

# Global Terrorism Index 2022: Current and Future Terrorist Threats

Institute for Economics and Peace

**Keynote by**  
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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues, dear friends

Good morning, greetings from Geneva, Switzerland. It is a real privilege for me to contribute to the launch of the 2022 Global Terrorism Index today.

The Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) is proud to have collaborated with the Institute for Economics and Peace since 2015 — in helping to contribute to it substantively as well as in launching multiple editions of the Global Terrorism Index in the past years.

Today, I will outline what I believe are **three systemic shocks** that will have an impact on the current state of terrorism in the world. These systemic shocks will also continue to impact terrorism, as we move into the future.

**The first systemic shock is the global pandemic.** The global pandemic has now killed more than 5.6 million people. However, the actual number of deaths occurring globally is estimated to be even higher.

The global pandemic is not an isolated event. Zoonotic diseases have expanded every three years and will continue to expand, if governments refrain from working on preventing the illegal trade of wildlife, which has been enriching criminals and terrorists alike.

The **actual** pandemic has unleashed a feeling of collective anxiety about public health and an uncertain future and has increased millions to fall into the poverty trap worldwide.

Covid has caused enormous economic shocks, wiping at least 9 to 10 percent of GDP in Latin American alone.

In the first 25 weeks of the pandemic, 20 years of anti-poverty strides that had effectively lifted millions of people out of poverty were wiped away.

The economic fall-out, social exclusion and the ongoing uncertainties that COVID-19 have caused, are fostering division and turmoil and extremist groups are profiting from this.

One billion people are now forced to work in illegal economies and multiple terrorist groups are taking advantage of people without incomes.

Terrorists and criminals target and recruit destitute, poverty-stricken young men and women who have been impoverished due to Covid 19 and climate change.

They are targeting young people who are socially vulnerable with no jobs and no future across the globe — especially in Latin America, the MENA and South Asia. Social vulnerability is a key indicator for the spread of terrorism and has been shown to greatly increase the likelihood that individuals are recruited.

**The second systemic shock has been the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban.**

The Taliban controlled territory in parts of Afghanistan for years, but their takeover of the country in August 2021 and the chaotic withdrawal of the US forces and its allies left many questions unanswered.

The chaotic exit also pointed to persistent intelligence failures in understanding the dynamics of terror groups.

The Afghan people, the US and its allies have suffered extraordinary costs in trying to try to stabilize the country and to bring peace. However, the U.S. government's goal to eliminate al-Qaeda and decimate the Taliban movement and deny all terrorist groups a safe haven in Afghanistan was not achieved.

Also, the US was unable to build up the Afghan security forces sufficiently so they could deny terrorists a safe haven in the future, and the Afghan civilian government was unable to suppress its exorbitant corruption and become legitimate and capable enough to win the trust of Afghans.

All these goals remained elusive and now an entire country has been overtaken by an extremist group in South Asia.

As the Taliban begins to consolidate its power in Afghanistan, many observers are speculating on how much they have changed and how they might govern and how their victory will further embolden terrorist groups in the rest of the world.

**The third systemic shock has been the war in Ukraine** and the stark emergence of US great power competition with China and Russia.

This has profoundly changed the focus of US foreign policy which after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 was mainly focused on counterterrorist operations and 'the global war on terror.'

The current standoff between Russia and the West around Ukraine has put the threat of terrorism as a secondary global security threat to multiple countries in West, enabling extremists to continue their footholds into multiple countries unheeded.

These three systemic shocks provide several reasons why terrorism will persist into the foreseeable future.

Especially the US exit from Afghanistan after twenty years of hard military power marks the end of a paradigm to combat terrorism solely kinetically.

It has become obvious that traditional war-fighting methods and hard power have been ineffective and partly counterproductive.

In the last few years, Preventing Violent Extremism has gained interest as an approach by governments, multinational organisations and non-state actors.

Here at the GCSP we run courses on PVE to help countries find better solutions to extremism beyond hard security approaches.

PVE is intended to address structural causes and aggravating factors that create grievances and thereby help promote violent extremism.

It seeks to identify vulnerable groups and address early signs of radicalization and mitigate the risks through education and counter-narratives and engagement.

In order to combat modern terrorism, there must be a real understanding of the root causes of extremism and their links to climate change, poor governance, corruption and the fact that many young people simply have no opportunities to find a job or lead a meaningful life.

The growing consensus that ideology cannot be defeated by guns alone but by better ideas promises to be a better approach to terrorism in 2022. Thank you for your attention and I wish you a very insightful conversation.