

Forum:	Special Political and Decolonization Committee
Issue:	Establishing measures to combat religion-based terrorism
Student Officer:	George Kantzis
Position:	Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is George Kantzis, I am 17 years old and I attend the 11th Grade in the German School of Athens. I must admit that it is my honor to serve as the Chair of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee in the 7th session of the Platon School Model United Nations. Overall, I have participated in 15 MUN conferences and I can assure you that Model United Nations is a whole world itself. MUN is undoubtedly an important activity with immense values and therefore, I am proud that it is included in my aspirations.

This year's agenda of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee provides delegates with the chance to discuss and propose measures, so as to combat serious problems, such as the corruption of election procedures, the religious extremism terrorism and the outbreak of wars due to diamonds. Being a chair, it is my responsibility to guide you through your research and help you in order to submit effective resolutions tackling the problem of religion-based terrorism at hand. However, this study guide is not the only source on which you should base your research. Religious terrorism is a rather huge topic and consequently, it demands serious devotion. Therefore, should you think of any questions relating to this issue, I strongly urge you to contact me at my email address georgekantzis@gmail.com.

I am really looking forward to meeting you all in the 7th PSMUN.

Best Regards,

Your chair,
George Kantzis

INTRODUCING TOPIC

In the recent years, an alarming increase of terrorist operations and attacks carried out in multiple cities around the world has been observed, imperiling global security and endangering the lives of thousands of people. The predominant motivation of the majority of these terrorist attacks is the dissemination of the perpetrators' religion. According to statistics published by the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), religion as a driving ideology for terrorism has increased since 2000. In the year 2000, a number of 250 terrorist attacks took place throughout the world, yet only in 2012, there have been around 1750 incidents, which manifested the rapid increase of religious terrorism by almost 700%.

Most of these terrorist attacks are however carried out by Islamist terrorist organizations operating in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as well as in the Sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, this terrorist activity in conjunction with the general political instability due to the Arab Spring and the various insurgent groups fighting against the countries' regimes, have caused great political turmoil in the region, hence giving the opportunity for the emerge of even more terrorist organizations.

The most prominent terrorist militant groups, in these areas, are the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Boko Haram and Al Qaeda, while there are also other smaller active terrorist organizations, such as the Taliban, Hezbollah and Al-Shabaab. All these organizations are in close collaboration with each other and have played a significant role as regards the upsurge of religion-motivated terrorism.

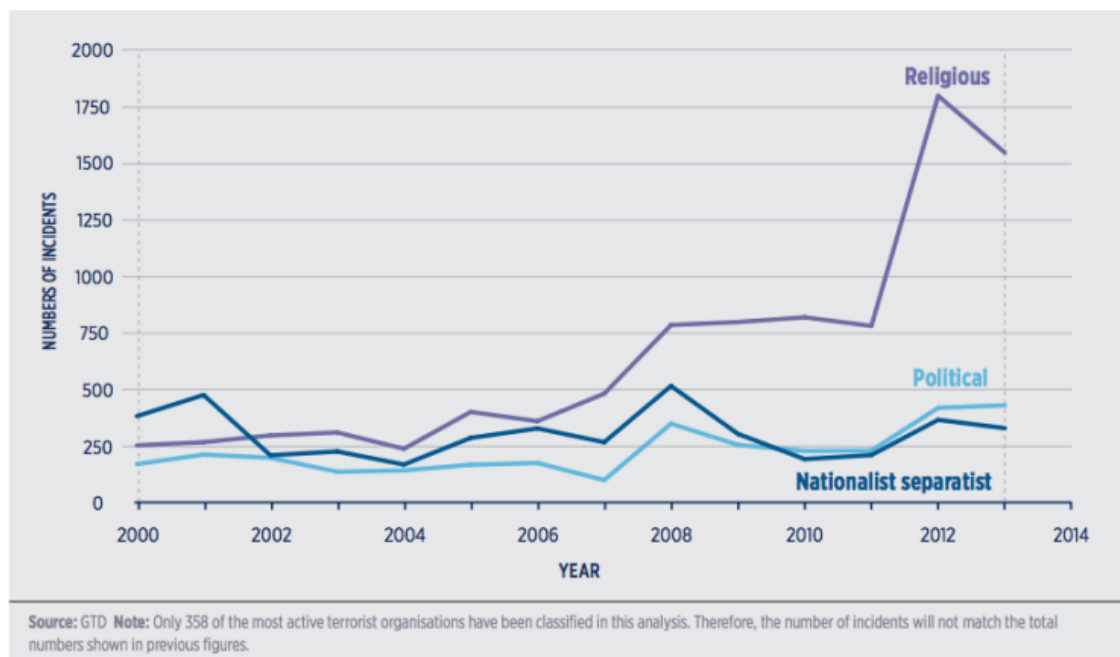


Figure 1: Trends in Terrorist Groups ideology from 2000 – 2013: A notable increase of terrorist attacks by 700% has taken place since 2000

Last but not least, according to a statistic published by the Institute for Economics and Peace in the Guardian, around three-fifths (3/5) of global terror attacks, namely around 6.000 out of 10.000, have been committed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria and Syria, countries where most of the relevant terrorist organizations have their headquarters, while the rest two-fifths (2/5) have been carried out in cities thought the world. These facts demonstrate that the above-mentioned organizations are the main drivers of religion-based attacks.

In conclusion, countries have to adopt efficient measures, which will not only aim to secure themselves and their borders from terror attacks, but also to directly tackle the reasons of the current matter and eliminate religion-based terrorism worldwide.

Global terror attacks

Total incidents, 2000 - 2013

○ Total ○ Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Syria ○ Rest of world

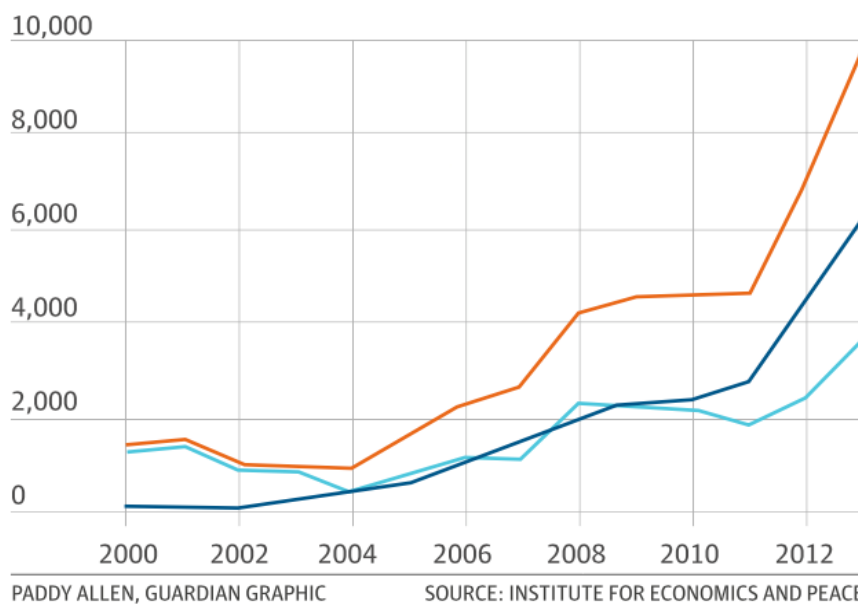


Figure 2: Global terrorist attacks throughout the world

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Religion

According to the Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology, the term religion refers to "ways in which humans relate to the divine (a presence or force behind, beyond, or pervading sensible reality that conditions but is not conditioned by that reality). All such "ways" include a system of beliefs about the divine and how it is related to the world. Most also involve an attitude of awe toward the divine, and a pattern of actions (rituals and an ethical code)."

Terrorism

Until now, the international community has failed to meet a consensus regarding the definition of “terrorism”. Therefore, on account of the absence of a universal definition of the term, the United Nations (UN) has been restricted from creating and actualizing an applicable strategy against terrorist acts. However, many definitions have been formed on a national or continental level, such as the “Convention on Combating International Terrorism” which defines terrorism as *“any act of violence or threat with the aim of terrorizing people or threatening to harm them or imperiling their lives, honor, freedoms, security or rights or exposing the environment or any facility or public or private property to hazards or occupying or seizing them, or endangering a national resource, or international facilities, or threatening the stability, territorial integrity, political unity or sovereignty of independent States”*.

Religion-based Terrorism

The term religious terrorism is defined as *“terrorism by those whose motivations and aims have a predominant religious character or influence.”*

Sunni Islam

Sunni Islam is the largest denomination of the Islamic religion enumerating up to 940 million out of approximately 1.1 billion Muslim adherents worldwide, officially renowned as Sunnis or Sunnites. The term “Sunnis” derives from the Arab word “sunnah”, which is translated as “custom” or “tradition” and it basically means that the Sunnis follow the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad. The Sunnites believe that Prophet Muhammad’s successor, namely the caliph, is selected by the Muslim community and vigorously oppose to the other Islamic denomination, the Shi’a, which claims that Muhammad appointed Ali, his son-in-law, to be his successor. Furthermore, the Sunnis invigorate the power of Allah and consequently in the Arab states where the Sunnis are a vast majority, the Sharia Law is strictly implemented.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), is an extremist terrorist jihadist military group located and operating mainly in the Middle East, with Al-Raqqah in Syria being the group’s headquarters.

In 1999, the group was formed by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was a Jordanian Islamist. Later on, in 2004 the group was allied with Al-Qaeda and as a result, it was officially named “Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)”. Following the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi by a US airstrike in 2006, several jihadist groups merged in October 2006,

establishing the “Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)”, which was led by Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi, who was succeeded subsequent to his death by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi in 2010.

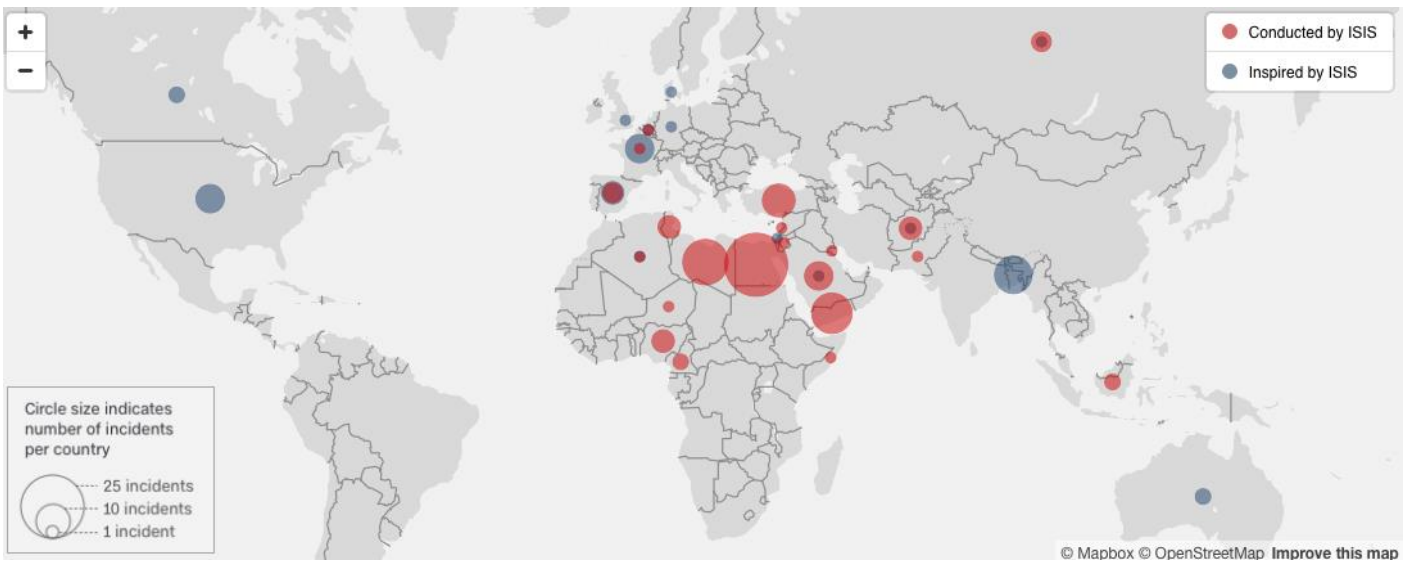


Figure 3: ISIS-led or ISIS-inspired attacks until September 2016

After the Arab Spring and the commencement of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi sent troops in 2012 to Syria to fight alongside the rebels against Bashar al-Assad’s regime. In April 2013, the forces known as “Al-Nusra Front (ANF)” were consolidated with ISI creating the “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)”. Finally, in June 2014, ISIS was self-announced as an international caliphate called “Islamic State (IS)” led by the caliph Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi.

Until the present, the Islamic State has claimed responsibility for numerous terrorist operations on a worldwide scale, which have endangered global security. As it was published by the CNN in September 2016, ISIS has performed or inspired 143 global attacks in 29 different states (other than Syria or Iraq) including the United States, France, Belgium, Germany, Egypt, Turkey and Libya and has killed almost over 2043 victims.

The main goal of the organization is to create a caliphate and to establish a Sunni Islamic State. Moreover, they mainly aim at expanding this caliphate first by conquering Europe and thereafter the whole world. They generally seek to “fill the world with the truth and justice of Islam and to put an end to the falsehood and tyranny of jihiliyyah (state of ignorance)” as the 5th edition of “Dabiq” named “Remaining and Expanding”, the Islamic State’s magazine, conveys.

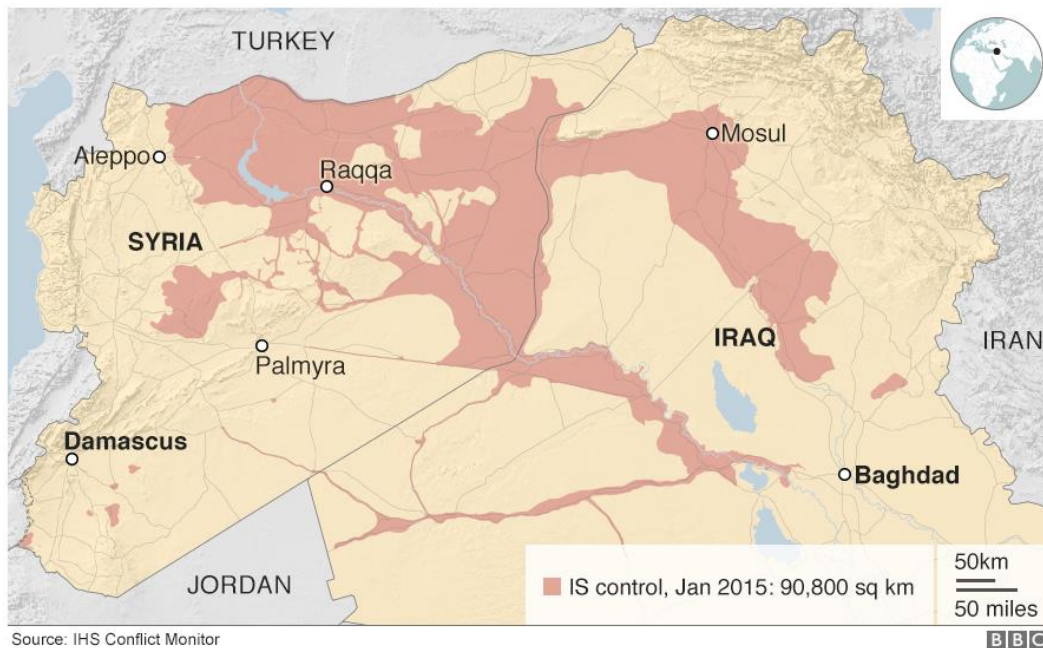


Figure 4: Region Controlled by ISIS until January 2015

Yet, ISIS, since its self-declaration as a “Sunni Caliphate” in June 2014, has lost control over many areas in Iraq and Syria owing to airstrikes and other attacks performed by the US-led coalition. This coalition was created by the Jeddah Communique, which is an official document signed in September 2014 by Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and the United States and which forms an alliance between the relevant countries aiming at countering ISIS. Other countries have joined the coalition as well, without having signed the communique, such as the UK and France.

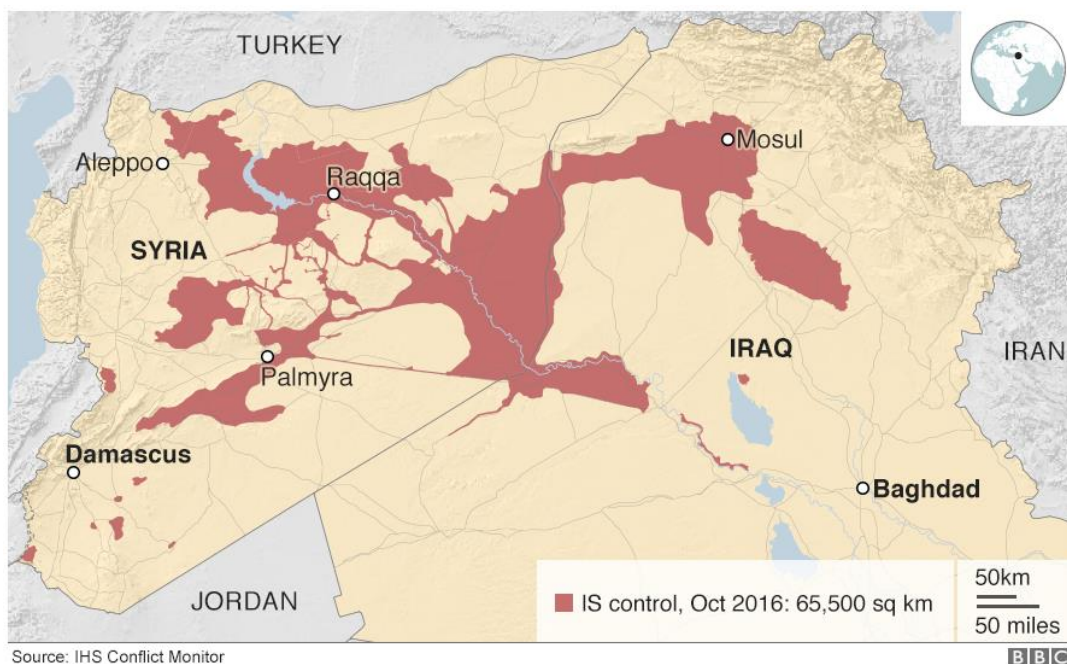


Figure 5: Regions controlled by ISIS (after US-led coalition airstrikes) since October 2016

Boko Haram

Similarly to ISIS, Boko Haram is also an extremist terrorist jihadist military group based in Nigeria and operating in Cameroon, Chad and Niger. The name Boko Haram in Arabic means “Western Education is forbidden” and hence, it clearly manifests the group’s opposition to the western culture and to the western world. In 2002, the group was established under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf and in December 2003, it carried out its first terrorist action, attacking police stations near the border of Niger. During the group’s uprising in July 2009, Mohammad Yusuf was executed and many Boko Haram fighters were imprisoned.

The group regained its strength in 2010 due to the massive prison break and the appointment of the group’s new leader, Abubakar Shekau. In August 2011, Boko Haram attacked the United Nations Headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria and killed 23 people, while injuring another 75 and on the 25th of December of the same year, the group launched brutal assaults against a Christian Church followed by other similar anti-Christian actions.



Figure 6: Towns reported to be under Boko Haram control or attack in September 2014

In 2013, Boko Haram started attacking institutions of western education, the highlight of those being the abduction of 276 schoolgirls in 2014. Moreover, during the same year, Boko Haram executed other serious terrorist actions, causing the death of almost 6.600 civilians. Finally, in March 2015, Boko Haram pledged its allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and therefore, a new leader was appointed. The terrorist organization’s main target is to promote the Sharia Law and to spread the faith of Sunni Islam throughout the world.

Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda is a militant terrorist organization, which was founded in 1988 by Osama Bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam. It consists of a wide network of affiliates, which perform terrorist attacks and other action in several regions. Some of its well-known affiliates are “Al-Qaeda in Iraq”, which was renamed to “Islamic State of Iraq” in 2006, “Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb” (AQIM), which operates in the Maghreb and the Sahel region, “Al-Qaeda in Palestine” and “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula”.

In addition to the local atrocities, Al-Qaeda has committed terrorist actions on a worldwide scale as well, with the most prominent attacks being the September 11 Attacks of 2001 in four different US states killing almost 3000 people in total and the 2002 Bali Bombings leaving 202 casualties. After the 9/11 attacks, the United States responded by initiating the “War on Terror” which continues to the present day and focuses on the elimination of Islamic terrorism.

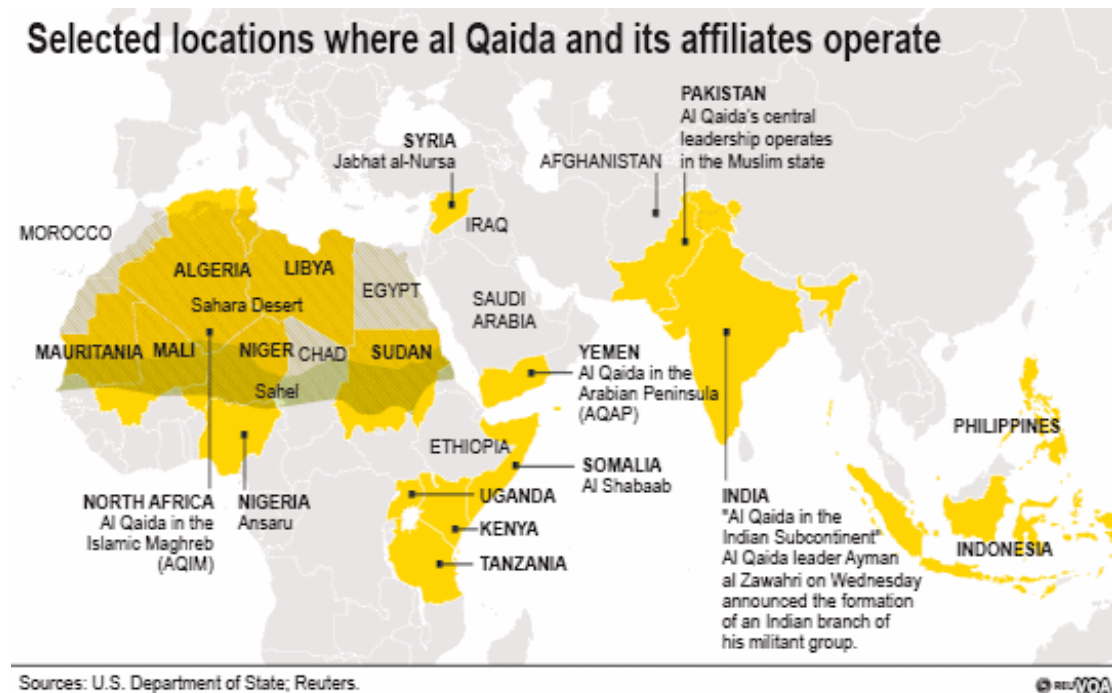


Figure 7: Locations where Al-Qaeda and its affiliates operate

Al-Qaeda’s ideology as a vast terrorist organization with affiliates all over the Middle East and the North Africa (MENA) region includes the eradication of western influences on the Islamic faith and the creation of a Sunni caliphate which will cover the whole Arabic world.

Other Terrorist Organizations

Apart from ISIS, Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda, there are other local terrorist organizations as well that take part in regional conflicts and conduct serious crimes. Such organizations are the Taliban in Afghanistan, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, Hezbollah in Lebanon and many others. All of them are militant groups which want to spread their respective ideologies through civil wars and other terrorist acts.

In conclusion, religion-based terrorism is a grave phenomenon of the 21st century, since there are plenty of militant jihadist groups all aiming to impose their beliefs and terrorize civilians.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
September 11, 2001	Al-Qaeda launched four coordinated attacks in New York; Arlington Country, Virginia and Shanksville, Pennsylvania. There were almost 3000 casualties and over 6000 injuries in total.
October 12, 2002	Al-Qaeda performed the Bali bombings in Kuta, Indonesia killing 202 people, most of which were foreign tourists.
August 16, 2011	Boko Haram attacked the United Nations building in Abuja, Nigeria, killing 23 people and injuring 75.
August 2014	ISIS has taken control of the archaeological site of Palmyra in Syria and has blown up the UNESCO's World Heritage Monument.
January 7, 2015	The Charlie Hebdo Shooting in Paris by "Al-Qaeda in Yemen", where 12 people lost their lives and another 11 were injured.
March 18, 2015	ISIS attacked the Bardo Museum in Tunis, Tunisia killing 23 people and injuring many more.
October 10, 2015	100 people, gathered for a peace rally in Ankara, Turkey, were killed by two explosions, believed to have been caused by ISIS.

November 13, 2015	Terrorist attacks across Paris, where 130 victims were killed. The coordinated attacks happened in various locations, such as in Stade de France, in Bataclan Theatre and in other cafés and restaurants. After the attacks, ISIS claimed responsibility.
December 2, 2015	A couple has killed 14 people and injured another 21 in San Bernardino, California, during a gathering of government health workers. According to the “Institute for the Study of War”, the couple had connections with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.
March 22, 2016	ISIS suicide bombings took place in a subway station and in the international airport of Brussels, Belgium.
March 23, 2016	ISIS suicide bombers killed almost 43 Yemeni soldiers in Aden, city in Yemen.
June 28, 2016	The Atatürk International Airport of Turkey was attacked by three suicide bombers, who killed 44 people. The Turkish authorities claim that the perpetrators were planning the attacks months before the action and that they had links to the Islamic State ISIS.
December 19, 2016	Berlin Christmas Market Attacks: A huge vehicle ploughed through a Christmas Market in Berlin, Germany killing 12 people and injuring around 50. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.

More information regarding further attacks can be found here: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/17/world/mapping-isis-attacks-around-the-world/>

COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN THE ISSUE

United States of America

The United States of America is one of the key factors regarding the fight against ISIS and Al-Qaeda, since it has held numerous attacks against the jihadist groups. After the 9/11 attacks, the United States launched the “War on Terror” and succeeded in killing Osama Bin Laden, the founder of Al-Qaeda, in 2011. In addition to that, the USA has taken the initiative to create the Jeddah Communique, which forms a coalition between certain countries and to lead the fight against the Islamic State by reducing the influence of ISIS in the region. According to administration officials of the US government, the applied strategy has been proved efficient in some

operations, with forces, such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), and sea-launched missiles, being deployed. Nevertheless, the US policy regarding terrorism is quite uncertain, because Donald Trump, the new President-elect, has not announced any official action plan yet.

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation is also a key power regarding the settlement of the disputes in the area. Russia, supporting Bashar Al-Assad's regime in Syria, launched coordinated bombings in August 2016 striking specific targets in Aleppo, Syria. According to a Russian spokesperson, the bombings destroyed training centres and weapon bases belonging to ISIS and the Jabhat al-Nusra groups. Additionally, since the intervention of Russia in the Syrian civil war in September 2015, Russia has managed to eliminate the Islamic State's army by 35%, as Russia's Deputy Security Chief has conveyed.

United Kingdom (UK)

According to the United Kingdom official governmental website, the UK has provided over 1400 military personnel to assist the local forces and the UK Royal Force has conducted 1000 airstrikes in ISIS-controlled regions. The UK's policy in combating the Islamic State and other affiliates include the provision of military support, the decrease of the groups' financial resources, the prevention of the recruitment of foreign fighters and the provision of help to reclaimed and protected areas. Finally, since the initiation of the anti-terrorism operations, the UK has managed to diminish the areas occupied by ISIS by nearly 50% in Iraq and 20% in Syria.

France

France also plays a significant role in eliminating religion-based terrorism, as according to the "Guardian" France was the first country that has united its forces with the coalition in Iraq led by the US. By and large, France has carried out plenty airstrikes destroying ISIS-claimed camps resulting in making noteworthy progress. Furthermore, France is also assisting in the situation in Libya, by fighting against the Islamic State's claims in the region.



Figure 8: Terrorism is associated with killings, hijacking, suicide attacks and bombings

African Union (AU)

Although the African Union strongly condemns terrorism, there are many terrorist groups operating in African Countries, such as in Nigeria, Somalia, Mali, Burkina Faso, Libya and Tunisia. On the 17th of February 2006, the African Union published a report with the title “Africa’s Response to Terrorism”, where many key issues were mentioned, such as the financing of terrorism and the recruitment of foreign soldiers. Moreover, the African Union adopted in July 2011 the “African Model Law on Counter Terrorism”, thereby urging all member states to change their national legislation systems and implement the newly proposed anti-terrorism laws. Nonetheless, religious terrorism has ever since increased dramatically and the African Union’s attempts to suppress its rise have not been deemed quite successful.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

In the previous years, the United Nations have voted and implemented multifarious measures and resolutions to eliminate religion-based terrorism. First of all, the Resolution 2170 S/RES/2170 was voted upon on the 14th of August 2014 by the Security Council condemning the recruitment of foreign fighters and focusing on the obstruction of the terrorist groups’ financing methods. Secondly, the Resolution 2255 S/RES/2255 was adopted on the 22nd of December 2015 condemning the augmentation of extremism and religious terrorism as well by freezing all assets of terrorist organizations, including ISIS and Al-Qaeda and by encouraging the enactment of other strong measures.

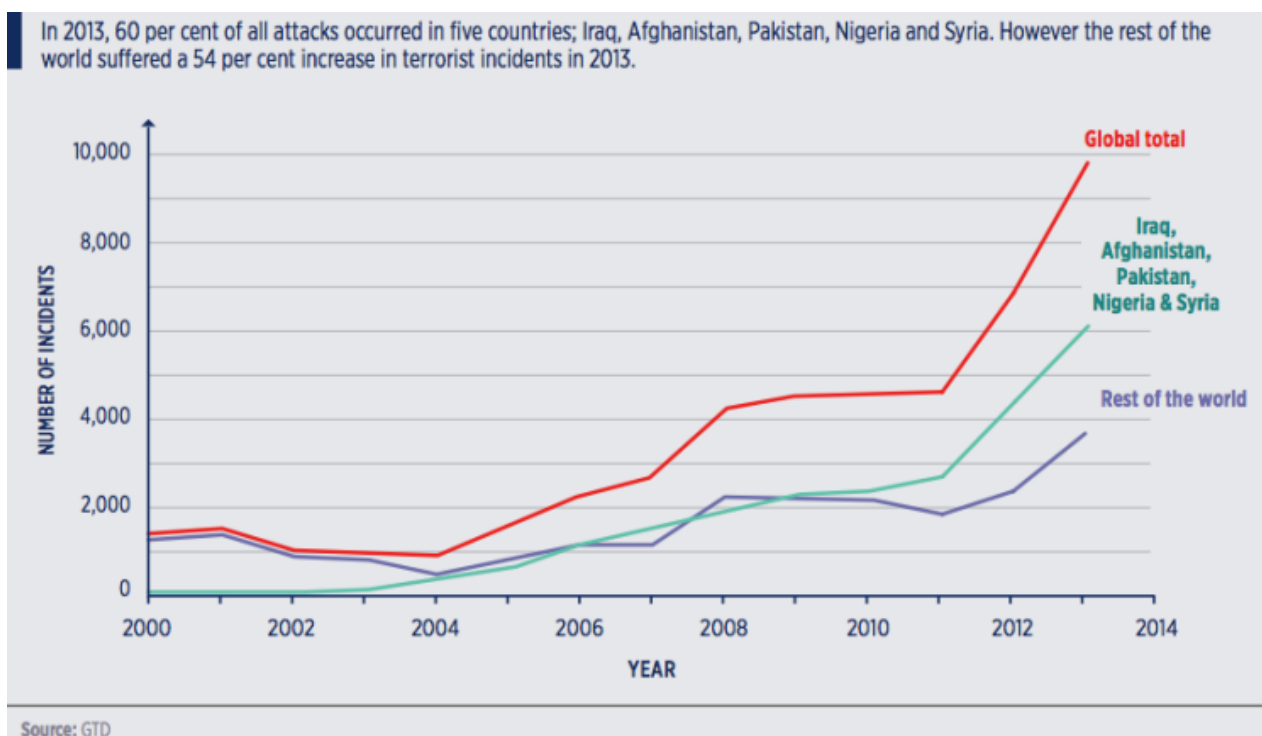


Figure 9: Despite all the United Nations’ and NGOs’ attempts, terrorism has increased significantly

Lastly, the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy was voted by the General Assembly on the 8th of September 2006. The Strategy consists of four so-called “Pillars”, which are reviewed every two years by the General Assembly and aim at tackling global terrorism and ceasing future attacks. The first Pillar revolves around “addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism”, the second deals with “measures to prevent and combat terrorism”, the third composes “measures to build states’ capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in that regard” and finally the fourth comes up with “measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism”.

Despite all the resolutions passed and the legislative frameworks proposed by both the UN General Assembly and the Security Council and other regional unions, such as the African and the European Union, terrorism continues to be a significant threat to peace, security and prosperity. Hence, delegates could implement some of the following possible measures, so as to decrease the actions committed by terrorist organizations and enhance the situation.

To begin with, countries could sign and ratify the Jeddah Communiqué, thereby joining the US-led coalition. By doing this, the coalition would become more powerful and consequently the joined forces could reclaim Al-Qaeda-, ISIS- or Boko Haram-occupied territories.

Additionally, countries could endorse specialized legislation in order both to secure their borders from further attacks and to raise awareness regarding religion-based terrorism. As a result, countries would protect and inform their citizens about such a form of terrorism and prevent possible terrorist actions.

Last but not least, member states following closely the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, could propose a legislative framework, which will identify the groups’ financial resources and try to cease all its funds. That way, the organizations will not have enough resources to be supplied with arms and other war materials and this will lead to the loss of their power and influence.

All these measures and many more will guarantee that religious terrorist groups will be defeated, which will only happen if countries unite their forces against the roots of this problems, namely ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, the Taliban and the rest jihadist groups.

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5. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034>
6. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-29110663>
7. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/images/map-al-qaeda-2015.gif>
8. http://az616578.vo.msecnd.net/files/2016/03/06/635928703683428344-1638974284_terrorism-xs.jpg
9. <https://danielomcclellan.wordpress.com/2015/01/14/some-facts-recommendations-about-terrorism/>

MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES

For Facts and Figures regarding religion-based terrorism:

- <https://danielomcclellan.wordpress.com/2015/01/14/some-facts-recommendations-about-terrorism/>
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/nov/18/religious-extremism-main-cause-of-terrorism-according-to-report>
- <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/17/world/mapping-isis-attacks-around-the-world/>
- <https://isis.liveuamap.com>