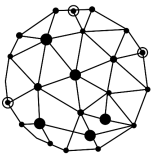


The Rise of Extremism by Non-State Actors in 2024

31 March 2024

Key Judgements:

- Following the US led Global War on Terrorism, the world focus shifted from combating unconventional non-state extremism to focusing on conflicts being conducted by state-actors and the overarching peer-to-peer conflict between the great powers of the time.
- The transnational nature of these extremist groups, including their operations, members, and strategies, presents a significant challenge for state actors in developing comprehensive strategies to counter their growing threat.
- Extremism has aimed to hide itself within a large social movement, where they can either control the narrative or utilize the sympathy for that movement as a weapon.
- Extremist groups often collaborate with criminal networks to fund their operations, acquire weapons, and exploit vulnerabilities in governance and law enforcement.
- New conflicts have created a void in international focus, allowing extremist groups to exploit instability and gain ground.
- Protecting civilians while countering extremist activities that thrive on social unrest and target those who feel disenfranchised.



Extremism in 2024

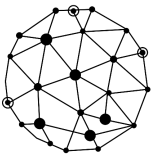
In the shadow of the attack on Israel that was carried out on October 7th, 2023, there have been a total of 15 global incidents attributed to non-state extremism. These incidents have involved various forms of violence, including shootings, bombings, vehicular attacks, suicide bombings, and sieges. The degree of violence and planning that took place to carry out such attacks highlights the evolving threat posed by non-state extremist groups operating globally.

Indiscriminate violent actions have been the preferred method of non-state extremists for nearly two decades. Recently, there has been a noticeable increase in such violent actions worldwide, orchestrated by these same non-state actors. Following the US led Global War on Terrorism, the world's focus shifted from combating unconventional non-state extremists, to tackling conflicts that are being conducted by state-actors and the overarching peer-to-peer conflict between the great powers (USA, China, Russia and Iran) of the time. In 2024, the traditional image of an "extremist" has been shattered, giving rise to a diverse landscape in which extremism can flourish. No longer is the mold that of an individual conducting violent attacks solely with political or religious intentions. Today, extremism is increasingly seen present in almost every aspect of modern day life.

With regards to those committing violent attacks, while many of these groups still share some degree of ideological, geographic and cultural ties, their diversity has enabled smaller factions to establish themselves globally. The transnational nature of these extremist groups, including their operations, members, and methodologies, present a significant challenge for state actors when developing comprehensive strategies to counter their growing threats. The globalization of extremism has facilitated the exchange of knowledge in key domains like resistance tactics, armed operations, and political maneuvering.

Furthermore, adding to the already monumental task of "rooting out extremism", non-state actors have evolved to employ hybrid tactics, leveraging technological advancements to further their goals. They utilize technology for recruitment, operational planning, and propaganda dissemination, exploiting social media platforms to sway public opinion and hinder global counter-terrorism efforts. These extremist groups exploit societal vulnerabilities and employ asymmetric warfare tactics to achieve their objectives. An increasing trend has seen extremists groups attaching themselves to a wider issue, to leverage "world sentiment", also known as "the victim complex", against the states they oppose. Extremism aims to hide itself within a larger social movement, where they can either control the narrative or utilize the sympathy garnered as a weapon.

The rise of non-state extremism continues to blur the lines between traditional and unconventional warfare. These groups often operate in gray areas, blending conventional



tactics with unconventional methods such as cyberattacks, psychological warfare, and unconventional weapons use. This hybrid approach challenges counter-terrorism forces to adapt their strategies and capabilities to confront multifaceted threats effectively. The link between non-state extremism and other illicit activities, such as organized crime and illicit financing, adds complexity to the threat landscape. Extremist groups often collaborate with criminal networks to fund their operations, acquire weapons, and exploit vulnerabilities in governance and law enforcement.

The following is a look at extremist non-state actors who have conducted attacks in 2024. To be included, entries must be notable, having been widely reported or a stand-alone article, and described by a consensus of reliable sources as "terrorism." Incidents are limited to one per location per day. If multiple attacks occur in the same locality and on the same day, they will be accounted as a single incident.

January

In January, there were four separate incidents orchestrated by non-state actors. On the second day of the month, an attempt on the life of South Korean main opposition leader Lee Jae-myung was made during a press conference at the newly opened Airport on Busan's Gadeok Island. The assailant, identified as Kim Jin-sung, attacked Lee with a knife during a Q&A session, aiming for his neck. The motive behind this assault remains under investigation.

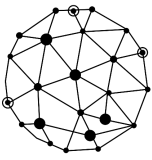


The following day witnessed a suicide bombing in Iran, attributed to the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISIS-K), resulting in the tragic deaths of 94 innocent civilians and injuries to 284 others. The twin explosions occurred during a procession near Soleimani's grave in the Golzar Shohada cemetery and the Saheb al-Zaman



mosque, marking the fourth anniversary of Soleimani's death. The explosions were spaced between 10 to 20 minutes apart.

On the 15th of January, Israel faced a vehicular attack and stabbing incident, causing the death of one individual and injuries to 18 others. The perpetrators, identified as two Palestinians aged 44 and 25, were reportedly motivated by tensions related to the Israel-Gaza conflict.



Towards the end of the month, during Sunday mass, a shooting incident occurred at the Church of Santa Maria, resulting in one fatality and another individual being injured. The attackers were affiliated with the Islamic State.

February

In February, a series of alarming attacks unfolded across different regions, totaling five incidents. The month began with a bombing rampage in Mogadishu on the 6th, where four separate explosions rocked the crowded Bakaara market. This tragic event resulted in the loss of 10 lives and left over 20 individuals wounded. Simultaneously, in Istanbul, two assailants targeted a security checkpoint, leading to the deaths of three individuals, including the attackers, and injuries to six security personnel.

The following day, on the 7th, Pakistan experienced two bombings aimed at political offices in Balochistan, occurring just before the country's general elections. These attacks caused a grim toll of over 30 fatalities and more than 40 injuries. This attack was also attributed to the Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISIS-K).

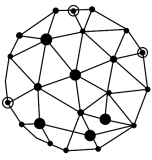
Moving forward to the 9th of February, the Islamic State in the Mozambique Province launched a deadly assault on Mozambican defense forces, resulting in the deaths of 25 personnel. This attack was attributed to the ongoing insurgency in Cabo Delgado, which is an ongoing Islamist insurgency in Cabo Delgado Province of Mozambique.

Towards the latter part of the month, on the 16th in Kiryat Malakhi, Israel, there was a tragic shooting incident. A Palestinian assailant opened fire on civilians at a bus stop, leading to the loss of two lives, including the attacker who was neutralized by a bystander. Lastly, on the 29th, in the west bank, an insider attack unfolded, claiming the lives of two civilians as a Palestinian police officer fired upon them while they were waiting in a car at a gas station.

March (As of 3/31/2024)

The month began with a deeply troubling incident in Zurich, where an orthodox Jewish man fell victim to an apparent random stabbing. The assailant, identified as a 15-year-old individual, targeted the victim while reportedly shouting anti-Semitic remarks. The motive has been attributed to the rise of anti-semitic behavior as a result of the Israeli-Gaza war.

Moving forward, on the 14th of March, the city of Mogadishu experienced a devastating suicide car bomb attack that resulted in the loss of 8 innocent lives and left 27 individuals critically injured. The assailant, believed to be affiliated with the extremist group Al-Shabaab,



detonated the bomb outside the prominent SYL Hotel, triggering a protracted 13-hour standoff between militants and security forces.

Continuing the distressing trend of violence, the 21st of March marked another tragic chapter as a suicide bombing claimed the lives of 21 individuals in Kandahar, Afghanistan. The attacker, identified as a non-state actor, targeted a New Kabul Bank, where Taliban members had gathered to receive their salaries. The resulting explosion not only caused loss of life but also led to 50 others sustaining severe injuries.

Additionally, a recent incident in Krasnogorsk, Russia, saw non-state actors carrying out a shooting massacre. The attackers planned and executed mass shootings, strategically placing explosives around Crocus City Hall. Furthermore, they resorted to setting fire to the building's rooms, the resulting death toll has been identified at around 150 killed and upwards of 140 injured.

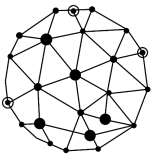
Most recently, in Pakistan an unknown assailant targeted a bus of Chinese nationals traveling to the Dasu dam in the Shangla District of Pakistan. A vehicle, Borne IED (VBIED), rammed into the bus, killing 6 individuals, 5 of them being of Chinese nationality.

Implications For Tomorrow

The rise of extremism has profound implications across multiple fronts, encompassing citizens' safety, military strategies, and the overall geopolitical landscape. The increasing involvement of non-state actors in extremist activities has transformed this issue into a widespread concern that transcends national boundaries. Consequently, this phenomenon has bridged the gap between traditional adversaries, as many nations now share a common objective of countering extremism.

During the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), nations were united in their efforts to combat extremist threats. However, recent developments such as the conflict in Ukraine, ongoing tensions between Israel and Gaza, and China's assertive actions in the South China Sea have shifted global attention. These new conflicts have created a void in international focus, allowing extremist groups to exploit instability and gain ground.

For military operations, these dynamic factors translate into a more intricate and diverse threat environment. Extremist organizations have capitalized on regional turmoil to expand their influence, rendering traditional warfare tactics less effective. The challenge now lies not only in directly confronting extremist groups but also in addressing the underlying geopolitical factors that fuel their rise.



Furthermore, the impact extends to civilian populations, who are increasingly susceptible to extremist violence and radical ideologies. This presents a dual challenge for military and security forces: protecting civilians while countering extremist activities that thrive on social unrest and target those who feel disenfranchised.

In essence, the rise of extremism has reshaped the global security landscape, necessitating a reevaluation of military strategies, international partnerships, and diplomatic initiatives. It underscores the interconnected nature of security threats and emphasizes the need for comprehensive approaches that transcend traditional military responses.

The implications of this phenomenon are far-reaching, demanding a holistic understanding of the complex dynamics at play. By recognizing the multifaceted nature of extremism and its impact on various aspects of society, military professionals, academics, and policymakers can develop nuanced strategies that effectively address this pressing global challenge.