

BROAD PATTERNS IN GLOBAL TERRORISM IN 2014

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The U.S. State Department has just published its annual country reports on terrorism. In the past, most of the resulting commentary has focused on the narratives in the main report. It is the statistical annex, which largely goes unread, however, which does most to provide a picture of the global patterns in terrorism and which does most to warn that we are neither winning nor containing the struggle.

The State Department reports that *there were a total of 13,463 terrorist attacks worldwide in 2014, resulting in more than 32,700 deaths and more than 34,700 injuries. In addition, more than 9,400 people were kidnapped or taken hostage. This meant the number of terrorist attacks in 2014 increased 35% and total fatalities increased 81% compared to 2013.*

Looking back at previous editions and other data once sees the following patterns:

- The Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia continue to dominate world terrorism. They had a total of roughly 9,600 terrorist incidents in 2013 – the vast majority of which were carried out by Islamic extremist or Jihadist groups.
- No other region had more than 1,000.
- The US State Department *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013* showed that major incidents had risen from less than 300 major incidents a year in the MENA region during 1998 to 2004, to approximately 1,600 in 2008.
- They increased again from around 1,500 in 2010 to 1,700 in 2011, and jumped to 2,500 in 2012, and 4,650 in 2013.
- This was a fifteen-fold increase in annual incidents since 2002, and threefold increase since 2010.

It is scarcely coincidental that the concentration of terrorist violence can often be directly linked to major civil conflicts and failed nations that have weak and corrupt governments and deep sectarian, ethnic, racial, and tribal friction. Moreover, if one looks at the data on terrorism by country in the excerpts below, it is all too clear that the sharp rise in refugees and internally displaced persons from some 40 million in the past to well over 60 million in 2014 has been closely related to the rising levels of violence in the states where terrorism is most common.

The State Department data also decisively show that terrorism is not a clash between civilizations, but a clash within one. So do Rand studies that reflect:

- A 58-percent increase in the number of Salafi-jihadist groups from 2010 to 2013.

- Estimates that the number of Salafi jihadists more than doubled from 2010 to 2013, according to both RAND's low and high estimates.¹
- Approximately 99 percent of the attacks by movements like al Qa'ida 2013 were against "near enemy" targets in North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.

Similar reports include:

- A US government National Counter-Terrorism Center (NCTC, report on terrorism for 2011 that estimated that: "In cases where the religious affiliation of terrorism casualties could be determined, Muslims suffered between 82 and 97% of terrorism-related fatalities over the past five years."
- Estimates by the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) at the University of Maryland, that between 2004 and 2013, about half of all terrorist attacks, and 60% of fatalities due to terrorist attacks, took place in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan – states with largely Muslim populations.
- A BBC study that concluded that, "The overall number of deadly terrorist attacks in France, the UK, Spain and the US is very low by international standards. Between 2004-2013, the UK suffered 400 terrorist attacks, mostly in Northern Ireland, and almost all of them were nonlethal. The US suffered 131 attacks, fewer than 20 of which were lethal. France suffered 47 attacks.

The following excerpts from the Statistical Annex to the State Department report describe the key patterns in terrorism in 2014 in terms of total incidents and casualties, location, critical countries, perpetrators, lethality, targets, tactics, and weapons.

I. SIGNIFICANT TRENDS (Excerpts from the June 2015 State Department report on Trends in 2014)

Although terrorist attacks took place in 95 countries in 2014, they were heavily concentrated geographically. More than 60% of all attacks took place in five countries (Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, and Nigeria), and 78% of all fatalities due to terrorist attacks took place in five countries (Iraq, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria).

The number of terrorist attacks in 2014 increased 35% and total fatalities increased 81% compared to 2013, largely due to activity in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Nigeria. In certain countries, including Greece, Nepal, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Russia, terrorist attacks and total fatalities decreased.

The 81% increase in total fatalities was, in part, a result of certain attacks that were exceptionally lethal. In 2014, there were 20 attacks that killed more than 100 people, compared to two such attacks in 2013.

Terrorism in 2014 was marked by numerous kidnappings and hostage-taking events. More than 9,400 people were kidnapped or taken hostage in terrorist attacks in 2014, three times as many as in 2013. This trend was concentrated in certain countries, including Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, and was particularly influenced by an increase in attacks that involved large numbers of hostages.

II. INCIDENTS OF TERRORISM WORLDWIDE (Excerpts from the June 2015 State Department report on trends in 2014)

In 2014, a total of 13,463 terrorist attacks occurred worldwide, resulting in more than 32,700 deaths and more than 34,700 injuries. In addition, more than 9,400 people were kidnapped or taken hostage.

... On average, there were 1,122 terrorist attacks, 2,727 deaths, and 2,899 injuries per month worldwide in 2014. There were 2.57 fatalities and 2.87 injuries per attack, including perpetrator casualties.

The months with the most terrorist attacks and combined casualties (deaths and injuries) were May, June, and July. In particular, the high number of attacks in May coincides with the peak of spring “fighting season” in Afghanistan, where attacks increased more than 107% between February and May.

Contributing to the high number of fatalities in June, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) carried out an attack on Badush prison in Mosul, Iraq on June 10, 2014, which resulted in the deaths of 670 Shia prisoners. As of the end of 2014, this was the deadliest terrorist attack worldwide since September 11, 2001.

Also in June, there were five attacks in which more than 50 people were kidnapped. Three took place in Iraq, one in Somalia, and one in Syria. In August, four attacks (three in Iraq and one in Nigeria) involved the abduction of more than 50 people.

The exceptionally high number of hostages reported in December is largely a result of the attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar, Pakistan. Assailants from Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan held more than 500 individuals hostage during a siege that killed at least 150 people.

More than 6,200 of the 32,700 people killed in 2014 (19%) were perpetrators of terrorist attacks. Perpetrators were killed intentionally in suicide attacks, accidentally while attempting to carry out attacks, or by security forces or victims responding to attacks.

III. LOCATION (Excerpts from the June 2015 State Department report on Trends in 2014)

Although terrorist attacks took place in 95 countries in 2014, they were heavily concentrated geographically. More than 60% of all attacks took place in five countries (Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, and Nigeria), and 78% of all fatalities due to terrorist attacks took place in five countries (Iraq, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria).

Given the limitations of media coverage in Syria, the data presented here are conservative estimates of terrorism in Syria. Consistent with START's practice of including in the GTD only those attacks that have been verified by at least one well-regarded source, these statistics represent those incidents that were reported by independent news outlets.

Globally aggregated statistics do not represent uniform patterns worldwide. They are produced by diverse trends in violence and heavily influenced by events in several key locations.

- **Attacks:** Large increases in Iraq and Afghanistan, two countries that also experienced high numbers of attacks in 2013, comprise more than one-third (37%)

of the 35% increase in total attacks worldwide in 2014 compared to 2013.

- **Fatalities:** Large increases in Nigeria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, three countries that also experienced high numbers of fatalities due to terrorist attacks in 2013, comprise more than two-thirds (72%) of the 81% increase in total fatalities worldwide in 2014 compared to 2013. Also, approximately one-quarter (26%) of the increase in total fatalities was attributable to increases in perpetrator fatalities, which were especially prevalent in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria.
- **Injuries:** The total number of injuries due to terrorist attacks increased slightly (6%) in 2014. This was largely a product of various regional trends, including a 376% increase in injuries in Nigeria in 2014, and a 44% decrease in injuries in Pakistan in 2014 compared to 2013.
- **Hostages:** Several countries observed large increases in the number of hostages taken in terrorist attacks in 2014. However, the largest increases took place in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, comprising more than two-thirds (68%) of the 201% increase in hostages worldwide in 2014 compared to 2013. This considerable increase in the total number of hostages taken by perpetrators of terrorist attacks is a result of a large increase in the number of attacks that involved any hostages as well as a large increase in the number of attacks that involved more than 100 hostages.

IV. CRITICAL COUNTRIES (Excerpts from the June 2015 State Department report on Trends in 2014)

Four of the five countries that experienced the most terrorist attacks in 2014 were the same as those that experienced the most terrorism in 2013. The one exception was the Philippines, which experienced a 24% decline in attacks, and ranked 10th among countries with the most terrorism in 2014. Nigeria, which ranked 7th among countries with the most terrorist attacks in 2013, experienced a 114% increase in attacks and a 308% increase in fatalities in 2014.

Iraq

By a wide margin, the highest numbers of total attacks, total fatalities, and total injuries took place in Iraq. The average lethality of attacks in Iraq was 3.07, *nearly 20 percent higher than the global average (2.57 fatalities per attack), and 19% higher than the 2013 average in Iraq (2.56).*

The increases in terrorism in Iraq in 2014 coincided with the expansion of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The percentage of attacks in Iraq for which no perpetrator group was identified decreased from 84% in 2013 to 70% in 2014. During the same time period, the number of attacks in Iraq attributed to ISIL (also known as al-Qa'ida in Iraq in 2013) increased from 400 to more than 950, representing 96% of all attacks in Iraq for which a perpetrator group was identified in 2014.

Five of the 20 most lethal individual attacks in 2014 took place in Iraq; all were carried out by ISIL. In addition, terrorism in Iraq continued to be marked by extremely deadly coordinated attacks. On 160 occasions in 2014, there were more than 10 attacks on a single day within a particular country. Of these, more than two-thirds (71%) took place in Iraq. Likewise, there were 109 occasions in 2014 when more than 50 people were killed in

terrorist attacks on one day in a particular country. Approximately one-third of these highly lethal days (36%) occurred in Iraq and involved up to 27 attacks on a single day.

More than three-quarters of all attacks in Iraq (77%) were classified as bombings/explosions and 7% were suicide attacks. An additional 12% were armed assaults, 5% were kidnappings, and 5% were assassinations, often targeting government figures and police leadership.

Although the percentage of attacks involving hostages in Iraq (5%) was half that of the global percentage (10%) in 2014, in 2014 Iraq experienced an extraordinary increase in the total number of hostages taken (896%) in terrorist attacks compared to 2013. This increase was due to a small number of attacks that involved extremely high numbers of hostages.

The most common types of targets in Iraq were private citizens and property (41%), police (24%), and general (non-diplomatic) government entities (9%). The majority of the attacks in Iraq took place in the governorates of Baghdad (26%), Saladin (22%), Nineveh (13%), Diyala (13%), and al-Anbar (12%).

Pakistan

The total number of terrorist attacks reported in Pakistan decreased 6%, total fatalities decreased 25%, and total injuries decreased 44% in 2014 compared to 2013.

No specific perpetrator organization was identified in source materials for 79% of all attacks in Pakistan. Of the remaining attacks, 29% were carried out by Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Attacks attributed to TTP killed more than 540 and wounded more than 770 in 2014.

Thirty other groups, including a number of Baloch nationalist groups such as the Baloch Republican Army, the Baloch Liberation Front, the United Baloch Army, the Baloch Liberation Army, and the Balochistan Liberation United Front, carried out attacks in Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan.

In 2014, 32% of all terrorist attacks in Pakistan took place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, 29% took place in Balochistan, 22% took place in Sindh, and 12% took place in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

The most frequently attacked types of targets in Pakistan were generally consistent with global patterns: more than 22% of all attacks primarily targeted private citizens and property and 21% primarily targeted the police. However, government targets (7%) were less prevalent in Pakistan compared to global patterns (13%), and utilities (8%) and educational institutions (6%) were more likely to be the target of terrorism in Pakistan compared to global patterns, where they each comprise 3% of all attacks.

Afghanistan

The total number of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan increased 38% between 2013 and 2014, while the total number of fatalities increased 45%. However, in Afghanistan the percentage of total fatalities comprised by perpetrator deaths was especially high – 43%, compared to 19% worldwide.

Although less severe than the increases in Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria, in 2014, Afghanistan also experienced a large increase (168%) in the number of hostages taken in terrorist attacks.

Information about the perpetrator group responsible for the attack was reported for more than half of all attacks in Afghanistan in 2014 (57%). Nearly all of these (99%) were attributed to the Taliban. Attacks carried out by the Taliban in 2014 killed more than 3,400 people, including perpetrators, and wounded more than 3,300.

Attacks against police targets, especially checkpoints, patrols, and security forces, comprised more than 42% of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan in 2014. Police targets in Afghanistan were more than twice as prevalent as police targets worldwide (21%).

As in Iraq, suicide attacks remained especially frequent in Afghanistan, comprising 10% of all terrorist attacks in 2014. This represents a 51% increase in the number of suicide attacks in Afghanistan since 2013.

Terrorist attacks took place in all 34 of Afghanistan's provinces in 2014, but were somewhat concentrated in Helmand (10%) and Kandahar (8%) provinces in the South, and Ghazni province (8%) in the East.

India

Among the countries with the highest numbers of terrorist attacks and fatalities in 2014, India was unusual on several dimensions. In particular, terrorist attacks in India were less likely to be lethal (32% were lethal compared to 51% worldwide) and resulted in fewer casualties (both fatalities and injuries) per attack.

Several casualty metrics for fatalities and injuries in India decreased in 2014; a smaller percentage of attacks were lethal, and there were fewer deaths and injuries per attack. However, the total number of terrorist attacks increased 21%, the total number of fatalities increased 4%, and the number of hostages recorded in India increased by 59%.

Terrorist attacks in which the primary tactic was bombing/explosion were less prevalent in India (42%) than worldwide (56%), and there were no suicide attacks in India in 2014. The types of tactics that were considerably more common in India than the rest of the world included kidnappings (17% compared to 10% worldwide) and facility/infrastructure attacks (9% compared to 6% worldwide).

More than half of the terrorist attacks in India in 2014 took place in four states: Jharkhand (15%), Jammu and Kashmir (13%), Assam (12%), and Manipur (12%).

Compared to the other countries that experienced the most terrorist attacks and fatalities in 2014, the diversity of perpetrator groups was much greater in India, with 45 groups active in 2014. However, nearly 60% of the terrorist attacks carried out in India in 2014 were attributed to the Communist Party of India-Maoist or Maoist perpetrators not specifically identified as belonging to a particular organization

Nigeria

Terrorism in Nigeria in 2014 was marked by severe increases in the total number of attacks (114%), fatalities (308%), injuries (376%), and hostages (1,358%) compared to 2013.

Like Iraq, Nigeria was particularly likely to experience highly lethal individual attacks, as well as highly lethal coordinated attacks. Nine of the 20 deadliest individual terrorist attacks in 2014 took place in Nigeria. Two others occurred across the border in Cameroon and were attributed to the Nigerian group Boko Haram. In 2014, the average number of

deaths caused by attacks in Nigeria was 12.8.

This was nearly twice as high as the rate in 2013, and nearly five times as high as the global average (2.57 deaths per attack) in 2014. Of the 109 occasions in 2014 when more than 50 people were killed in terrorist attacks on a single day in a particular country, more than one-third (37%) occurred in Nigeria, involving up to seven attacks in one day.

Nearly 1,300 people were kidnapped or taken hostage in terrorist attacks in Nigeria in 2014, compared to fewer than 100 in 2013. In particular, there were two attacks that involved several hundred hostages. In April, 276 students were abducted from a government-run secondary school for girls in Chibok. In December, 185 people were kidnapped from Gumsuri village. Both attacks were attributed to Boko Haram.

Information about perpetrator groups was reported for 86% of terrorist attacks in Nigeria in 2014. Of the attacks for which perpetrators were identified, most were attributed to Boko Haram (71%) or assailants described as “Fulani militants” (26%), who are engaged in a land resource conflict in Nigeria.

The majority of terrorist attacks in Nigeria in 2014 (66%) targeted private citizens and property. This is twice as high as the global rate (33%) of attacks against private citizens and property. Almost three-quarters (73%) of the terrorist attacks in Nigeria that targeted private citizens and property victimized the residents of entire villages, towns, or cities, rather than isolated individuals.

In 2014, terrorist attacks took place in 28 states and the Federal Capital Territory; however, they were heavily concentrated in Borno, where 40% of the attacks took place.

Syria

While the number of terrorist attacks recorded in Syria in 2014 remained relatively stable compared to 2013, the total number of deaths increased 57%. Approximately one-quarter of the increase in fatalities (26%) in Syria was a result of a large increase in the number of perpetrators killed while carrying out attacks, however.

The average lethality of terrorist attacks in Syria in 2014 (8.24) was more than three times as high as the global average (2.57) and 59% higher than the average lethality of terrorist attacks in Syria in 2013.

As in 2013, the average number of people wounded in attacks in Syria in 2014 was particularly high at 9.32. This was 226% higher than the global average for injuries (2.86), but 1% lower than the average number injured in terrorist attacks in Syria in 2013.

Syria experienced a more than 300% increase in the number of hostages taken in 2014, compared to 2013. More than 870 people were kidnapped or taken hostage in 30 terrorist attacks in Syria, including three attacks in which more than 100 people were taken hostage. These three attacks targeted Kurdish civilians, particularly children, and were attributed to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Information about the perpetrator groups responsible for terrorist attacks in Syria was reported in 61% of all cases. Among those attacks for which perpetrator group information was available, ISIL was responsible for 62% and al-Nusra Front was responsible for 20%.

Approximately two-thirds of all terrorist attacks in Syria in 2014 took place in the

governorates of Aleppo (32%), Damascus (17%), and Homs (17%).

V. PATTERNS IN LETHAL ACTS OF TERRORISM (Excerpts from the June 2015 State Department report on Trends in 2014)

The total number of deaths from terrorist attacks worldwide increased 81% in 2014 compared to 2013. Although the percentages of attacks that resulted in zero, one, two to four, or five to 10 fatalities mirrored 2013 levels, the percentage of attacks involving more than 10 deaths increased from 3.2% to 4.4%.

Attacks that caused more than 10 deaths represented a relatively small proportion of all terrorist attacks, yet this change corresponds to more than 100 additional attacks that resulted in more than 10 fatalities in 2014, compared to 2013.

Nearly 18,000 people were killed in 561 attacks that resulted in more than 10 deaths in 2014. These attacks occurred in 23 different countries, including most frequently: Nigeria (155), Iraq (141), Afghanistan (66), and Syria (46).

The overall increase in fatalities in 2014 was particularly impacted by exceptionally lethal terrorist attacks that killed more than 100 people. In 2014, 20 such attacks took place compared to two in 2013.

Among the attacks that resulted in only one fatality in 2014, 42% were bombings, 33% were armed assaults, 14% were assassinations, and 7% were kidnappings. In 7% of attacks that resulted in only one death, the person killed was the perpetrator. Nearly half of the attacks that killed only a perpetrator were suicide attacks (46%), but in the remainder the perpetrator was either killed accidentally when explosives detonated prematurely, or the attack was repelled by authorities.

The majority of non-lethal attacks in 2014 were bombings (66%), and approximately one-quarter (24%) of the non-lethal attacks were unsuccessful (e.g., an explosive was planted but it was defused or failed to detonate).

More than 9,400 people were kidnapped or taken hostage in 1,337 attacks in 2014, 201% more hostages than were reported in 2013. In 14 attacks in 2014, more than 100 victims were kidnapped or taken hostage. These include several attacks targeting Yazidi civilians in Iraq, as well were released, rescued, or escaped from their captors.

The remaining hostages were either killed or the outcome of the event was not reported.

VI. PERPETRATORS (Excerpts from the June 2015 State Department report on Trends in 2014)

Information about perpetrators was reported in source materials for 46% of terrorist attacks in 2014. More than 250 organizations were named as perpetrators of terrorist attacks, including 33 organizations that had not previously been identified as perpetrators in the Global Terrorism Database.

In 30% of the attacks with information about perpetrator groups, the groups explicitly claimed responsibility. In the remaining attacks, source documents attributed responsibility to a particular group or groups based on reports from authorities or observers.

The perpetrator groups responsible for the most terrorist attacks in 2014 were the Islamic

State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Taliban in Afghanistan, al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and Maoists in India. These groups were also responsible for the most attacks in 2013. All five increased the frequency of their attacks in 2014, though at different rates.

Of the attacks for which perpetrator information was reported, 17% were attributed to ISIL. Although ISIL operated primarily in Iraq and Syria, the group expanded its influence geographically in 2014 by carrying out attacks in Lebanon and Egypt for the first time. In addition, several organizations based in other countries pledged allegiance to ISIL and self-identified as a “province,” “chapter,” or “supporter” of the Islamic State.

Among these five perpetrator groups, the average lethality of attacks carried out by ISIL (6.46 people killed per attack), the Taliban (4.07), and Boko Haram (16.86) were higher than the global average (2.57) in 2014. The average lethality of attacks carried out by al-Shabaab (2.46) was slightly lower than the global average. Attacks carried out by Maoist perpetrators in India were by far the least deadly and the least likely to be deadly, causing 0.63 deaths per attack.

All five of the most active groups markedly increased the number of hostages taken in 2014; however, the increases in hostage-takings by ISIL and Boko Haram were exceptionally large. Attacks carried out by these two groups in 2014 involved more than 4,300 hostages, 50% of all hostages taken in terrorist attacks worldwide in which the perpetrator group was identified.

Boko Haram also increased its use of suicide tactics in 2014, carrying out 31 suicide attacks, compared to three in 2013.

VII. TACTICS AND WEAPONS (Excerpts from the June 2015 State Department report on Trends in 2014)

Each recorded terrorist attack can involve one or more tactics in a continuous sequence of actions. The most commonly used tactic in 2014 involved explosives (54%), followed by armed assaults (23%), which almost always involved firearms.

Although the pattern of tactics in 2014 generally remained consistent with 2013, bombings and assassinations were slightly less prevalent in 2014, while hostage takings (a combination of kidnapping and barricade events) were relatively more prevalent. In particular, the percentage of attacks classified as bombings decreased from 57% to 54%, and the percentage of assassinations decreased from 23% to 17%. In addition, there were 39 unarmed assaults in 2014. There were also 42 hijackings carried out in 2014, primarily involving cars, trucks, and buses as well as three maritime targets and one airplane.

A total of 574 terrorist suicide attacks took place in 2014, resulting in more than 4,700 deaths and more than 7,800 injuries. Although these attacks took place in 17 countries, 70% of them occurred in Iraq and Afghanistan. On average, suicide attacks in 2014 were 3.6 times as lethal as non-suicide attacks.

VIII. TARGETS (Excerpts from the June 2015 State Department report on Trends in 2014)

Each attack in the Statistical Annex dataset includes information on up to three different targets and/or victims, regardless of whether or not the attack successfully impacted the

intended target.

Fewer than 1,300 terrorist attacks in 2014 involved multiple types of targets. More than half of all targets attacked in 2014 (55%) were classified as either private citizens and property or police. Terrorist attacks were particularly likely to target private citizens and property in Nigeria (66% of attacks in Nigeria) and Iraq (41% of attacks in Iraq).

Attacks targeting police were most frequently aimed at police officers, security forces, or patrols, and took place disproportionately in Afghanistan (43%).

The most ubiquitous targets of terrorist attacks in 2014 were private citizens and property (attacked in 72 countries) and non-diplomatic government entities (attacked in 62 countries).

Attacks on journalism and media targets increased 34% in 2014 compared to 2013, and occurred in 30 countries; Attacks on journalists and media targets were most frequently classified as kidnappings (31%), assassinations (27%), and bombings (18%).

ⁱ Seth Jones, *A Persistent Threat: The Evolution of al Qa'ida and Other Salafi Jihadists*, RAND, 2014, p. x, Washington, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR600/RR637/RAND_RR637.pdf. Also see Wm. Robert Johnston, "Selected terrorist attacks and related incidents worldwide: Introduction, as updated January 18, 2015, <http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/terrorism/wrjp255b.html>, and <http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/terrorism/wrjp255w3.html>.