandemonium narrative and its limits: Artificial intelligence and the Islamic State's innovation pattern*. Hudson Institute. https://www.hudson.org

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Cronin, A. K. (2003). Behind the curve: Globalization and international terrorism. *International Security*, *27*(3), 30–58. https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/behind-curve-globalization-and-international-terrorism

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Cronin, A. K. (2009). *How terrorism ends: Understanding the decline and demise of terrorist campaigns*. Princeton University Press.

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Feyyaz, M., & Phillips, B. J. (2024). How do militant organizations respond to proscription? The case of Jaish-e-Mohammad in Pakistan. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *38*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2024.2385015

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Ganaie, N. A. (2025). The role of artificial intelligence in radicalisation, recruitment and terrorist propaganda: deconstructing violent extremism and reimagining counterterrorism in contemporary digital ecosystems. *Frontiers in Political Science*, *7*, 1718396. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2025.1718396

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Hoffman, B. (2006). *Inside Terrorism* (Rev. ed.). New York: Columbia University Press.

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

House of Commons Library. (2025, June 7). *Countering Islamic State/Daesh in Africa, Syria and Iraq 2025* (Research Briefing No. CBP-9613). UK Parliament.

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Institute for Economics and Peace. (2025). *Global terrorism index 2025*. https://www.visionofhumanity.org

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

International Centre for Counter-Terrorism. (2025). *The Islamic State in 2025: An evolving threat facing a waning global response*. https://www.icct.nl

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Kaldor, M. (2012). *New and old wars: Organized violence in a global era* (3rd ed.). Polity Press.

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Kara, O. (2025). The future of terrorism. *Journal of Humanity, Peace and Justice*, *2*(1), 1–12.

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Lakomy, M. (2024). In the digital trenches: Mapping the structure and evolution of the Islamic State's information ecosystem (2023–2024). *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1177/17506352241274554

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Minniti, F. (2025, April 11). *Automated recruitment: Artificial intelligence, ISKP, and extremist radicalisation*. Global Network on Extremism and Technology. https://gnet-research.org

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Ou, C., Wang, J., Liu, C., Zhang, Y., & Zhao, X. (2024). Evolution of the global terrorist organisational cooperation network. *PLOS ONE*, *19*(1), Article e0281615. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0281615

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Rapoport, D. C. (2001). The fourth wave: September 11 in the history of terrorism. *Current History*, *100*(650), 419–424.

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Sadaghashvili, T. (2025). The U.S.–Iraq War's legacy in global terrorism and the Taliban's return to power. *European Scientific Journal ESJ*, *44*(29), 36.

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Sageman, M. (2004). *Understanding terror networks*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Sageman, M. (2008). *Leaderless jihad: Terror networks in the twenty-first century*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Stern, J., & Berger, J. M. (2015). *ISIS: The state of terror*. HarperCollins.

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

The Soufan Center. (2025, July 11). *Assessment of the global terrorism threat landscape in mid-2025*. https://thesoufancenter.org

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Toros, H., & Burnett, J. (Eds.). (2025). Critical security research and the War on Terror: From the margins to the mainstream? [Special issue]. *European Journal of International Security*, *10*(1). https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2024.26

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

Toros, H., Jarvis, L., & Jackson, R. (2024). What the War on Terror leaves behind: assessing international security in a post-terrorism era. *European Journal of International Security*, *10*(1).

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**

U.S. Department of the Treasury. (2024). *2024 national terrorist financing risk assessment*. Office of Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes.

Google Scholar **Worldcat** **Fulltext**