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Editorial

At the end of July, the 36th report of the United Nations Security Council's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team was published, in which the evolution of the global jihadist phenomenon is analyzed based on its most representative terrorist organizations, particularly Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, as well as their regional branches located especially in much of the territory of Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. In particular, this report once again highlights the threat that terrorism poses to much of West Africa, where groups such as JNIM continue to expand the territory under their control in different regions of countries like Mali and Burkina Faso. The United Nations publication also does not overlook the worrying situation occurring in other scenarios, such as in Somalia, where Al Shabaab continues to expand its areas of influence through the conquest of new spaces, or in Syria, where the Islamic State is trying to take advantage of the still unstable situation in the country following the overthrow of the Al Assad regime and the rise to power of Hayat Tahrir al Sham.

As is well reflected in this report, terrorism is a complex phenomenon that exploits any situation of power vacuum or instability in governance to gain advantage and obtain a benefit that brings it closer to its ultimate objective. It is for this reason that it is essential to continue understanding the dynamics that exist around the world and the interconnections between different phenomena in order to carry out a more effective counterterrorism effort.

Precisely, with the aim of getting to know more closely some of the particularities of this phenomenon, several scientific studies are presented in this issue 15 of the Revista Internacional de Estudios sobre Terrorismo (RIET). The first of the works presented comes from Drew University in the United States and is the work of Carlos Yordan, who addresses the role of the United Nations in the fight against terrorism between 1970 and 2020, through the analysis of the speeches from the General Debate of the General Assembly. The second text presented is a comparative analysis regarding the tools and mechanisms of radicalization employed by the Islamic State and The Proud Boys in their

recruitment strategy, with the authorship of this work falling to the researchers Valeria Vizcaíno, Ana Isabel Carrillo, and Romina Pérez, all of whom belong to the Tecnológico de Monterrey University. For his part, Carlos Ramírez, from the Attorney General's Office of Michoacán, presents the threat of cyberterrorism from a viewpoint based on contextual analysis and the investigative perspective. The fourth, and last, of the academic works included in this issue 15 of RIET is once again the work of three authors: Ana Cecilia Reyes, Naomí Solorio, and Valeria Garfias. These researchers, through a historical-comparative approach, analyze the way in which U.S. policies have developed a discourse of fear about a part of the Mexican population, transforming the traditional image of drug traffickers into that of potential terrorists.

Regarding the outreach content of this issue, the event we bring to light is the one that took place in Bali in October 2002, when a chain of terrorist attacks carried out by the terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah on various tourist spaces on this Indonesian island ended the lives of more than 200 people. In this issue, we will also get to know closely the Revolutionary Organization 17 November, a terrorist group that was operational in Greece between the years 1975 and 2002. For its part, in the anniversaries and "Did You Know...?" section, we once again bring to the fore, in the form of informative snippets, some events of interest, such as the way in which Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula tried to introduce explosive material into commercial flights through perfumes in 2010 or how the Hellfire R9X missiles are being used in the fight against terrorism.

To close the issue, in the section dedicated to the memory of the victims under the collaboration with the Memorial Center for Victims of Terrorism, Inés Gaviria and Javier Ruiz focus on the way in which, on occasions, extremist rhetoric and narratives have tried to pervert the memory and the events, turning victims into victimizers.

Once all the content of this issue 15 of RIET has been presented, we invite the reader, as always, to immerse themselves in the pages of this issue, hoping that the reading will be to their liking and help them expand their knowledge.

Article

Carlos L. Yordán

The Evolution of the UN's Role in the Fight Against Terrorism: A Computational Text Analysis of General Debate Speeches (1970–2020)

Abstract

This article examines the evolving role of the United Nations (UN) in global counter-terrorism efforts over the past fifty years through a textual analysis of speeches from the UN General Assembly's General Debate between 1970 and 2020. For much of its history, terrorism was treated primarily as a domestic or regional issue. Still, the September 11, 2001, attacks marked a pivotal shift, establishing terrorism as a global security threat and legitimizing the UN's expanded institutional mandate. By analyzing the frequency and context of terrorism-related terms, this study reveals how the public discourse of member states has evolved, reflecting a growing international consensus on the need for coordinated multilateral responses. The findings highlight initial tensions around sovereignty and diverse threat perceptions, alongside the emergence of a complex counter-terrorism architecture encompassing sanctions, normative strategies, and technical cooperation. This work offers a novel perspective on how the UN collectively framed and legitimized its central role in global counter-terrorism governance.

Keywords: United Nations, Counter-Terrorism, General Debate, General Assembly

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1. Introduction

Today, the United Nations (UN) plays a central and multifaceted role in global efforts to counter terrorism. Its institutional architecture now encompasses Security Council sanctions regimes targeting terrorist actors, a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted by the General Assembly, and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), which coordinates technical assistance and capacity-building efforts across the UN system. This architecture reflects a broad international consensus that terrorism is not merely a national threat, but a transnational one requiring collective action under the auspices of the UN.

However, this centrality was not always the case. For much of the UN's history, terrorism was treated primarily as a matter of national or regional law enforcement, with little interest among Member States in adopting a comprehensive international response (Millar & Rosand, 2006, pp. 16–17). Repeated calls from Secretaries-General to strengthen the UN's counter-terrorism capacity were, for the most part, ignored or sidelined. Even after high-profile terrorist incidents, the prevailing international norm emphasized state sovereignty and non-interference rather than collective security.

This article examines how and why this situation changed over the past five decades. It traces the evolution of Member States' attitudes toward terrorism and their growing willingness to confer institutional authority and resources on the UN to address the challenge as a threat to global security. Before the September 11, 2001, attacks, most governments regarded terrorism largely as a domestic issue falling outside the UN's core peace and security mandate. The 9/11 attacks by Al Qaeda fundamentally altered that consensus (Altiok & Street, 2020; David & Bailey, 2017; Fink, 2012; Rostow, 2002). In its immediate response, the Security Council, invoking Chapter VII of the UN Charter, defined terrorism as a threat to international peace and security and imposed binding obligations on all Member States to cooperate in its suppression (UN, 2001b). By 2006, concerns over an overly security-centric approach led many States to push for a more inclusive institutional response. This shift enabled the General Assembly to take on a more active and normative role, contributing to the complex and diverse legal counter-terrorism framework that exists today (UN, 2006).

The existing literature has shed light on how certain States have shaped or responded to the UN's evolving role in counter-terrorism. Bernhard Blumenau (2014), for example, shows how West Germany advocated an expanded UN mandate in the 1970s, well before terrorism was widely conceived as a global challenge. More recently, Vikash Chandra has examined the evolution of China's (2019) and India's (2020) discourse on terrorism and multilateralism, using their diplomats' official UN speeches to explore their policy preferences. Other studies have addressed the legal, institutional, and normative tensions generated by post-9/11 counter-terrorism practices (Altiok & Street, 2020; David

& Bailey, 2017; Fink, 2012; Tiwari & Kashyap, 2020). While these works offer valuable insights, they often focus on individual countries or specific institutional mechanisms.

This article takes a broader perspective, asking: how have Member States collectively legitimized the UN's expanded role in counter-terrorism over the past 50 years? Rather than isolating individual policies or moments, it maps evolving discursive patterns in the UN General Assembly's annual General Debate—a forum where States articulate their foreign policy priorities in their own words. This approach makes it possible to track shifts in international consensus, revealing how terrorism moved from the margins to become a defining component of the global security agenda.

2. Methodology

The United Nations General Assembly's General Debate is one of the organization's most significant annual events. For nearly two weeks each September, world leaders gather at UN Headquarters in New York to deliver official statements reflecting their governments' perspectives on the most pressing global challenges. These carefully crafted speeches articulate national interests and foreign policy priorities (Baturo et al., 2017). Since the early 1970s, roughly 95% of Member States have participated regularly, with a growing trend since the 2000s for these statements to be delivered by heads of state or government rather than by foreign ministers, as had previously been the norm.

Because states control the content of their statements, the General Debate offers a valuable window into the evolution of global political priorities over time (Brun-Mercer, 2021, pp. 444–445). This article examines speeches delivered during the General Debate from 1970 to 2020, using the **R** programming environment[1] together with the **quanteda** package to manage and analyze large volumes of textual data (Benoit et al., 2018). All speeches analyzed are in English, and therefore searches and analyses were conducted exclusively on vocabulary in that language. The General Debate corpus is publicly available via the Harvard Dataverse (Jankin et al., 2021). Through various methods, this analysis explores how leaders' views on terrorism have evolved since 1970.

Standard preprocessing steps were applied,[2] including removing punctuation, numbers, and common stopwords; converting text to lowercase; and creating compound tokens such as "united_nations" and "counter_terrorism" to capture relevant collocations. To ensure the analysis focused exclusively on terrorism linked to political violence, I performed keyword-in-context (KWIC) searches to exclude irrelevant uses, such as the phrase "balance of terror," which was employed in the

1 This is a programming language and an open-source environment for statistical computing and graphics.

2 For a summary of these steps, see Welbers et al. (2017).

context of nuclear deterrence during the Cold War.[3] This process made it possible to identify which speeches referred to terrorism as a tactic of political violence.

The main analytical method was dictionary-based text analysis,[4] which counts the frequency of terrorism-related terms over time and across different states, to reveal longitudinal trends in their salience and perceived importance. While this approach does not capture all semantic subtleties or nuances of sentiment, its interpretation was validated through contextual analysis. Using **quanteda's** "textstat_keyness" function,[5] I identified the 25 words most strongly associated in each decade of the UN General Debate corpus with the keywords "terrorism," "terrorist," and "terrorists." These words, shown in Figure 2, help shed light on leaders' attitudes toward terrorism.

This methodology provides a systematic means of tracing the public evolution of States' positions on terrorism within the UN, while also highlighting changes in multilateral cooperation on this issue. It also identifies key moments of transformation and emerging patterns of consensus. The following section presents the results of the analysis.

3. Main Findings

Although the late 1960s saw a rise in the frequency of terrorist attacks, it was in 1972, following the attack against Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games, that the United Nations began to treat this phenomenon as an international security issue. Just days before the opening of that year's General Debate, UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim urged participating leaders to reflect on how to address this threat (Reston, 1972). The Security Council, however, took no action.

While the General Assembly failed to adopt a resolution condemning this or other attacks, from 1972 onward, it passed a series of resolutions that gave rise to international treaties and protocols criminalizing various activities associated with terrorism (Kramer & Yetiv, 2007, p. 412). By the 1990s, the Security Council had begun exercising its authority to impose sanctions regimes on States directly supporting terrorist groups, as well as on individuals and organizations linked to the al-Qaeda network, particularly after the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in East Africa (von Einsiedel, 2016, pp. 1–2).

3 For a detailed explanation of this function, see Watanabe and Müller (2025b).

4 For an analysis of this method and its application, refer to the work of Boumans and Trilling (2016) and Guo et al. (2016).

5 For a detailed explanation of this function, consult the documentation written by Watanabe and Müller (2025a).

The evolution of the UN's role in counter-terrorism was nonetheless gradual. Many States were reluctant to grant the organization the capacity to intervene in their internal struggles against armed groups. After the September 11, 2001 attacks, however, and in the face of the clear threat posed by al-Qaeda and its network of jihadist groups, governments worldwide promoted the creation of a new international counter-terrorism architecture. This initially centered on the Security Council and was later expanded to include the General Assembly as well as various UN agencies, programs, and funds (Sherman & Sarfati, 2021). Counter-terrorism thus became one of the organization's central priorities (Altiok & Street, 2020).

The textual analysis of the General Debate corpus reflects this historical narrative. The frequency of the term "terrorism" shows a marked increase in attention to the issue over time, especially after the September 11 attacks. As shown in Figure 1, during the 1970s and 1980s, references to terrorism were scarce and remained marginal among the topics discussed, in a context where the dominant security discourse focused on Cold War tensions, decolonization, and regional conflicts. In contrast, from the 2000s onward, "terrorism" became one of the most frequently mentioned terms, reflecting growing global concern and its consolidation as a priority on the international agenda.

Figure 1. Rank of the Number of Terrorism Mentions in the UN General Debate Corpus by Decades

Decades	Frequency	Rank	Document Frequency
1970–1979	910	533	299
1980-1989	1301	420	511
1990-1999	1444	329	599
2000-2009	5844	22	1391
2010-2019	3280	65	1107

Source: *author's own calculation*

Examining the terms associated with "terrorism" reveals how the discourse has evolved over the decades (see Figure 2). In the 1970s, the focus was on hostage-taking, hijackings, and aircraft diversions, in line with UN negotiations and the adoption of related conventions, such as the 1970 Hague Convention on Hijacking of Aircraft. Regional conflicts also appeared, including references to groups involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, reflecting an early international recognition of the geopolitical dimensions of terrorism.

In the 1980s, the discourse shifted toward state-sponsored terrorism and its links to drug trafficking, with mentions of Armenian groups connected to attacks against Turkish officials (Gunter, 2007). This decade also saw increased references to terrorism as a tactic embedded in broader ideological conflicts, including those in Latin America. In the 1990s, concerns intensified regarding the relationship between terrorism, organized crime, and drug trafficking, alongside initial mentions of al-Qaeda's attacks on U.S. embassies in East Africa in 1998. There were strong condemnations of all "acts" and "manifestations" of terrorism, as well as calls to adopt international conventions on terrorist attacks and terrorism financing.

Figure 2. Main Words Associated with "Terrorism" and "Terrorist*" in the UN General Debate Corpus by Decade

Decades	The top 25 associated words
1970-1979	*Acts, Innocent, Violence, Kidnapping, Deir Yassin, Irgun, Subversive, Hijacking, Organizations, Victims, Hostages, Combat, Indiscriminate, International Terrorism, Subversion, Gangs, Haganah, Leumi, Subversives, Crimes, Reprisals, Stern, Criminal, Murder, Gang*
1980-1989	*Acts, Innocent, State-sponsored, Violence, International Terrorism, Narco, Attacks, Condemn, Hijacking, Armenian, Criminal, Subversion, Groups, Combat, Extradition, Combating, Whomever, Condemned, Scourge, Phenomenon, Forms, State, Drugs, Differentiate, Crime*
1990-1999	*Acts, Drug-trafficking, Bombings, Organized crime, Fight, Combat, Manifestations, Forms, Crime, Suppression, Combating, Drugs, Attacks, Extremism, Narco, Dar Salaam, Condemn, International Terrorism, Condemns, Drug traffickers, Money launderers, Money-laundering, Embassies, Violence, Phenomenon*
2000-2009	*Acts, Attacks, Fight, Suppression, Manifestations, Forms, Combat, Combating, September, Conventions, Threat, Innocent, Condemnation, Coalition, Extremism, Attack, Condemns, Organized crime, International terrorism, Counter terrorism, Scourge, Condemn, Struggle, Beslan*
2010-2019	*Extremism, Violent extremism, Groups, Attacks, Fight, Acts, Manifestations, Fighters, Organized crime, Forms, Extremist, Attack, Threat, Combating, Countering, Al Qaeda, Islamic State, Boko Haram, Daesh, Transnational, Drug Trafficking*

The 2000s marked a turning point: "terrorism" became one of the most frequently mentioned terms, with speeches strongly condemning Al Qaeda attacks, particularly 9/11, as well as violence by Chechen militants. Terms like "combat," "combating," and "coalition" reflected support for coordinated global counterterrorism efforts. The increasing use of "counter terrorism" signaled acceptance of the UN's expanded role beyond its traditional peacekeeping and humanitarian functions.

In the 2010s, rhetoric increasingly included terms such as "extremism" and "violent extremism," in line with Security Council resolutions[6] and the General Assembly's *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism* (UN, 2015), both developed in response to the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Mentions of "fighters" referred to foreign terrorist combatants traveling to conflict

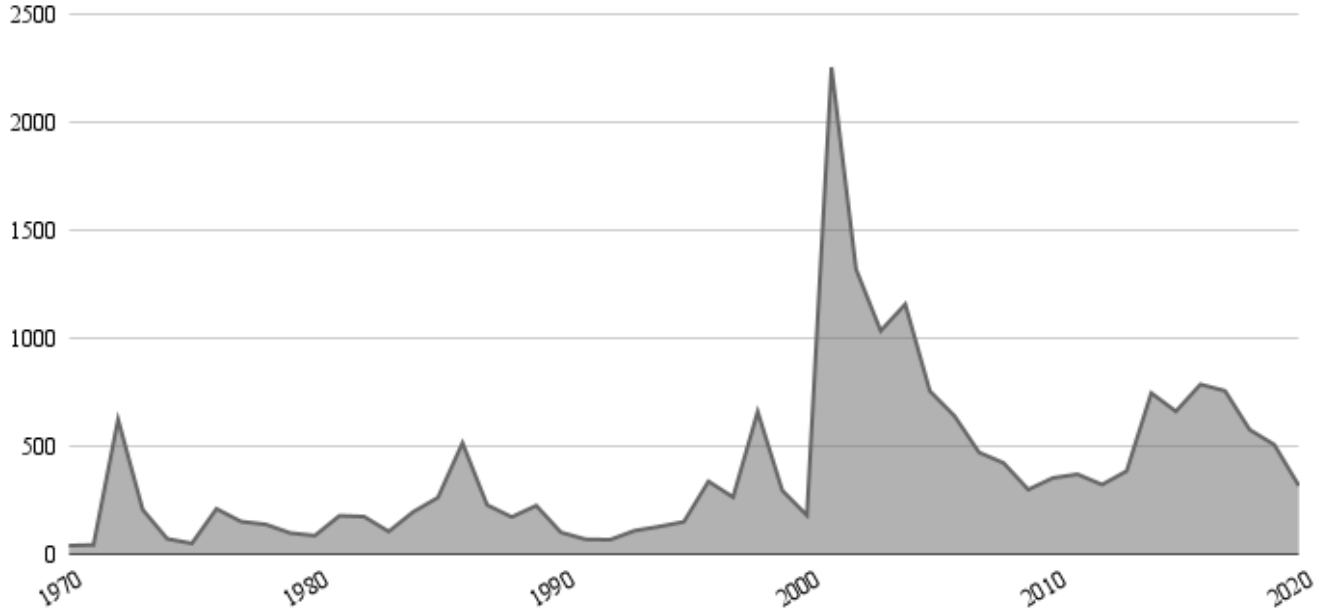
6 For example, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2178 (2014) and Resolution 2354 (2017) with the aim of preventing extremism and curbing the flow of foreign fighters.

zones, while specific groups like al-Qaeda, the Islamic State (also known as Daesh), and Boko Haram appeared frequently, highlighting the diversity of emerging threats.

Temporal spikes in terrorism mentions occurred immediately after 9/11, but also in 1972 (following the Munich Olympic massacre), 1986, and 1998. The 1986 increase reflected a fragmented discourse: Latin American and Caribbean states focused on links between terrorist groups and drug cartels, while others criticized U.S. actions in Libya and Nicaragua, Israeli occupation of Palestine, and apartheid in South Africa. The 1998 peak coincided with al-Qaeda attacks in East Africa and calls for new counterterrorism measures. The post-2013 rise reflected heightened attention to ISIS.

Figure 3. Count of References to Terrorism in the UN General Debate, 1970–2020

Source: author's own calculation



Beyond mentions of terrorism, references to "counter terrorism" efforts, including anti-terrorism initiatives and UN institutional mechanisms, increased significantly after 9/11, confirming a major shift in global discourse supporting the UN's expanded counterterrorism mandate. Figure 4 shows a table with the frequency of terms related to "counter terrorism" by decade. Figure 5 shows the number of mentions per year, while Figure 6 illustrates the percentage of countries that referenced counter terrorism in their speeches each year.

Figure 4. Frequency of Mentions of Terms Associated with Counterterrorism in the UN General Debate by Decade

Decade	Anti Terrorism	Counter Terrorism	Counter Terrorism Committee	Global Counter Terrorism Strategy	UN Office of Counter Terrorism
1970-1979	1	1	0	0	0
1980-1989	0	6	0	0	0
1990-1999	8	6	0	0	0
2000-2009	111	230	145	169	0
2010-2019	18	157	8	86	4

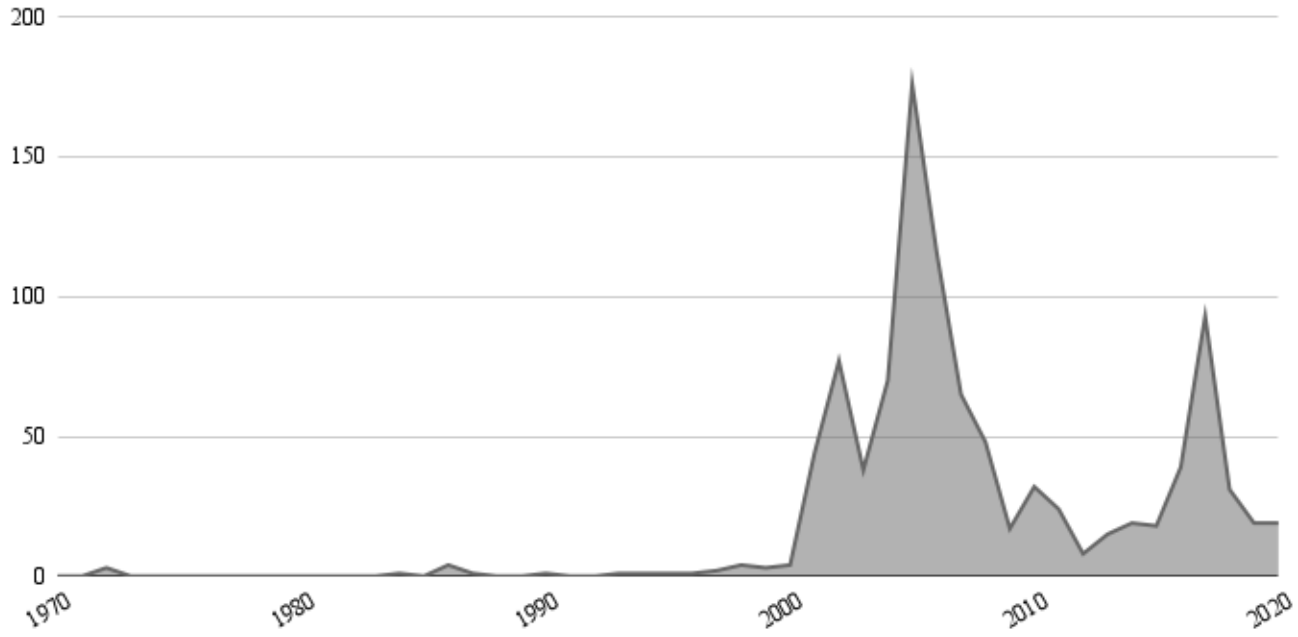
Source: *author's own calculation*

This increase in the number of mentions related to "counter terrorism" was influenced by key events of the 2000s. The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, approved by the Security Council as a direct response to the 9/11 attacks (UN, 2001a), consolidated international consensus around the need for collective action against al Qaeda and transnational terrorism (Malone, 2006, pp. 121–125). In contrast, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, carried out without UN approval and opposed by U.S. allies such as France and Germany, revealed the limits of that consensus (Weiss et al., 2014, pp. 128–135). These tensions were also reflected in General Debate speeches, where states articulated divergent positions on the legitimacy of the war and on the scope of the UN's role in combating terrorism.

However, the regional instability generated by the invasion of Iraq, combined with military campaigns against al Qaeda and its affiliated networks, contributed to the emergence of the self-proclaimed ISIS. As shown in Figures 5 and 6, ISIS's rise and its proclamation of a territorial caliphate in 2014 reactivated international consensus, spurring new "counter terrorism" strategies backed by both the Security Council and the General Assembly. This consensus translated into specific resolutions on foreign terrorist fighters and into the adoption of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, initiatives that, as noted earlier, reflect an effort to broaden the UN's normative framework in response to contemporary terrorism (Altiok & Street, 2020, pp. 8–9).

Figure 5: Number of References to Terms Associated with Counterterrorism in the UN General Debate, 1970–2020

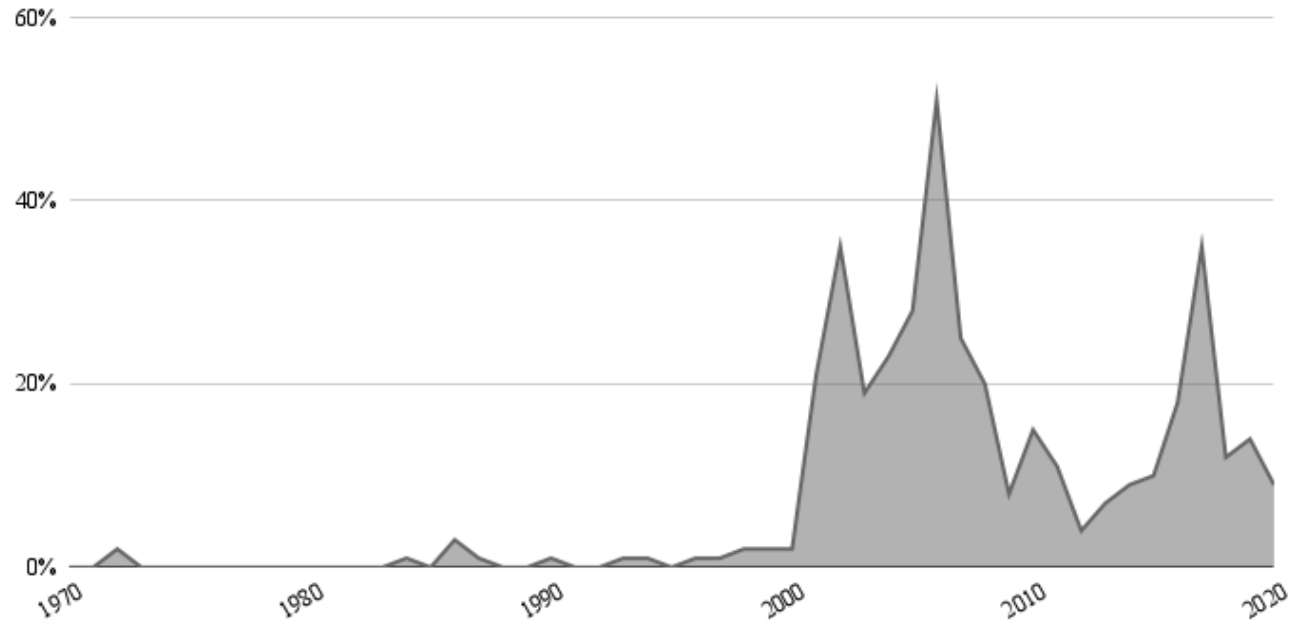
Source: author's own calculation



A key reason behind state support for the expanded role of the UN lies in the evolving understanding of the diverse threats posed by terrorist groups. Before 9/11, states generally avoided explicitly naming these groups in their General Debate speeches, opting instead for more general discussions of terrorism as a tactic. Countries facing terrorism tended to request limited international involvement, fearing impacts on their sovereignty, while others used the platform to denounce alleged state sponsors or condemn specific attacks, reflecting divergent political priorities.

Figure 6: Annual Percentage of States Mentioning a Term Associated with Counterterrorism in the UN General Debate, 1970–2020

Source: author's own calculation



Al Qaeda's attacks, starting with the 1998 bombings and culminating in 9/11, marked a turning point. These events led many states to explicitly address Al Qaeda and its affiliates as transnational threats and to advocate for strengthening the UN's coordinating role. The attacks demonstrated the insufficiency of purely national responses and generated consensus on the need for multilateral cooperation under UN leadership.

Using the Global Terrorism Database (START 2022), this study identified the most active terrorist organizations between 1970 and 2019 and analyzed their mentions in UN speeches. These organizations are listed in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Terrorist Groups Referenced in the UN General Debate, 1970-2020[7]

Terrorist Group	Incidents	Mentions in the General Debate	Number of Countries that Mentioned the Group
Taliban	12,195	404	48
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)	7,161	544	60
Shinning Path	4,564	11	2
Al Shabaab	4,212	95	25
Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN)	3,353	34	14
Boko Haram	3,052	112	39
Irish Republican Army (IRA)	2,882	20	4
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	2,795	31	3
Maoísts	2,669	7	3
Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)	2,594	9	2
Al Qaida	2,407	230	63
Basque Fatherland and Freedom (ETA)	2,124	2	1
National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN)	1,683	16	7
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)	1,606	79	3
Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	1,580	1	1
Hamas	606	177	16
Hezbollah	407	29	15

Groups active before 9/11, such as ETA, IRA, and FMLN, were mentioned infrequently and primarily by the countries affected. For example, Ireland frequently mentioned the IRA, while the United Kingdom did not, reflecting differing political sensitivities. References to the FARC and ELN mainly came from Colombia, with similar patterns for the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, the PKK

7 The number of incidents was collected by the Global Terrorism Database (START, 2022).

in Turkey, and Shining Path in Peru. In contrast, Boko Haram, the Taliban, ISIL, and Al Qaeda were widely mentioned by various countries, reflecting their transnational threat profile and the perception that national-level responses were insufficient. This widespread recognition helped build consensus in favor of a coordinated global response under the UN's auspices, reinforcing the legitimacy of the organization's expanded mandate in counterterrorism.

In sum, dictionary-based textual analysis reveals several reasons explaining the expansion of the UN's role in counterterrorism after 9/11: the rising global relevance of terrorism; its shift in perception as a transnational threat; the increase in mentions of specific terrorist organizations; and the rise of discourse around coordinated counterterrorism efforts under the UN's leadership. However, complementary methods, such as supervised and unsupervised machine learning, could provide additional nuance. Likewise, a more detailed analysis of emblematic attacks from earlier decades—such as the Munich massacre or terrorist acts from the 1980s, could shed further light on the gradual transformation of the UN's role in counterterrorism.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of five decades of speeches at the United Nations General Assembly reveals a clear trajectory: terrorism shifted from a peripheral topic to a central concern that legitimized the expansion of the UN's institutional role in the global fight against terrorism. This change reflects both a transformation in member states' threat perceptions and a growing consensus that terrorism is a collective problem requiring multilateral solutions.

This transformation accelerated dramatically after the September 11 attacks, which dismantled the previous framing of terrorism as primarily a domestic or regional challenge. After 9/11, the Security Council invoked its authority to impose binding obligations, and the General Assembly took on a broader role both normatively and operationally. This culminated in an institutional architecture currently encompassing sanctions regimes, normative strategies, and capacity-building mechanisms designed to foster international cooperation.

However, this evolution was neither automatic nor free of controversy. Initial resistance to expanding the UN's role reflected concerns about sovereignty, political sensitivities, and divergent threat perceptions. For decades, the discourse remained fragmented, shaped by regional conflicts, ideological rivalries, and competing priorities. The gradual legitimation of the UN's counterterrorism efforts depended on shifts in these political dynamics and the development of a shared understanding of terrorism as a threat to international peace and security.

Looking ahead, the challenge is to balance effective counterterrorism action with respect for human rights, the rule of law, and political pluralism. The UN's evolving role must continue to adapt to the changing nature of terrorism and the geopolitical environment, maintaining its legitimacy through inclusion and transparency. The corpus-based approach adopted in this article offers a novel perspective on how member states have collectively framed and legitimized the UN's role over time.

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Article

Valeria Vizcaino, Ana Isabel Carillo and Romina Pérez

Online Radicalization and Recruitment: Islamic State and The Proud Boys Face to Face

Abstract

Despite emerging from radically different ideological, geographical, and cultural contexts, contemporary extremist movements share technological and communicative patterns in their radicalization processes. This study examines the mechanisms by which digital discourses motivate individuals to take action, focusing on two paradigmatic cases: the Islamic State and the Proud Boys. Through a comparative approach, the ideological objectives, audiences, and symbols employed by each group in their digital narratives are analyzed.

By comparatively addressing these tactics, the study highlights that they appeal to feelings of displacement, particularly among young men. Therefore, the study proposes that beyond doctrinal differences, current radicalization is sustained by common discursive dynamics facilitated by the digital ecosystem.

Keywords: radicalization, recruitment, social media, IS, Proud Boys

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1. Introduction

The Internet has been used as a platform from which terrorists not only seek funding or report on the planning and execution of their attacks and actions but has also been employed to spread propaganda, issue "calls" for recruitment, and promote training. This is achieved through statements and videos posted on social media, forums, and encrypted sites to radicalize and recruit new members, including minors.

Contemporary terrorism has migrated to the digital environment, where social media, with 5.17 billion users in 2023 (Statista, 2024), act as powerful weapons to spread hatred, extremism, and disinformation. Terrorist groups, regardless of their ideology, employ similar digital strategies to manipulate narratives, radicalize, and recruit followers, taking advantage of limited regulation. With this in mind, the study hypothesizes that radicalization is not due to an ideological factor exclusive to one group or another. Instead, in this case study, both the Islamic State and the Proud Boys rely on the same digital strategies to generate a collective identity through narratives and symbolism, which facilitate recruitment and subsequently the radicalization and indoctrination of initiates.

To address this hypothesis, a deductive methodology is employed in both case studies to analyze these methods of radicalization and recruitment. As a theoretical foundation, the concepts of "habitus" by Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Ruiz De Elvira, 1998) and "cultural identity" by Hall (Hall & du Gay, 1996) are used to explain ideological formation. In this sense, social media are understood as closed spaces that reinforce extreme ideologies (Tufekci, 2017). Additionally, the definitions of radicalization and recruitment by Neumann and Rogers (2007) are adopted, and a distinction is made between extremist and terrorist groups (Laqueur, 1977; Bötticher, 2017).

Initially, a brief contextualization of the problem and the importance of social media in the recruitment of new members by terrorist groups is presented, along with a brief profile of the two proposed groups. Subsequently, a deeper comparative analysis is conducted. This analysis describes the similarities in the recruitment and radicalization methods of both groups based on the proposed theoretical framework and the information collected and analyzed in the previous section. Finally, the main findings and recommendations for future research are presented.

2. Importance of Social Media in the Context of Terrorism

Social media have emerged as a new element within the terrorist ecosystem, reconfiguring interactions among previously known actors in an unprecedented way. Social media represent multifunctional tools that enable everything from the propagation of ideological discourses to the logistical coordination of attacks. This phenomenon is reflected in the digitization of terrorism, where the virtual and physical realms converge.

From a contemporary perspective, platforms such as Telegram, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and YouTube are not only channels for dissemination but true stages where radical groups project power, intimidate, and recruit followers. According to Flores Sánchez (2007), these platforms offer key advantages for terrorism, as they are low-cost tools with global reach, relative anonymity, and resistance to censorship.

Francisco Agra (2022) explains how cyberspace has blurred the boundaries between ideological indoctrination and criminal execution. This new scenario presents an ideal opportunity to maximize presence, as terrorism empowered by social media no longer requires physical travel or direct contact. A YouTube channel or an Instagram account is sufficient to trigger a radicalization process.

This new reality explicitly began in the 1990s with the use of static websites, evolving into social media and encrypted apps following the Arab Spring and the rise of the Islamic State. Referring to this, Flores Sánchez (2007) notes that the turning point was the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, where "e-terrorism" began to consolidate as a strategy.

The 11-M attacks in Madrid exemplified this initial approach, as the use of digital platforms for logistical planning and ideological justification of attacks was crucial[1]. However, this phenomenon is constantly evolving, moving toward a more decentralized direction focused on self-indoctrination.

The appeal of social media for terrorists lies in their ability to disseminate content virally. This, in turn, poses a challenge for all legal and technical frameworks. Content moderation is insufficient, algorithms amplify extremist discourses, and there is no international consensus for regulation[2]. As a society, we have not demonstrated a reactive capacity equivalent to the evolution of this phenomenon. Supporting this argument, Agra (2022) highlights that legal frameworks still lag behind the speed at which terrorism adapts to the digital environment. Anonymity, encryption, and network fragmentation are key factors that hinder the rapid identification of emerging threats, making it necessary for cybersecurity to combine technological surveillance, legal reforms, and preventive strategies on social media.

1 For example, the French case "Public Ministry vs. Arnaud and others" employed investigative methods such as physical surveillance, forensic analysis, and digital surveillance. In this context, Arnaud, alias "Abdallah," incited jihad and used tools like Pretty Good Privacy (PGP) and WinZip to encrypt communications and protect sensitive files. For instance, PGP offered highly secure asymmetric encryption, while WinZip allowed for compressing and password-protecting documents. These technologies complicate access to evidence. The inciting phrase "hurry to seek martyrdom as soon as possible" was key in linking him to planned acts and justifying his conviction (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013, pp. 57–65).

2 Some digital platforms were pioneers in the dissemination of digital terrorism in the first decade of the 21st century. The vast majority of these platforms have since been blocked or rendered obsolete. Examples include Al Neda, which began operating in 2001 and was a key Al Qaeda site for disseminating propaganda, videos, and instructions. A similar case is Maalemajihad.com, which peaked in 2000, had a short lifespan, and focused on the ideological and tactical training of new members. Another case is Ogrish.com, used between 2000 and 2006. Although not specifically jihadist, it was employed to spread extremely violent videos of attacks and executions (Gutiérrez Gutiérrez, 2012).

3. Jihadist Radicalization and Recruitment Tactics on Social Media

3.1. Objective, Structure, Motivation, and Presence of the Group

The Islamic State (IS) is one of the most powerful and extensive terrorist organizations in history. At its peak, it controlled approximately 60% of Syrian territory and 40% of Iraqi territory, allowing it to exert significant dominance over both societies. Since the proclamation of its caliphate in 2014, it operated as a parallel state, wielding greater authority than the legitimate governments in the region (Speckhard & Ellenberg, 2020).

Economically, IS established itself as a powerful actor on the international stage. Its main sources of funding included bank robberies, kidnappings, illegal oil trafficking, sexual slavery, and other illicit activities. Additionally, the group radically implemented Islamic law or "Sharia," leading to numerous human rights violations, particularly against women and minors, who were frequently exploited or enslaved under religious justifications (Speckhard & Ellenberg, 2020).

In the cultural sphere, IS also caused devastation. It profited from the illegal sale of valuable archaeological artifacts while simultaneously destroying historical heritage to reinforce its ideological narrative. These actions served a dual purpose: financing operations and using destruction as propaganda to attract followers, demonstrate power, and promote rejection of religions or identities deemed "infidel". These practices aim to eliminate any distinct cultural or religious forms, making them a form of symbolic and cultural terrorism (Terrill, 2017).

Regarding its structure, this terrorist organization has operated in a decentralized manner, building a "bureaucracy" somewhat akin to a federal state, with a unifying central command that controls all its regional branches or offices. These branches operate almost autonomously, managing their own operations and finances, allowing the group to adapt more easily to different sociocultural contexts (Al-Azhar Observer, 2023).

3.2. Main Recruitment Channels

The recruitment methods of new members in this organization have evolved alongside the digital society we live in today, though the essence of their methods has remained consistent:

1. Recruitment of followers at a young age, attracting children or adolescents to teach extremist ideas from a young age.
2. Radicalization in prisons, spreading their ideology in correctional facilities to persuade inmates to join their violent cause.
3. Exploitation of social media, using the internet to disseminate propaganda, recruit, and coordinate attacks easily.

Today, following the dismantling of the IS caliphate, which left devastated cities such as Mosul (BBC Mundo, 2017) and the Syrian cities of Raqqa and Aleppo (Luizard, 2015), there has been a shift toward a digital caliphate or "cybercaliphate". The main recruitment networks now rely on widely used social media platforms such as YouTube, Telegram, Instagram, and Twitter, as well as less common platforms like Twitch, to expand their dominance and presence without borders (Las Heras, 2022).

3.3. Audiovisual Discourse: Narrative, Symbolism, and Target Audience

Today, any ideology requires an audiovisual discourse to attract more people to its ranks, especially when it involves religion and narratives of otherness, in this case, the West. Therefore, IS's discourse combines images of social harmony with extreme scenes of violence, creating a radical contradiction. It presents an ideal society under the caliphate while showcasing brutal executions and tortures, masking its religious-nationalist delusion under a narrative of order and unattainable social perfection in a globalized and multicultural world. Ultimately, the visual appeal relies on displaying physical suffering as the ultimate proof of power and faith in action (González, 2017).

As a terrorist organization, IS has been characterized since its inception as an extremely violent and grotesque group that openly displays all its violent acts and attacks, using audiovisual content as a global weapon and showcasing executions with a media aesthetic to sow terror. It is an organization that does not hide its crimes but, on the contrary, turns them into a spectacle, successfully merging violence, faith, and power into a normalized communicative strategy (González, 2017).

Its propaganda in the West primarily targets young people disconnected from their family context, emotionally vulnerable, and searching for identity, as its discourse portrays the Muslim world as a victim. It rejects the Western order and offers meaning, belonging, and prestige through closed indoctrination, group control, and a vision of the impending final judgment. This creates an urgency to redeem oneself before Allah, as the "true believers" will be saved and the "infidels" destroyed, justifying violence as part of an inevitable divine plan—a narrative legitimized by a fundamentalist and intolerant ideology toward otherness (Romero Ramírez & Durán Rodríguez, 2010).

4. Far-Right Radicalization and Recruitment Tactics on Social Media

4.1. Objective, Structure, Motivation, and Presence of the Group

Within the spectrum of contemporary extremism, The Proud Boys represent a clear manifestation of the rise of the far-right through nationalist symbols, supremacist discourses, and an aggressive defense of traditional masculine identity. Founded in 2016 by Canadian commentator Gavin McInnes, The Proud Boys are classified by the FBI as a neo-fascist far-right group, notably known for their participation in the January 6, 2021, assault on the U.S. Capitol (Bailard et al., 2024:2057-2056).

The group identifies as "Western chauvinists who refuse to apologize for creating the modern world" (Kutner, 2020:5). While they do not self-identify as part of the alt-right, Kutner (2020)

demonstrates the presence of cryptofascist symbols, white supremacist imagery, and affinity for racist, misogynistic, and homophobic viewpoints in the group's ideology—key elements of the alt-right (Kutner, 2020:5). Under the motto "The West is Best," the group's objective is to restore a white, Christian, American Western culture that reaffirms the dominant role of white men in society.

Although the group's official structure is unknown, a hierarchy within The Proud Boys can be inferred, with levels of "membership" that outline the path from recruitment to radicalization within the group (DeCook, 2018, p.488; Kutner, 2020:4-5).

4.2. Main Recruitment Channels

Since their inception, The Proud Boys have used various social media platforms for both internal and external communication, serving as a key tool for crucial activities ranging from recruiting new members to planning events and spreading their ideology (Bailard et al., 2024:2058).

From 2016 to 2018, The Proud Boys leveraged major social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to their advantage. However, in 2018, these platforms removed the group's main accounts, including that of its founder (Linton, 2018). This event solidified Instagram as the group's primary platform while prompting a migration to platforms like Truth Social and Parler for recruiting potential members and Telegram for encrypted internal communication (Kelly, 2024, p.4; Bailard et al., 2024:2058).

4.3. Audiovisual Discourse: Narrative, Symbolism, and Target Audience

Through these platforms, the group seeks to attract a specific profile of recruits with "a defined list of identities: white, libertarian, anti-feminist, and anti-modern" (Kelly, 2024:9). The group targets young, marginalized men who express a perception of losing their "rightful social place" due to the prominence of progressive ideologies.

According to various studies (DeCook, 2018; Kelly, 2024; Kutner, 2020), The Proud Boys have built a provocative identity through the use of narrative and audiovisual tools to create shared symbolism among group members. These include memes, the "red pill" metaphor, conspiracy theories, and the use and display of uniforms and tattoos. Memes are particularly key to the recruitment process.

DeCook (2018) highlights that memes "have become a means to spread propaganda, [being] small fragments of political and cultural ideology that are easily digestible" (DeCook, 2018:485). In this regard, The Proud Boys have become adept at using and crafting memes for recruitment and indoctrination. The main characteristics of these memes include the use of the mantra "The West is the Best" and symbols traditionally associated with American masculinity, such as Uncle Sam and Jack Daniel's whiskey (DeCook, 2018:491-492).

In addition to this visual symbolism, the content of the memes reinforces the group's main narratives of supremacy and justification[3]. These memes foster The Proud Boys' determination to return to a purely Western, white, and Christian society, far from current multiculturalism (DeCook, 2018, p.500). While they may seem like harmless posts, these memes conceal a powerful form of subconscious and invisible propaganda that reinforces the group's extremist ideology.

The "red pill" metaphor is another critical narrative tool that The Proud Boys consistently employ to recruit new members. Inspired by The Matrix (1999), this image suggests that a simulation caused by progressive ideologies must be awakened from to restore Western order and values in society (Kelly, 2024:6). This conspiracy theory appeals to precarity, uncertainty, and social exclusion—key factors and sentiments that The Proud Boys capitalize on for recruitment (Kutner, 2020, p.6). This, in turn, allows the group to construct a new conception of reality based on "precarity as a white, working-class American man at risk of losing his place in society" (Kutner, 2020:6). This discourse serves as a dual tool, facilitating recruitment and justifying the extremist actions that arise from it.

5. Comparative Analysis: Similarities and Differences

Below is the comparative analysis between the Islamic State and The Proud Boys. The elements compared include each group's motivation and objectives, narrative, target audience, and the symbolism they use or rely on to carry out their actions. For visual purposes, the comparison is presented in Figure 1, with the main findings detailed subsequently.

Element	Islamic State	The Proud Boys
Motivation/Objectives	Seeks to impose a global Islamic caliphate through violence, propaganda, and territorial control, funded by illicit activities. Enforced Sharia, destroyed heritage, and subjugated populations to consolidate power.	Aims to restore a white, Christian Western culture, reaffirming the dominant role of white men through nationalism, violence, and rejection of diversity and progressive ideologies.
Narrative	Combines extreme violence with divine promises, portraying an ideal caliphate against a corrupt world. Attracts vulnerable youth by offering identity and redemption through jihad.	Promotes an anti-feminist, anti-modern, and supremacist vision where white men must "awaken" from progressive deception to restore Western, Christian, and traditional order.
Recruitment Channels and Target Audience	Recruits vulnerable youth through social media, prisons, and child indoctrination. Spreads digital propaganda and promises identity and redemption through violence supported by a radical jihadist ideology.	Recruits primarily through social media platforms like Instagram, Truth Social, Parler, and Telegram. These platforms facilitate the spread of their ideology and recruitment of members, especially young men lacking identity and purpose.
Symbolism	Blends violence, faith, and power in striking images. Uses brutality and an ideal order to terrorize and indoctrinate, portraying physical suffering as proof of faith and dominance.	Includes memes, uniforms, and the "red pill," representing "awakening" from progressive deception, exalting masculinity, white supremacy, and traditional Western values.

Figure 1. *Comparative Table: ISIS vs. Proud Boys. Source: Authors' elaboration.*

3 For example, one of the posts presented by DeCook (2018) features the following text: "- Dad, why are there no Muslims in Star Trek? - Because it's the future, son".

Regarding the motivations of both groups, there is a stark difference, as while both are tied to societal identity, the Islamic State seeks to build a purely Sunni Islamic state from scratch. In contrast, The Proud Boys aim to defend and reinstate a Western culture where cisgender white men dominate, subjugating other social factions through violence.

Secondly, the narrative is an area where both groups converge to some extent, as they target young men lacking a sense of belonging or solid identity. However, a key difference is that IS accepts women in its ranks, giving them a somewhat prominent role, while The Proud Boys have no place for women.

The narrative of both groups undoubtedly promotes an ideology deemed "the best for society" within their respective contexts. Thus, IS promotes jihad as the only path for human redemption before Allah to reach paradise. Meanwhile, The Proud Boys' narrative posits that returning to an anti-modern, anti-feminist, and androcentric society is the way to preserve the pillars of American society and restore traditional Christian order.

Finally, regarding symbolism, ISIS focuses on perfectly blending violence with faith through traumatic imagery, such as videos of terrorist attacks, public executions of "infidels," or acts of slavery. These are justified as actions taken in defense of Islam and its ideals for Allah, ensuring redemption and paradise. In contrast, The Proud Boys focus on creating visual content where masculinity, traditional Christian values, and white supremacy are the protagonists, primarily using the soft power of communicative resources.

6. Conclusion

This research, based on the analysis conducted and the comparative study presented, has demonstrated that, despite ideological, cultural, and geographical differences, both the Islamic State and The Proud Boys share relatively similar narrative, communicative, and technological patterns in their digital recruitment and radicalization processes. One of the main findings is the target audience they seek to recruit. Both groups exploit the identity crises of young people, particularly those who feel marginalized or silenced within their current socio-political context. They use discourses that promise meaning, belonging, and a transcendent cause, as well as a digital community space with others who share their conception of reality. While differences in ideology, symbols, objectives, and platforms are acknowledged, both IS and The Proud Boys have adeptly exploited the use of narratives, carefully constructed symbolism, and key audiovisual strategies, such as memes or videos, to achieve their objectives.

The comparative analysis demonstrates the acceptance of the study's main hypothesis: radicalization and recruitment go beyond ideological content. The effectiveness of both groups in recruitment relies on their ability to instrumentalize the digital environment, generating a sense of belonging and creating a unique habitus for each group. This facilitates the indoctrination process and supports physical manifestations of violence in favor of the group.

Based on the findings, several future research directions can be proposed. First, it is recommended to deepen the generation of primary evidence of both groups' narratives through techniques such as digital ethnography. Second, extend the comparative analysis to other groups within the same categories or conduct the same exercise with other types of groups, such as those on the far-left. Third, explore the role of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, examining their future implications and potential risks. Finally, further research and development of legal and regulatory frameworks for extremist and hate speech are recommended, as these, as demonstrated, employ sophisticated narrative tactics that evade current restrictions.

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Article

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Investigative Perspective on Cyberterrorism from a Contextual Analysis

Abstract

Cyberterrorism is a phenomenon that must be addressed from different angles. Although it originates in the digital environment, this does not mean that its scope and impact are restricted solely to this context, as the repercussions are direct and palpable in the physical world. We will analyze cyberterrorism from an impact perspective, profiling and contextualizing everything that cyberterrorists encompass, some of their modus operandi and historical cases of impact, as well as the visions and nuances left in each action. Having a broader overview and emphasizing the constant evolution of this phenomenon, as well as the importance of a multidisciplinary approach based on cybersecurity, giving due importance to international cooperation in legislation and digital education to mitigate its effects and strengthen human and digital resilience in the face of various emerging threats, which are advancing by leaps and bounds, therefore, the analysis of the context and adaptation of cyberterrorists is essential, without losing the historical heritage that deserves a point of comparison to achieve a better and greater understanding.

Keywords: Cyberterrorism, Profiling, Analysis, Context, Mexico

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1. Introduction

It suffices to turn to the internet to find a universe of information in which it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between legitimate contents and things that seem taken from a science fiction novel. The internet arrived disruptively as a technology that achieved positioning as a tool for immediate and expeditious communication, reigning far and wide across the world, allowing contact between people regardless of borders or geographical barriers, ideologies, genders, thoughts. Today, the internet is the key point in the functioning at different social scales.

From the aforementioned premise, we can proceed to various analyses of cybercriminal behaviors, from legal and technical-informatics perspectives, which are addressed abundantly. However, a bifurcation that branches into social and psycho-criminological perspectives on the topic relating to this quadrant of characteristics related to cyberterrorism is overlooked.

In this article, we will analyze what could be the background or context in cyberterrorism, based on a criminological profiling, as well as its comparison with other branches related to cybersecurity and cybercriminality.

Among the multiple advantages of internet use are from scientific advances to the exploitation that terrorist groups around the world manage to have to achieve positioning in their cause. In this sense, the needs faced by security forces, citizenship, companies, and users in general require an approach to analysis on the context to achieve a better and greater understanding in favor of prevention.

It is worth highlighting that terrorism in its different modalities is present in all countries, in some cases more marked and visible than in others, and for that, it suffices to make a catharsis of the historical facts in regions around the world, which are clear examples of how technology and the internet become the main points of convergence for social control. From here is where we need to glimpse the contextual considerations directly related to cyberterrorism and thus leave a precedent.

2. Understanding Cyberterrorism

Cyberterrorism corresponds to a complex that implies the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to carry out attacks under a technological premise, intended to cause, instill fear, panic, and derived damages on a worldwide level, since the internet knows no borders. However, many times it is achieved within a demarcation or geographical region nuanced by prevailing political and social situations. The contrasts in cyberterrorism are notable in terms of motivations, ideology, methods, impact, and direct consequences, as well as collateral ones. Below, we will mention some historical cases and more recent examples to illustrate these contrasts:

- Attacks on Estonia in 2007: A series of cyberattacks paralyzed Estonia's governmental, financial, and media services. These attacks were attributed to Russia and are believed to have been related to a political dispute over a monument in Tallinn. The attacks highlighted the vulnerability of the country's digital infrastructures and the way in which geopolitical conflicts

could escalate in the digital realm as well.

- Operation Aurora in 2009: This cyberattack was attributed to China and targeted numerous technology companies and national security defense firms. It is believed that the purpose behind this attack was cyber espionage, theft of intellectual property, and thereby the revelation of trade secrets, which highlighted how states could use cyberterrorism for economic, strategic, and positioning purposes.

- Stuxnet in 2010: The Stuxnet malware was discovered in 2010 and is believed to have been developed by governments of Western countries to sabotage an Iranian nuclear plant. This case demonstrated how states could use cyberterrorism as a tool to halt the development of nuclear weapons in other countries, opening a debate on the ethical and legal implications of the use of digital tools (Buxton, 2022).

- Attacks on the power grid in Ukraine: In 2015 and 2016, Ukraine suffered a series of cyberattacks that left entire regions without electricity for hours[1]. These attacks were considered a clear example of how cyberterrorism could have a direct impact on a country's critical infrastructure, causing massive interruptions in public services (CCDCOE, s.f.).

On the other hand, more recently, we can list some of the attacks in which the use of digital tools is nuanced through terror and social control:

- Use of ransomware[2]: In the last decade, ransomware attacks have increased significantly. Criminal groups use malware[3] to encrypt their victims' systems and demand a ransom in exchange for the decryption key. Notable examples include the attack on the Colonial Pipeline company in the United States in 2021, which affected fuel supply in several regions of the country. These attacks highlight how non-state actors can cause large-scale havoc with primarily financial motivations (Easterly, 2023).

- Operations between nations and disinformation: Some countries engage in cyber operations to influence public opinion and destabilize other governments. The case of the alleged Russian interference in the United States presidential elections in 2016 and 2020 is a prominent example of how cyberterrorism can be used to undermine confidence in democratic systems and undermine political stability.

- Advanced Persistent Threats (APT) from China: China has been accused of conducting sustained and highly sophisticated cyberattacks against government, military, and corporate

1 This event was also known as the "Blackout".

2 "Ransomware is a type of malware that holds a victim's sensitive data or device hostage, threatening to keep it locked, or worse, unless the victim pays a ransom to the attacker" (Kosinski, s.f., para. 1).

3 "Malware is a term that encompasses any type of malicious software designed to harm or exploit any programmable device, service, or network. Cybercriminals typically use it to extract data that they can use as blackmail against victims for financial gain. Such data can range from financial information to medical records, personal emails, and passwords. The variety of information that can be compromised has become limitless" (McAfee, s.f., para. 1).

targets worldwide. These attacks are usually aimed at obtaining strategic and technological information for the benefit of the state. Examples include the theft of information related to the development of stealth fighters and advanced military technology (America's Cyber Defense Agency, s.f.).

- Emerging AI threats: As artificial intelligence advances, concerns arise about how it could be used in cyberattacks. From the development of more intelligent malware to the automation of targeted attacks, the integration of AI in cyberterrorism could significantly increase the scope and effectiveness of attacks.

The technological partnership that we must understand first is the one achieved between technology and psychosocial impact factors, at the time of bringing to reality, subsequent to the digital plane, all those palpable affections that leave a mark.

Technological evolution is not an isolated fact; it is a point exploited by terrorism to magnify its impacts and simplify its efforts.

3. Human Factor

Within cyberterrorism, we must recognize that not everything is purely digital when involving tools developed to achieve a purpose, since behind it there is a human or group of humans in charge of handling the technology. Some examples of this type of actions are the following:

- Activism and hacktivism: Hacktivist groups, such as Anonymous or Guacamaya, have carried out cyberattacks to promote social and political causes. These groups often attack websites and online platforms to spread messages and expose sensitive information. While their motivations may be driven by ideals, their methods can cause collateral damage and generate debates about the limits of digital protest.

- Extremist groups: Some terrorist groups years ago began to use cyberspace as a tool for recruitment, propaganda, and coordination. The Islamic State, for example, has used social networks and online platforms to recruit followers and spread its ideology. Although these groups may not have the technical capacity to carry out sophisticated cyberattacks, their online presence remains a major concern in terms of radicalization and destabilization[4].

- Cyber warfare: Tensions between states can manifest in the form of cyber espionage and high-level cyberattacks. With the above, we can see bodies of cyber soldiers prepared for cyber warfare, something that has been reflected in the Russia-Ukraine war conflict, where a large number of digital operations of scale and impact have been deployed with real damages in the nations from 2022 to date, still with latent consequences.

4 Other groups that can be mentioned in this regard are war groups such as the FARC in South America and drug trafficking groups in Mexico.

Ultimately, cyberterrorism continues to evolve and present a wide range of challenges in terms of security and cybersecurity, allied to other issues such as diplomacy, ethics, and legislation. The international community must collaborate to develop effective prevention and response strategies to address this constantly changing threat, not only from digital issues but toward a human factor that allows knowing the context in favor of prevention.

Cyberterrorism is present with nuances of diverse and varied impact, with that we can mention some clear examples for the understanding of the degree of damage that could be reflected in the material world. Under the aforementioned premise, it is worth emphasizing awareness for users by allowing them to know that although something is gestated in cyberspace or through technologies and at first is not tangible, it can have irreversible consequences in the real world, in the tangible world. Therefore, below, the impacts on different scales are described in more detail:

Social impact. One of the main factors that cyberterrorism relies on, which is related to its name, is fear and panic. Many cyberattacks, technically or digital attacks using platforms, can generate sensations of fear in the population, since the interruption of essential services or the exposure of sensitive data can undermine confidence in the institutions and systems we depend on for our daily lives.

In recent years, we even see a new factor, control through fear, since it is not necessary to resort to sophisticated tools, perhaps a publication that seems real or is real (depending on the context) can generate entire populations fearing to leave their homes. This is how it happens with the case of drug trafficking in Mexico, where through social media platforms messages with photographs taken from public squares are disseminated so that the population feels fear (Contreras, 2023).

Attacks gestated through cyberterrorism on a large scale can erode confidence in the government, companies, institutions. The perceived lack of security in cyberspace can have lasting effects on public confidence, attracting distrust that deteriorates the social fabric. The above can even be used as tools to influence political processes and undermine government stability[5]. The dissemination of false information, election manipulation, and the exposure of compromising information can have a direct impact on internal politics and international relations.

Digital impact. Attacks targeted at critical infrastructures, such as power grids, water systems, nuclear, telecommunications, and health services, can cause significant damages. The interruption of these essential services can have devastating effects on people's lives and a country's economy. Some collateral damages can result in the loss of personal, financial, and business data. This can lead to financial exploitation, identity usurpation or impersonation, and the exposure of industrial secrets, which can have long-term consequences for the affected individuals and organizations.

Attacks diversify into significant economic losses for nations and companies in particular. Likewise, the interruption of commercial operations, the degradation of a company's reputation, and recovery costs can have a negative impact on the economy in general. For cyber espionage tasks, it is usual for cyberterrorists to focus on sensitive and at the same time strategic information.

5 As previously mentioned, the latest elections in the United States are an example of this.

Global scale impact. Cyberterrorism with its direct and collateral consequences contributes directly to global destabilization, with attacks that can exacerbate international tensions and lead to diplomatic or even military conflicts. Viewed from another perspective, when the actors are countries, cyberterrorism can be used as a tool to influence international relations. Cyberattacks between nations can generate tensions and alter geopolitical dynamics, leading to armed conflicts.

Cyberterrorism highlights the importance of international cooperation in cybersecurity matters. The global community must establish norms and agreements to address the unique challenges presented by it and promote a safer cyberspace. Although the latter seems like a utopia, efforts are required to achieve a first firm step between nations.

As we have said, there are various nuances and approaches to impact, from the social and political to the economic or the digital aspect. These impacts can be profound and lasting, affecting both individuals and entire nations. The prevention and mitigation of cyberterrorism require a coordinated global response and a multidisciplinary approach.

4. Digital Terror

When speaking of fear or terror, we must mention cyberterrorism, its present and existing context behind it, to thus proceed to a post-analysis understanding.

Digital terror is a strategy used in cyberterrorism to manipulate and spread fear, disinformation, and propaganda through digital media with the objective of achieving various goals, such as radicalization, mobilization of followers, and social destabilization. This tactic has become increasingly effective due to the omnipresence of technology and global interconnection through the Internet and social networks. Below, we will mention some of the strategies used as points of impact.

4.1. Media Manipulation

Cyberterrorist groups can use digital media to spread false information and disinformation with the purpose of sowing chaos, undermining confidence in institutions, and disseminating their extremist ideology. They can leverage social media platforms, fake websites, and online forums to spread their narrative and thus incentivize some to join their cause and others not to take action out of fear. Narratives are often constructed that exploit sensitive and controversial topics, such as religion, politics, and discrimination. These narratives are used to attract vulnerable individuals and manipulate their emotions, which can lead to radicalization and that tendency to nuance it in an act that impacts the material world (Waldmann, 2010).

In a radicalization process, the creation of an identity is sought, and for that, social networks and other digital media can be used to create that online belonging that converges with individuals seeking to belong to something bigger than themselves. This can lead to greater participation with more radical entities. In this sense, we arrive at an aspect of analysis for the construction of the cyberterrorist context: the sum of people to a cause makes that same one remain present and current.

Here lies the importance for which cyberterrorist groups continually seek people or digital media and tools on which to rely, such as the following.

Social media platforms. They offer an effective platform for cyberterrorists to recruit new members. They can use anonymous or fake profiles to contact and radicalize individuals online, offering distorted information and creating a sense of community (Cyber Zaintza, s.f.).

Multimedia content. The use of impactful multimedia content, such as propaganda videos, graphic images, and extremist speeches, can have a powerful effect in attracting new adherents. These materials can be designed to appeal to emotions and foster adherence to the terrorist cause.

Social engineering techniques. Cyberterrorists can use social engineering techniques to psychologically manipulate people and make them perform actions they would normally not do. This can include persuasion to join extremist groups, participate in illegal activities, or carry out attacks.

Video games. The use of video games as a medium to recruit adherents for cyberterrorism is a concerning phenomenon that has gained attention in recent years. Although not all video games are associated with cyberterrorism, some extremist groups have leveraged these interactive platforms to attract young and vulnerable individuals toward their agendas. Within video games, cyberterrorists can introduce propaganda, either through in-game messages, images, or even videos. This propaganda can promote extremist ideologies, glorify acts of violence, or present distorted narratives.

4.2. Destabilization and Social Chaos

From the terror effect we arrive at the chaos effect, in the mere style of philosophical narrative in which devastation becomes present, playing a key role in destabilization, which is the sum of the aforementioned factors.

By spreading messages of hate, polarization, and discrimination, cyberterrorists can contribute to social and ethnic division. These messages can provoke internal conflicts and weaken social cohesion. We have seen throughout history uprisings in favor of social causes to overthrow regimes (Khader, 2012) and other cases where they manage to destabilize societies.

For this latter assumption, online platforms can be used to coordinate physical or digital attacks. This can include the planning of terrorist attacks, cyberattacks, or the fomenting of riots and violent protests.

Terror as part of digital in cyberterrorism is a multifaceted strategy that seeks to influence public opinion, radicalize individuals, and destabilize society using digital media and social networks. The speed and breadth of online communication make this tactic powerful and challenging to counter, and it underscores the importance of digital education and cybersecurity.

5. Analysis and Context

Context analysis is fundamental in understanding and preventing cyberterrorism. To address this topic, it is necessary to consider both the units or elements involved in the analysis as well as the profiling techniques and methods used to identify potential threats, with the aim of having a prevention parameter before it nuances into an irreversible material result.

For the above, a multidisciplinary approach is needed, as we mentioned at the beginning, to be able to identify and discern, among others, cyber threats, motivations, techniques and tools, or vulnerabilities. All of them we will discuss below.

When we speak of cyber threats we refer to the activities and actors that represent a threat to cybersecurity. This includes individuals, groups, organizations, and states that seek to carry out cyberattacks with malicious purposes, in this case cyberterrorists. As for motivations, understanding those existing behind cyberattacks is crucial to identify the actors and their objectives. Their ends can be political, economic, ideological, or simply malicious. On the other hand, analyzing the techniques and tools used in cyberattacks can provide information on the sophistication of the actors and their level of technical knowledge. Finally, identifying vulnerabilities in systems and networks is essential to prevent cyberattacks. This implies understanding the potential weaknesses that could be exploited by malicious actors, this on a somewhat more technical scale but applicable to the context.

6. Profiling in Cyberterrorism

Profiling[6] in cyberterrorism implies the creation of profiles of the actors involved and their characteristics. This is done with the objective of identifying patterns, behaviors, and motivations that can help prevent or mitigate attacks. In this sense, in 2019 the researchers Macdonald, Jarvis, and Lavis. In their study: "Cyberterrorism Today? Findings from a follow-on survey of researchers", reinforce the relevance of analyzing the ideological and behavioral components within cyberterrorism. Based on a survey conducted with specialists in 2017, the authors show a growing consensus around certain essential traits of this phenomenon: political or ideological motivation, the use of digital media as an instrument or target, and the generation of fear in society as the main effect. Likewise, the researchers foresee that the threat of cyberterrorism is perceived as increasing and that different actors (including States and terrorist organizations) may be involved. In response, they highlight the need for preventive measures, such as strengthening infrastructures, international cooperation, and cybersecurity education, rather than resorting to exceptional or drastic responses (Macdonald, Jarvis & Lavis, 2019).

Likewise, we find this terminology in similar digital sections (AT Internet, s.f.). Some key aspects of profiling for the cyberterrorist are:

6 "Vicente Garrido defines criminal or criminological profiling as the discipline of forensic science that deals with analyzing behavioral traces at a crime scene to provide useful information to the police for the capture of an unknown offender" (Garrido, 2012, p. 11).

Demographic characteristics. This includes factors such as the age, nationality, education, and gender of the individuals involved. These aspects can provide clues about their possible motivations and social environment.

Technical skills. Evaluating the technical skills of the actors is crucial to understanding their level of experience and the type of threats they may pose.

History of activities. Analyzing the online activity history can reveal behavioral patterns and preferences. This can help identify if an individual is involved in suspicious or extremist activities.

Communications and contacts. Examining online communications and contacts can provide information on the networks and groups in which an individual is involved. This is fundamental for tracking possible collaborations and associations.

Language analysis. The evaluation of the language used in online publications can provide clues about the individuals' ideological beliefs and intentions. This includes the use of extremist terms, hate speech, and violent rhetoric.

Connection patterns. Identifying patterns of connections between individuals and groups online can reveal networks and alliances in cyberspace. This is essential for tracking the spread of ideas and collaboration in extremist activities.

Multimedia content analysis. Examining images and videos shared online can reveal extremist symbology, glorification of violence, or evidence of illicit activities.

Reconnaissance techniques. Cyberterrorists can carry out online reconnaissance techniques to identify potential targets. This can include gathering information on critical infrastructures or key individuals.

Group behavior analysis. Observing how groups interact online can help understand how extremist ideologies are spread, how members are mobilized, and how activities are planned.

Within all the methodology to be implemented during and after the construction of a profiling for the cyberterrorist, we can mention some techniques to consider within the context analysis process, among which we find:

Dark web monitoring. Many extremist and cyberterrorist activities occur in the "dark web"[7]. Monitoring these spaces can provide valuable information on the planning and execution of attacks.

Cyber intelligence. Involves the collection and analysis of data related to cyber threats. This can include monitoring online forums, social networks, and encrypted communications.

7 The "Dark Web" is a part of the Internet that is not indexed by traditional search engines and requires specialized browsers, such as Tor, to access it. It is characterized by the anonymity of its users, making it a space where both legitimate and illegal activities can take place.

Behavior analysis. Observing online behavior patterns can help identify suspicious or unusual activities that could be related to cyberterrorism.

Trend analysis. Identifying emerging trends in cyberterrorism, such as new types of attacks or techniques, is crucial to be prepared and develop prevention strategies.

Threat analysis. Involves evaluating the severity and probability of specific cyber threats. This helps prioritize resources and security measures.

Geopolitical context. Understanding the geopolitical context is essential, as international tensions and conflicts can have an impact on the motivations and activities of cyber actors.

Open and closed intelligence. Open intelligence involves the use of public sources, such as social networks and websites, to collect information. Closed intelligence is based on classified or exclusive information from government or corporate sources.

Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) Analysis. APTs are high-level and persistent attacks. APT analysis involves tracking attack patterns over time and understanding the techniques, tactics, and procedures used by the actors to identify their objectives and motivations.

Social network analysis. Social network analysis involves monitoring online platforms to identify the spread of extremist content, interaction between individuals, and the formation of communities in digital environments.

Likewise, contributions such as that of Jiménez Serrano (2012) in the Practical Manual of Criminological Profiling or Miranda Díaz (2017) "Introduction to Criminal Profiling. Criminological Criminalistic Vision", are useful to transfer the line of profiling analysis to the digital realm. The authors explain that the criminological profile is built from the identification of stable characteristics and repetitive behavioral patterns, considering elements such as modus operandi, the offender's signature, criminal geography, and victimology, which allow inferring motivations, behaviors, and probable future scenarios.

Although mainly the manual by Jiménez Serrano focuses on the traditional forensic and police realm, its methodology can be applied to cyberterrorism, where the "crime scene" translates as the digital environment; the modus operandi into attack techniques (such as those already mentioned as examples like malware, ransomware, APT, among others) or dissemination of propaganda; the geography into the virtual location of forums and networks; and finally the victimology into the selection of strategic targets (individuals, states, organizations, databases, to mention some). Thus, just as in the physical realm, digital profiling allows orienting investigations toward a more preventive than reactive approach, anticipating risks and recognizing ideological and behavioral patterns of extremist actors in digital environments. In summary, context analysis becomes a critical tool for understanding and preventing cyberterrorism. Profiling and analysis methods allow identifying patterns and behaviors that may be indicative of potential threats. This is essential for taking proactive

measures and protecting security at different scales, at the individual, business, and national level.

Collaboration between security agencies, international organizations, companies, and civil society is crucial to combat cyberterrorism. Prevention is based on sharing information, developing robust security policies, educating about online risks, and promoting a safe digital environment.

7. Conclusions

In summary, context analysis in cyberterrorism is based on the collection and analysis of information to understand cyber threats and the motivations behind them. Profiling and analysis methods help identify patterns, behaviors, and activities that could indicate the presence of malicious actors. Cooperation and prevention are essential to address this constantly evolving threat.

A critical need is to educate and raise awareness in society about digital threats and cyberterrorism. People must understand how to recognize signs of online radicalization, how to protect their information, and how to report suspicious activities. For their part, government agencies, companies, academic institutions, and international organizations must collaborate to share information and resources. Cooperation between sectors can help prevent cyberattacks and counter cyberterrorism.

As cyberterrorism tactics evolve, constantly innovative cybersecurity solutions are needed. This includes the development of advanced detection and prevention technologies, as well as the promotion of good practices in the design of secure systems. In this sense, governments must establish clear legal and policy frameworks to address cyberterrorism and punish the guilty. This implies the precise definition of cybercrimes and international collaboration in the prosecution of cybercriminals.

Balancing online privacy and security is a challenge. Considerations on data collection, surveillance, and access to personal information must be handled carefully to avoid abuses and vulnerabilities. The internet and cyberspace have brought both advantages and challenges, including cyberterrorism. The evolution of technology has allowed malicious actors to use cyberspace to spread fear, disinformation, and violence.

Cyberterrorism is a complex phenomenon that encompasses a wide range of actors, motivations, and techniques. The contrasts in terms of methods and objectives have created a diverse and constantly evolving landscape. Likewise, media manipulation and digital terror are tactics used by cyberterrorists to radicalize, recruit, and destabilize through digital media. Social networks and video games have become channels to spread extremist ideologies.

Ultimately, cyberterrorism presents a global challenge that requires a coordinated response at the international level. Cybersecurity, legislation, and education become essential pillars to maintain the balance between online freedom and protection against cyber threats.

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Article

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The Discourse of Fear: Turning Cartels into Terrorists

Abstract

This article analyzes how the figure of the Mexican has been constructed as an enemy within U.S. political and media discourse, using a qualitative methodology with a historical-comparative approach. Stanley Cohen's theoretical framework of "moral panics" helps explain how the creation of enemies has historically served to justify the implementation of control policies. The image of the Mexican has evolved from cheap labor to illegal immigrant, drug trafficker, and ultimately, potential terrorist. Media outlets have amplified this threat through stereotypes, while political discourse, especially during Donald Trump's presidency, has reinforced stigmatization by linking immigration with crime and terrorism. This has led to measures such as the designation of Mexican cartels as terrorist organizations. Through the analysis of political speeches, media coverage, and academic sources, the article concludes that fear has been instrumentalized to shape a national identity defined in opposition to the Mexican "other," affecting their perception in the American collective imagination.

Keywords: terrorism, cartels, fear discourse, narcoterrorism, migration

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1. Introduction

Fear is inherent in human nature; it is a response to a stimulus activated by association or imposition (Watson & Rayner, 1920). This emotion not only affects individual behavior but also shapes collective dynamics, molding social and political structures historically. Thomas Hobbes (1940:41) defines aversion as a rejection of that to which one has a certain hatred. This assumption is fundamental to his political philosophy, starting from the dichotomy between the anarchy of the "natural state" (characterized by the war of all against all) and the need for a sovereign power that guarantees peace. It is precisely the fear of chaos and death that drives individuals to voluntarily submit to the power of the State, symbolized by the Leviathan (Hobbes, 1651:28).

Under this premise, fear becomes the nourishment of the political organization of a society eager for protection. The individual, driven by uncertainty, distrusts and transforms fear into the foundation of authority and protection. Robin develops this in his book Fear (2004), where he defines political fear as

> "a people's felt apprehension of some harm to their collective well-being—the fear of terrorism, panic over crime, anxiety over moral decay—or the intimidation wielded over men and women by governments or groups" (p.14).

What distinguishes this fear is its social dimension; it materializes and becomes a tool that enables social cohesion, while strengthening the State and legitimizing both oppression and violence. In this sense, it is revealing how fear consolidates a national identity that promotes and supports the radicality of narratives.

Understanding the use of fear as an instrument within the political agenda is fundamental to analyzing power strategies in contemporary contexts. The recent designation of Mexican cartels as terrorist groups by President Donald Trump reflects a recurring historical logic in the United States of America: the manipulation of collective fear to justify political actions and reinforce state control. Through this analysis, the article aims to contribute to the literature with a yet unexplored perspective on such policies and their consequences.

In this sense, the article takes a historical journey, identifying patterns that have consolidated control narratives in American history, better known as moral panics, defined by Cohen (2011:46) as perceived threats against social values. Subsequently, the designation of cartels as terrorist groups is analyzed through the five stages of enemy creation defined by Cohen (2011), and the article concludes with a reflection on the social consequences of said designation.

2. Consolidation of the American Fear Discourse

This section examines the various manifestations of the politics of fear that have been recurrent in the history of U.S. public policies. From a geopolitical perspective, fear has been a central element in the construction of American national identity. Throughout its history, the United States has resorted to the figure of the "internal or external enemy" as a mechanism for cohesion and justification for control policies. From the fear of British tyranny in 1774 to the French threat in 1798 that prompted the Alien and Sedition Acts (Tierney, 2016: 5), this logic has remained in force. A paradigmatic example of this phenomenon in the contemporary era is the first Red Scare.

Fifteen years before World War I, the growing migratory flow from Eastern Europe began to be perceived in the United States as a threat to the established social order (Olsson, 1996:876). After the end of the war, the first Red Scare emerged, marked by the increase in activities that unbalanced the existing national balance in the United States due to the expansion of communist ideals (Coben, 1964: 59). In 1919, radical press was gaining more power, and the media generated media narratives centered on provoking a climate of fear toward "radical aliens attempting to overthrow the federal government". (Coben 1964:64)

Although multiple strikes during this period were related to the increase in housing costs, the government attributed them to the action of Soviet radicals and immigrants (Brecher, 1972: 105; Coben, 1964: 67). In this context, discourses on the deportation of foreigners became popular, such as the expression "We must remake America" from the governor of Gary, Indiana, which anticipated rhetoric similar to that of Donald Trump (Coben, 1964:72).

The Alien Registration Act of 1940 allowed the U.S. government to track foreigners and their possible anti-American ideas that, according to the official narrative, could lead to the overthrow of the government (Puloka, 2009). Similarly, Executive Order 14159 promulgated by Donald Trump, titled "Protecting the American People from Invasion," requires mandatory registration and collection of biometric data from foreigners, a measure criticized for its invasive nature and its potential use as a tool for control and surveillance (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2025).

In the second phase of the Red Scare (1947 and 1954), fear of communism remained latent, mainly due to McCarthyism[1]. This can be observed even in Hollywood's film production, which incorporated anti-communist propaganda (Larson, 1948: 434). In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Office of War Information, with the objective of:

> Formulating and carrying out, through the use of the press, radio, film, and other media, informational programs designed to facilitate the development of an informed and intelligent understanding, both nationally and internationally, of the status and progress of the war effort, as well as the policies, activities, and war objectives of the Government. (Executive Order No. 9182, 1942: 4468).

1 McCarthyism was a phenomenon led by Senator Joseph McCarthy, who promoted a systematic persecution of alleged communists within the government through a discourse based on fear, becoming "a paranoid witch hunt in search of internal subversion" (McNamara, 2005: 85).

The election of John F. Kennedy as the first Catholic president of the United States, along with the beginning of Pope John XXIII's pontificate, symbolically transformed the image of the American Catholic, gradually displacing anti-communism as the central axis of U.S. internal political discourse, although it continued to be a key component in foreign policy.

The example that definitively consolidates the fear discourse in the United States is the attack of September 11, 2001. Although it was not the first terrorist attack on the territory, it did represent a turning point in its counterterrorism policies. The attack left an irreversible mark on the American collective consciousness. As a result of this event, Congress approved a military response that initiated the war in Afghanistan and consolidated what has probably been the most media-covered enemy in contemporary U.S. history: foreign terrorist organizations (FTO). In his September 11 speech, President George W. Bush (2001, para. 12) constructed this new enemy figure by stating: "America has faced enemies before, and will do so again this time".

This discourse, along with media coverage, consolidated a polarizing narrative of "us versus them," where the enemy was clearly defined as external, threatening, and morally inferior. Within the discourse, phrases like "Today, our nation witnessed evil, the worst of human nature," fostered an environment of permanent insecurity, stigmatizing people with Arab features or from Muslim countries, who ceased to be individuals and became potential terrorists.

This fear persisted for a time, but the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan began to lose popular support, eroding the national unity generated by the anti-terrorist discourse (Tierney, 2016: 9). The United States then understood that it is more effective to construct a close and latent enemy, who could be anywhere: a neighbor, coworker, or university student. In this context, Donald Trump's discourse revives and reformulates fear through the rhetoric of crime, drug trafficking, and terrorism, positioning Mexican migrants as threats.

The question then arises: could the appearance of a new enemy restore the national unity that in other eras sustained the dominant position of the United States in the international system? If so, does the designation of Mexican cartels as terrorist groups and Trump's hate discourse toward Mexicans represent the prelude to this new enemy construction?

3. From Slogan to Strategy: Make America Great Again

President Trump poses a rhetoric of consternation about the role of the United States in the world, suggesting that it is going through a state of chaos that must be addressed. According to Jason Edwards (2018), Trump attributes this situation to previous administrations, which, as he has declared, weakened the country's greatness through policies on globalism, immigration, trade, nation-building, and illicit drug trafficking. Therefore, he promised to regain control of international relations to promote national interests (p. 181). In this context, the "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) discourse gains prominence. In his book Time to Get Tough: Make America Great Again, Trump (2011) states: "To solve the problem we have to be smart and tough... We are Americans. We have the potential, we just need the right leadership. Let's make America great again!" (p. 7).

The MAGA discourse gains relevance in a context of growing social and political unease in the United States, where broad sectors of the population feel marginalized, partly due to the advance of globalism and job loss. According to a Pew Research Center survey in 2024, approximately 31% of Americans consider themselves in a situation of poverty. In this scenario, the MAGA slogan not only functioned as a campaign slogan but as a powerful narrative that appealed to nostalgia for a supposed golden era in which the United States exercised global economic dominance and maintained a firm national identity.

This narrative inserts itself within a broader tradition of American exceptionalism[2], which has been identified by authors such as Paul, Lipset (1996) and Friedman (2012, p. 22) as the foundational basis of the country and its vision of an "original people" with a singular destiny. Thus, Trump knew how to exploit that imaginary in his two presidential campaigns to construct an idea of "national recovery" that implied pointing out external enemies or causes as responsible for the supposed "American decline".

Throughout his political career, Trump's message became increasingly nationalist, using language that stigmatized other countries, especially Mexico. "They send us people who have a lot of problems; they bring drugs, they bring crime, they are rapists," he stated in his campaign launch speech in 2015, establishing from the beginning a narrative that linked Mexican migrants with threats to national security.

Among the executive orders signed by Trump on his first day in office in 2025, the designation of six Mexican cartels as foreign terrorist organizations stands out (Maldonado, 2025). This measure represents a logical extension of his discourse, presenting the cartels as a threat comparable to international terrorism, under the argument of combating drug trafficking and ensuring border security. With this, these organizations fall under U.S. jurisdiction, allowing the government to adopt "all appropriate measures" and even undertake unilateral actions.

Following this stance by the American president, the need to understand the implications beyond the legal and political becomes evident, as the discourse of power and protection of the "us" defines the limits against foreign actors, contributing to a narrative of a constant foreign threat, which stigmatizes and excludes entire communities. It is pertinent to analyze the construction of the Mexican enemy within the American collective imaginary, a process that can be understood through the stages proposed by Stanley Cohen on the construction of national enemies.

2 Exceptionalism can be understood as a deeply rooted belief in American national identity, present both in its political elites and in public opinion. This view holds that the United States is a fundamentally different and unique nation compared to the rest of the world, with difference and singularity being the traits that define said notion (Ceaser, 2013: 16).

4. Construction of the Mexican as Enemy: Cohen's Stages

The image of the Mexican in the American imaginary has undergone a progressive transformation: from being considered cheap labor, to an unwanted migrant, then a criminal drug trafficker, and more recently, a potential terrorist. This chronology theoretically aligns with the process of creating the "public enemy" described by sociologist Stanley Cohen in his work Folk Devils and Moral Panics (1972).

Cohen proposes five stages in the creation of a moral panic, understood as a social reaction to a perceived threat. These stages allow understanding how certain groups are stigmatized until they become legitimized threats within political discourse. The first stage is the identification of a threat derived from an event, condition, or individual that puts the security or interests of society at risk. In the second stage, the media reinforce the perception of the threat through the visual representation of the villain out of control and the moral victims, with stereotyped judgments attributed to a violent criminal. This triggers anxiety, fear, and collective hostility toward the designated group. The third stage reflects how public opinion mobilizes against said group. In the fourth stage, the government intervenes in response to social clamor, seeking to repress, regulate, or eliminate the threat. Finally, in the fifth stage, the judgment is normalized and institutionalized, bringing with it lasting social consequences, such as cultural and legal stigmatization (Mannion & Small, 2019: 679).

Below, these stages are explained as applied to the case of Mexicans in the United States, especially in light of the recent designation of cartels as terrorist groups.

4.1. First Stage: Threat to Values, Security, and Interests

The identification of the Mexican as a threat began in the 1920s, when migration was hierarchized according to nationalities, based on racial judgments that determined who had the privilege of changing their legal status in the United States of America. Mae M. Ngai mentions in her work Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America (2004) a distinction where Western and Northern European cultures were considered welcome migrations, while those from Southern Europe and the American continent were perceived as invaders, lacking rights or status (Chávez L, 2013).

The narrative toward Mexicans presented them as undesirable and unadaptable beings to society due to their supposed intellectual inferiority, cultural and racial differences. The greatest concern of the American was their irregular arrival, along with their lack of interest in integrating into North American culture. In this context, and due to restrictive migration policies, the term "illegal" was directly associated with the Mexican migrant who crossed the border evading border control (Chávez L, 2013).

The distinctive patriotic of the white and capitalist American after World War I racialized the Mexican as cheap labor for sectors such as agriculture, mining, and construction. Academic, scientific,

and even medical discourses shared the narrative of the Mexican's intellectual inferiority and warned of a supposed "cultural reconquest" (Chávez L, 2013), thus justifying the absence of fundamental and political rights for Mexicans on American soil.

It was not until 1971, under Richard Nixon's mandate, with his declaration of drugs as the principal public enemy (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2025), that the image of the Mexican was linked to the criminal drug trafficker. This perception intensified a decade later with Ronald Reagan and the War on Drugs, which promoted punitive policies, severe sanctions, and massive raids based on racial profiles.

Media coverage and government campaigns consolidated the image of the Mexican drug trafficker, criminalizing not only individuals but entire communities. By the end of the 20th century, the Mexican was fixed in the American collective imaginary as a criminal drug trafficker and illegal immigrant. This representation was reinforced by restrictive migration policies, such as the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, and coverage by influential media like U.S. News & World Report. These factors contributed to the identification of an internal enemy that threatened the security of the American, as well as social cohesion.

A turning point in this perception occurred after the September 11, 2001 attack. Fear was planted in the individual and collective psyche, following the call of President George W. Bush, who emphasized the need to secure borders to prevent the entry of foreign threats such as terrorism, irregular immigration, and smuggling (Chavéz, 2013, 46). After the attack, the foreigner became a threat from which one must protect oneself.

4.2. Second Stage: Amplification of the Threat Through the Media

The construction of the Mexican as an enemy had been gestating for decades in the American collective imaginary. The media played a crucial role in amplifying this perceived threat, promoting the idea of the Mexican as a dangerous figure. From 1940, the media began to portray Mexicans negatively, linking them to criminality, which culminated in episodes like the Zoot Suit Riots[3]. The stigmatizing representation of pachucos contributed to consolidating the idea that Mexicans were violent or had the potential to be (Lucas, 2009: 63).

After the September 11 attacks, this narrative intensified. The Bush government increased border patrolling, and the media collaborated in constructing the Mexican as a threat, generating an environment of collective anxiety. Reports and television ads were issued that distorted data and presented Americans as moral victims (Frothingham, 2023).

During the Super Bowl in 2002, the U.S. government acquired two advertising slots to broadcast messages linking drug consumption to the financing of terrorist groups. CNN reported that 3.5 million dollars were invested in this campaign, whose message stated: "Where do terrorists get money? If you buy drugs, some of it might come from you" (CNN, 2002).

3 "A week of unrestrained violence against young Latinos, Blacks, Filipino-Americans, and other youth of color in Los Angeles, unleashed by the military, inflamed by racial tensions and fanned by one of the most iconic fashions of the 1940s" (Blakemore & Potter, 2023).

Shortly after September 11, the media compared the operation to capture Osama Bin Laden with the 1916 military expedition to find the Mexican revolutionary Francisco "Pancho" Villa. This parallelism shows how certain pursued figures are turned into useful symbols to justify the expansion of state power. Through the media, these militarized hunts are not perceived as violations of sovereignty but as necessary actions to preserve national security (Carlson & Ruback, 2023:41).

In 2003, the NBC network premiered a miniseries titled Kingpin, centered on Miguel Cadena, a Mexican drug trafficker portrayed in a family environment marked by violence, reinforcing negative stereotypes. Finally, a study published in Politics, Groups, and Identities analyzed the three most important news magazines between 2000 and 2010, concluding that "both the text and images in the media often represent immigrants negatively and in a way that does not match the actual demographics of the immigrant population". (Farris & Mohamed, 2018: 820).

The media have been key actors in the negative overrepresentation of the Mexican, amplifying their figure as a threat and consolidating their stigmatization in public discourse. As Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009:120) explain, the power to "define and construct reality" is linked to the "power structure in a society". Thus, the media narrative around the Mexican is not neutral but functional to the exercise of political and social power.

4.3 Third Stage: The Spread of the "Danger" Generates Collective Anxiety

In the current context, the stigmatizing discourse has resurfaced strongly, especially from Donald Trump's rise in U.S. politics. Since 2015, Trump promoted an environment of paranoia, pushing campaigns for citizens to report "suspicious" neighbors, turning the enemy into an everyday figure (Hensch, 2015). That same year, at the South Carolina Freedom Summit, he uttered one of his most famous phrases: "Mexico won't take advantage of us anymore. They won't have an open border anymore. The greatest builder in the world is me and I'm going to build them the biggest wall they've ever seen".

In 2022, after being expelled from several platforms for inciting hate and violence, Trump launched Truth Social, his own "uncensored" social network. This was initially rejected by the Play Store due to its policy against incentivizing violence (Matthias, 2024). This emphasizes the aggressive tone that characterizes his narrative.

During his first term and in his presidential campaigns, Trump consolidated his exclusionary discourse. In 2024, at a rally in Madison Square Garden, he spoke of his possible return to the presidency as a "day of liberation," suggesting that immigrants are invaders (Gold, 2024). Already in 2018, he had mentioned his intention to designate Mexican cartels as terrorists. At that time, Tree (an expert in anti-drug policies), stated that this proposal sought to "increase the stigma on Mexicans" (Gozzer, 2019).

Trump's discourse not only influences political perception but also public opinion. According to Pew Research Center surveys, in 2017, 65% of Americans had a favorable opinion of Mexico,

while at the beginning of 2024, that figure dropped to 37%. The study highlights Trump's role as a determining factor in this shift in perceptions (Poushter et al., 2024).

Trump has functioned as a catalyst for collective anxiety that transforms fear into social pressure that demands "decisive" responses from government institutions to protect the citizenry.

4.4 Fourth Stage: The Government Responds to Public Protest and Presents the Alleged Threat as a Symptom of a Social Malaise That Must Be Addressed

From his first term (2017-2021) to the present (2025), the President of the United States, Donald Trump, has promoted collective fear toward migrants and Mexican cartels, as part of a discourse focused on "regaining control" of the country against external threats that, according to him, were mishandled by previous administrations. Already in his 2015 campaign, Trump claimed that "the biggest suppliers of heroin, cocaine, and other illicit drugs are Mexican cartels, who hire Mexican immigrants to cross the border trafficking drugs". This narrative was consolidated with policies that directly affected Latino communities, and which today function as a structural antecedent of the moral panic intensified by the designation of cartels as terrorist organizations.

One of the most controversial measures was the "zero tolerance" policy implemented in 2018, which caused the separation of thousands of minors from their families in less than a month (BBC News Mundo, 2018). Likewise, the presence of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) was intensified, increasing raids in migrant communities. In the first hundred days of Trump's new term in 2025, ICE detained 158,000 undocumented persons, with the goal of surpassing the figures of the Biden administration. In addition, among the detainees, 2,288 members of Latin American gangs were identified, which served as an argument to increase resources allocated to combating these organizations (Beauregard, 2025).

Other measures include executive orders against so-called "sanctuary cities," which sanction jurisdictions that do not cooperate with immigration authorities. Processes of regularization, such as green card applications, were also suspended, and protections like humanitarian parole were eliminated. Likewise, appointments in the CBP One application were canceled, making access to asylum difficult for migrants, especially Mexicans (Gonzalez, 2025). Finally, Ronald Johnson, a former army officer with a background in intelligence, was designated as ambassador to Mexico, a decision that symbolically reflects a firm stance focused on security in the bilateral relationship, among many other policies.

In this sense, the fourth stage coincides with President Trump using the fear discourse to turn drug trafficking into a total threat that justifies extraordinary policies in the name of security. By designating cartels as terrorist organizations, the problem is presented as a sign of a supposed civilizational collapse, appealing to social malaise to reinforce a protectionist political project. Measures such as the tightening of asylum, tariffs on Mexico, and the expansion of the border wall not only seek to contain migration but function as symbolic gestures of exclusion. In this way, moral panic becomes a strategic tool to legitimize restrictive and authoritarian policies, framed as patriotic acts of national defense.

4.5 Fifth Stage: Transformation of Society Through Institutional Responses

Cohen (1972) speaks of the legitimization of the enemy as the final milestone in the consolidation of a "folk devil," which marks a change in social dynamics; institutionalized violence, perceived as heroic, becomes a prudent and applauded act.

Public inertia is a resource for foreign policy (Escalante Gonzalbo, 2012); under this argument, it is pertinent for the United States to create institutions such as the Department of Homeland Security, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, as these operate under an emergency decree, in which human rights are not the priority, arbitrary detentions are acts of prevention, and death penalties for migrants are deserved punishments.

These actions are justified by public fear; however, this fear is by no means submissive, but rather a call to action, which unifies and influences an entire nation to affect the exterior, and even more, intervene in the politics of neighboring countries. It is worth mentioning the recently approved mandatory death penalty for migrants guilty of capital crimes in the American state of Florida, a measure that normalizes extreme punishment for undesirable beings. As an addition, it is no coincidence that the new U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Ronald D. Johnson, is a pillar in military intelligence, nor his previous tenure as ambassador in El Salvador (2019-2021), as it is a message that attributes a security matter between countries (Vidal Liy & Camhaji, 2024).

Another investigation deserves the case of El Salvador with the Mara Salvatrucha and the legal exceptionality applied from their designation as terrorists. It is pertinent to mention the similarities and indirect messages between narcoterrorists and the Mara Salvatrucha; arbitrary detention, with the common denominator being the stigmatization of the enemy through symbolic markers, is a dehumanizing strategy in the context of El Salvador and the southern border of the United States of America. Another example is the consolidation of penitentiary centers with systematic violations of human rights, with CECOT (Terrorism Confinement Center) and Guantanamo Bay being zones of isolation and no-rights for inmates.

5. Conclusion

The designation of Mexican cartels as terrorist organizations is not an isolated fact, but the result of a historical logic in which fear is instrumentalized as a political tool. This narrative is consolidated through media discourses that amplify the perception of threat, directly impacting the American collective imaginary and legitimizing the application of security policies and international interventions.

The State, as the actor that holds the legitimate monopoly on violence, has the capacity to create enemies and administer the use of force. In this context, social cohesion generated through fear has been an effective strategy to ensure public acceptance of its policies. In the case of the United States, this has derived in a persistent narrative of "us" versus "them," where the figure of the foreigner, particularly the Mexican, is processed until representing a highly dangerous enemy.

The concept of "narcoterrorism" does not respond solely to security criteria, but obeys political interests and international positioning. Unlike ideological terrorism, drug trafficking pursues lucrative ends rather than political destabilization. However, the ambiguity of the term "terrorist" allows States to redefine it according to their strategic purposes, generating diplomatic tensions and collateral effects on the sovereignty of countries like Mexico. It is no coincidence that, faced with economic threats such as the imposition of tariffs, Mexico has agreed to reinforce its borders and extradite prisoners, revealing a malleable political agenda, conditioned by emergency decrees and diplomatic pressure from the neighboring country.

The United States has applied a logic of "heroic violence" through extraterritorial legislation that does not fully consider human rights or the implications on the perception of foreign citizens. In this process, the media narrative has played a crucial role in consolidating this discourse. By amplifying alarmist messages, the media contribute to the stigmatization and dehumanization of entire populations, as also occurred in El Salvador. Racial arguments that associate every Mexican or Latin migrant with criminal activities, regardless of their real link, distort the perception of American citizenship, promote discriminatory attitudes, and foster a climate of fear and rejection.

This context has been aggravated recently by social protests within the United States in the face of the emergence of extreme migration measures, such as the mass deportations promoted by Donald Trump. Sectors of American society have begun to openly question these policies for their inhumane character and for the use of means to instill fear, beyond guaranteeing security on the part of the State. The mobilizations reflect a growing unease in the face of an official discourse that criminalizes migration, and evidence the internal fissures of the American national project itself and the rejection by its citizenship of stigmatization strategies.

Finally, it is necessary to critically evaluate the use of the term "terrorism" in relation to drug trafficking, as well as to analyze Mexico's stance in the face of these designations, since this is key to understanding their impact in a more just and complete manner. It is undeniable that a negative social effect is generated in the perception of the Mexican, which makes it urgent to address the stigmatizations generated by this fear narrative, which ultimately harms innocent people and hinders efforts for regional cooperation based on mutual respect and human rights.

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Un extraño atentado. La matanza del restaurante El Descanso y el terrorismo internacional

A bizarre attack. The El Descanso restaurant massacre and international terrorism

Alfredo Crespo Alcázar

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YEAR OF PUBLICATION: **2025**
EDITORIAL: **Catarata**

In *Un extraño atentado. La matanza del restaurante El Descanso y el terrorismo internacional*, Professor Luis de la Corte presents us with an outstanding work in which, by analyzing the aforementioned attack, he also offers a complete and exhaustive overview of the terrorist phenomenon, a subject of study with which he is well familiar, as certified by his academic trajectory. The title, through the handling of three words, says much about the content: strange, massacre, and international terrorism.

Indeed, the attack perpetrated on April 12, 1985, leaves as its main, though not unique, conclusion that its perpetrators were never arrested, so they could not be tried. The latter constitutes an evident disregard for the victims, both the deceased and the injured, which the author addresses in this book by giving them value, providing a biographical profile of them: "the majority of those murdered at El Descanso were young people and middle-aged individuals. Consequently, I speak of people who still had almost all or a large part of their lives ahead of them" (p. 51). Likewise, he reminds us of the psychological effects, since "the disproportion between the material damages and the psychological, social, and political consequences triggered by terrorism has always been highlighted by scholars of this particular form of violence" (p. 67).

One of the successes of the work lies in the fact that it shows us the Spanish panorama of 1985, a time when ETA and GRAPO terrorism was permanently scourging society, without there being an adequate civic response in the form of mobilizations in favor of the victims. In addition to those "native" organizations, international terrorism had been operating in our country since the 1970s: "the

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number of victims was not high, but the attacks of Arab origin recorded between 1971-1984 caused the death of 11 individuals, all citizens of some country in the Middle East (one Israeli and ten Arabs), and some more people, all of them Arabs, suffered injuries" (p. 149). Murders of Mossad members also occurred in Madrid and Barcelona, and in 1975, the Red Army Faction assaulted the German embassy in Spain.

Regarding this, Dr. de la Corte places this stage in the third wave, following the canonical classification established by David Rapoport, in which terrorist organizations, essentially from the extreme left (Red Brigades, Red Army Faction, GRAPO…), resorted without qualms to violence to carry out the "revolution", maintaining some synergies among them: "from the seventies and eighties it became commonplace for leaders and spokespersons of one terrorist organization to express their sympathies and moral support for the 'struggles' waged by other foreign armed groups" (p. 111).

With all this, the El Descanso attack presented distinctive characteristics that lead the author to describe it as "unique in its class", which was due both to its lethality (21 dead) and to its opacity (for example, with regard to the American victims). In a more particular way, the symbolism of the chosen restaurant stands out, as it was a place frequented by soldiers from the United States military base located in Torrejón de Ardoz, although the majority of the victims were Spanish. In this sense, De la Corte provides a key piece of data: the time at which it was carried out, 22:30, was not typical for Americans to be having dinner. In intimate relation to this argument, the communiqué from the organization that carried out the attack refers to this fact, seeking an exemption from responsibility: "we wish to specify immediately that we are very sorry for the Spanish victims who were present at the time of the explosion in this nest of Americans. They were in no way the target of the explosion" (p. 198).

Regarding authorship, we find the key issue of the work. Initially, hypotheses attributing it to ETA or GRAPO were discarded, which "was not nonsense, far from it", the author emphasizes, as had been corroborated some time earlier by their attacks against the Rolando café in 1974 and against the California Café in 1979, leaving a trail of fatal victims and injured. However, other alternatives soon emerged. First, the Lebanese organization Harakat al-Yihad al-Islami (Islamic Jihad Organization). This part of the work is fundamental, and Professor Luis de la Corte explains it with rigor and meticulousness, relating the aforementioned terrorist organization to another whose freedom-depriving actions continue to the present day, such as Hezbollah. The latter avoided any responsibility in the El Descanso attack, although it maintained relations with the Islamic Jihad Organization since both "were already cooperating in 1985, although they surely began to do so much earlier, perhaps from the very date of its appearance" (p. 189).

However, the development of police investigations, carried out by the External Information Brigade, discarded the authorship of Islamic Jihad and attributed it to the terrorist organization WADD (Promise), after this group sent a communiqué to a news agency located in Damascus, in which it also provided the image of a sugar envelope of the kind handed out at El Descanso. In said communiqué, which the author reproduces in full, the elements that define terrorism appear well outlined. Indeed, we find the exemption from responsibility (when it is stated that Spanish citizens were not the target

of the attack), the dignification of terrorist activity by qualifying it as "revolutionary", the recourse to the existence of a historical grievance used as justification, the stigmatization of the enemy, and, ultimately, the inversion of the roles of victims and victimizers, without forgetting the messianic and Adamic character that every terrorist organization assigns to itself: "we, the fighters, proceed from the premise that there is no other alternative that can help the idea of our people to return, to build there, in Palestine, a democratic society in freedom" (p. 199).

With all this, the most surprising thing is that no arrests were ever made to the point that on March 9, 1987, the court in charge of the proceedings ruled for its filing due to lack of author. In 2005, the investigation was resumed due to a collateral event, since a photo of Setmarian, lieutenant of Bin Laden in Al Qaeda, appeared in El Mundo, whom some victims interrogated in real time had identified as a suspicious man at the scene of the events. Even so, the proceedings were closed again, hence the value of this work, in which the author has handled abundant sources (bibliography, proceedings, personal interviews…), which serves both to remember a criminal and freedom-depriving act and to show an ethical commitment to its victims.

17N
EPANASTATIKI ORGANOSI 17 NOEMVRI

ORGANIZATION TYPE:
Non-estate, terrorist, nacionalist

IDEOLOGY:
Far-left marxist-leninist

FOUNDERS:
Alexandros Giotopoulos

MAIN LEADERS:
Alexandros Giotopoulos, Dimitris Koufodinas

PLACES OF ACTUATION:
Greece

YEARS OF ACTIVITY:
1975-2002

ALLIANCES AND SYMPATHIZERS:
Non officials: Brigate Rosse, RAF, Action Directe

ESTIMATED MEMBERS:
20-30

Founded by Alexandros Giotopoulos in 1975, the ***Epanastatiki Organosi 17 Noemvri*** (November 17 Revolutionary Organization) adopted its name in commemoration of the students murdered by the Greek military dictatorship on November 17, 1973, at the Polytechnic University of Athens.

The group became known when it carried out its first attack on December 23, 1975, when it assassinated none other than Richard Welch, the head of the CIA station in Athens. The **17N** always maintained a low profiel and highly structured cells, and throughout its history, it financed itself through bank robberies and, to a lesser extent, extortion.

During its nearly thirty-year history, the Greek authorities were unable to detect its existence until June 2002, when a bomb exploded in Piraeus while being handled by one of the group's members, Savras Xiros, leading to his arrest.

17N committed more than **100 attacks with at least 23 fatalities**, primarily targeting foreign diplomats and Greek politicians and businessmen who symbolized capitalism (among others: George Tsantes, US naval officer; William Nordeen, US military attaché; Stephen Saunders, British military attaché).

The group was dismantled in 2002 after Xiros's confession, which led to the arrest of 19 members (including the main leaders, Giotopoulos and Koufodinas), 15 of whom were convicted in 2003 for more than 2,500 terrorism-related offenses.

Bali attacks
October 12, 2002

Historical and Contextual Background

To properly understand the Bali bombings, it is essential to situate them within the evolution of Islamic extremism in Southeast Asia, a region marked by religious diversity and postcolonial tensions. Indonesia, the nation with the world's largest Muslim population (approximately 270 million people, 87% of whom practice Islam), has grappled with tensions between a moderate, syncretic form of Islam blended with local Hindu and animist traditions and radical Wahhabi or Salafist currents influenced by ideologies imported from the Middle East. These tensions trace back to Indonesia's independence in 1945, following centuries of Dutch and Japanese colonialism, when its first president, Sukarno, promoted a secular state based on Pancasila (five principles that include belief in one God while respecting religious plurality).

A key precursor was the Darul Islam (House of Islam) movement, which emerged in the 1940s in West Java under the leadership of Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosoewirjo. This armed group sought to establish an Islamic state governed by sharia, opposing Sukarno's secular government and its successor under Sukarnoputri through a rebellion that lasted until 1962, when Kartosoewirjo was executed. Although militarily suppressed, Darul Islam's ideals persisted underground, influencing subsequent generations of militants. During Suharto's authoritarian regime (1967–1998), extremism was curtailed through repression, but post-Suharto democratization opened spaces for radical groups, exacerbated by communal conflicts in regions like Ambon, Poso, and the Moluccas, where clashes between Christians and Muslims caused thousands of deaths between 1999 and 2002.

From this context emerged Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), formally founded in 1993 (though its roots date back to the 1980s) by Indonesian exiles in Malaysia, notably clerics Abu Bakar Bashir and Abdullah Sungkar, who fled Suharto's persecution. JI was structured as a hierarchical militant network, inspired by al-Qaeda's model, with the ambitious goal of creating a pan-regional Islamic caliphate encompassing Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, southern Philippines (Mindanao), and Thailand. During the 1990s, JI radicalized intensely, sending hundreds of members to training camps in Afghanistan controlled by the Taliban and al-Qaeda, where they learned guerrilla techniques, bomb-making, and suicide tactics. Riduan Isamuddin, alias Hambali, emerged as the operational

leader, forging direct ties with Osama bin Laden and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the architect of 9/11. Hambali, an Indonesian of Yemeni descent, facilitated the flow of funds and training, and according to confessions from detainees, al-Qaeda transferred approximately $30,000 for specific operations, including the Bali bombings.

The immediate post-9/11 context was pivotal. The September 11, 2001, attacks in New York and Washington intensified the U.S.-declared "global war on terror," with Australia as a key strategic ally, having led the UN intervention in East Timor in 1999 for its independence from Indonesia—an event interpreted by extremists as a Western Christian aggression against Muslims. Indonesia, under President Megawati Sukarnoputri, initially downplayed the domestic terrorist threat to avoid alienating its conservative Muslim base and to prioritize economic and separatist crises. However, an audio tape attributed to Bin Laden, circulated after the bombings, declared: "You will be killed as you kill, and bombed as you bomb. Expect more that will cause you greater anguish," though it did not claim direct responsibility, reinforcing the narrative of jihadist retaliation. Bali was chosen as a "soft target" for its symbolism: a tourist paradise representing "Western decadence" (bars, nightclubs, and beaches filled with foreign "infidels"), maximizing psychological, economic, and media impact in a country where tourism accounted for 80% of Bali's GDP.

Planning and Preparation of the Attacks

The planning of the attacks began months earlier, revealing a meticulous yet improvised operation orchestrated by a dissident JI cell that called itself "al-Qaeda in the Malay Archipelago." In August 2002, during a clandestine meeting in Solo, Central Java, the "field commander" Imam Samudra, a radicalized computer engineer with experience in Afghanistan, announced the plan to attack Bali, justifying it as a defensive jihad against "Americans and their allies" in retaliation for the invasion of Afghanistan and the perceived global oppression of Muslims. Samudra coordinated with key figures such as Amrozi bin Nurhasyim (responsible for logistics), Ali Imron (who positioned the main van due to the designated suicide bomber's inexperience), Ali Ghufron alias Mukhlas (Amrozi's brother and recruiter), Dulmatin (explosives expert), and others like Idris, Abdul Ghani, and Umar Patek.

Amrozi, nicknamed the "smiling terrorist" for his defiant attitude during his later arrest, acquired a new Yamaha scooter for mobility and a borrowed white Mitsubishi L300 van from an acquaintance (a critical mistake that later facilitated tracking). The explosives were purchased in local Java markets: 1,020 kilograms of a homemade mixture of potassium chlorate (as an oxidizer), aluminum powder (to increase potency), sulfur (stabilizer), and TNT (high explosive), assembled in 12 plastic filing cabinets connected by 150 meters of PETN (pentaerythritol tetranitrate) detonating cord, a highly sensitive secondary detonator. Hambali, operating from Thailand, channeled al-Qaeda funds for the operation, while Azahari Husin, a Malaysian engineer with a doctorate from the University of Reading (UK), designed the devices, incorporating shrapnel to maximize damage.

The choice of Bali was not arbitrary. As a tourist hub attracting 20,000 Australians monthly and generating millions in revenue, it symbolized for extremists Western moral corruption: alcohol, dancing, and promiscuity in a Hindu enclave within a Muslim country. The perpetrators rented a modest house in Denpasar to assemble the bombs, testing components in remote Java areas to avoid detection. A third, smaller device, packed with human excrement to add symbolic horror and contempt, was intended for the U.S. Consulate in Denpasar, representing a direct gesture against U.S. hegemony. This preparatory phase illustrates JI's relative sophistication: recruitment of radicalized youth from pesantren (Islamic schools) like Bashir's Ngruki, use of transnational networks for training and funding, and tactical adaptation to "soft targets" after failed attempts against fortified embassies in Singapore. The operation involved at least 15 individuals with strictly divided roles: logistics (material acquisition), surveillance (reconnaissance of Kuta), execution (suicide bombers like Iqbal and Arnasan), and escape (plans to flee to Java). However, errors such as using traceable vehicles and personal mobile phones revealed a degree of amateurism, though they did not prevent the attack's lethality.

Execution of the Attacks

On October 12, 2002, a Saturday night during peak tourist season, Bali was teeming with thousands of visitors enjoying Kuta's vibrant nightlife, a coastal district famous for its clubs, bars, and open-air restaurants. The sequence of events unfolded with synchronized lethal precision, beginning around 23:00, at a time calculated to maximize casualties: a weekend with dense crowds, including Australian rugby and surfing teams on holiday.

The first explosion occurred at 23:05 in Paddy's Pub, a bar popular with young Australians and Europeans, packed with about 200 people dancing to pop music. The suicide bomber, identified as Iqbal (a 28-year-old Indonesian radicalized by JI), entered disguised as a tourist, carrying a backpack with 1–5 kg of TNT in PVC pipes sewn into a checkered vest. He detonated the device in the center of the dance floor, instantly killing dozens and injuring hundreds with shrapnel and the blast wave. The bar's roof partially collapsed, debris flew everywhere, and a fire spread rapidly, fueled by alcohol and flammable materials. Terrified patrons fled to Legian Street, screaming in panic, covered in blood, glass, and dust, many with severe burns and mutilated limbs.

Twenty seconds later, at 23:05:20, the main bomb detonated: the Mitsubishi L300 van parked outside the Sari Club, across from Paddy's, containing over a ton of explosives. Detonated by the suicide bomber Arnasan, it created a one-meter-deep, five-meter-wide crater, destroying buildings within a 100-meter radius and shattering windows up to a kilometer away. The blast wave hurled bodies into the air, incinerated vehicles, and turned the area into an inferno of flames and thick black smoke. The Sari Club, with approximately 300 patrons (many fleeing from Paddy's), bore the brunt: collapsed walls, caved-in roofs, and a massive fire that lasted hours, complicating victim and survivor rescues.

Almost simultaneously, around 23:00, a third bomb exploded outside the U.S. Consulate in Denpasar, 10 kilometers from Kuta. This lower-yield device (about 50 kg), intentionally contaminated with excrement to symbolize contempt, caused minor structural damage (broken windows and cracked walls) and one minor injury to a local passerby, serving primarily as a distraction and anti-imperialist statement.

The immediate chaos was overwhelming and apocalyptic, as eyewitnesses described: streets littered with dismembered bodies, survivors with third-degree burns pleading for help, and a pungent smell of burning flesh mixed with smoke and gasoline. Local Balinese and tourists conducted initial rescues, using surfboards as makeshift stretchers, T-shirts as tourniquets, and taxis or motorcycles to transport victims to Sanglah Hospital in Denpasar, the nearest but overwhelmed facility. This medical center, designed for routine emergencies, was inundated with hundreds of patients; local doctors and foreign volunteers placed victims in nearby hotel pools to alleviate burns, given the absence of specialized mass-trauma units.

The choice of day and time was strategic: a Saturday night in peak season (June–October), with guaranteed crowds from weekend parties and vacation groups, maximizing civilian casualties. Surviving attackers initially escaped to Java via ferries and buses but left critical clues, such as van chassis fragments with engraved serial numbers, which later led to Amrozi's arrest.

Figure 1: This was the state of the street where the second artifact exploded. Créditos: AAP/Dean Williams

Victims, Immediate Consequences, and Humanitarian Response

The attacks claimed 202 confirmed deaths, distributed by nationality: 88 Australians (43% of the total, including 28 women and 60 men), 38 Indonesians (mostly local workers), 23 British, 7 Americans, 6 Germans, 6 Swedes, 4 Dutch, 4 French, 3 Danes, 3 New Zealanders, 3 Swiss, 2 Greeks, 2 Portuguese, 2 South Koreans, and others from countries including Canada, Ecuador, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Poland, South Africa, and Taiwan. By age, the victims were predominantly young: 20 under 21 (including teenagers on school trips), 77 aged 21–30, 8 aged 31–40, 28 aged 41–50, and 14 over 50. Many victims suffered burns covering up to 80% of their bodies; post-mortem X-rays revealed embedded metal fragments, indicating intentional shrapnel use to amplify damage.

The medical response was initially chaotic due to resource overload. Sanglah Hospital, with limited capacity for burn victims, treated hundreds with scarce supplies; Indonesian doctors and Australian volunteers improvised treatments in hallways and courtyards. Australia launched its largest aeromedical operation since the Vietnam War, evacuating 66 critically injured to Darwin (1,800 km) and Perth (2,600 km) using Royal Australian Air Force C-130 Hercules aircraft equipped with mobile intensive care units. Indonesia declared a national state of emergency, mobilizing the military for security and rescues, while local volunteers provided food, water, and transport.

Economically, Bali's tourism industry (80% of the province's GDP, directly employing 50,000 in hotels) collapsed dramatically: international arrivals dropped to a third in subsequent months, exacerbated by the Iraq War and the 2003 SARS outbreak, leaving hotels empty with occupancy rates below 40% and causing mass unemployment (up to 29% of the workforce, with 1,400 layoffs in hotels alone). In interconnected regions like Lombok and East Java, supply chain sales fell by up to 70%, impacting artisans and farmers. Politically, Megawati Sukarnoputri faced harsh criticism for underestimating JI's threat, catalyzing intelligence reforms and the creation of anti-terrorism laws.

Investigation, Arrests, and International Collaboration

The investigation, dubbed "Operation Alliance" and led by Indonesia's National Police (Polri) under General I Made Mangku Pastika, involved unprecedented collaboration with the Australian Federal Police (AFP), the UK's MI6, the U.S. FBI, and intelligence agencies from Singapore and Malaysia. Forensic clues included the van's chassis number, recovered despite attempts to erase it, leading to Amrozi's arrest on November 5, 2002, in Java. His mobile phone revealed contacts with Imam Samudra, Ali Imron, Mukhlas, Idris, Abdul Ghani, and Umar Patek, enabling a series of arrests.

Arrests were swift: Samudra in November on a ferry, Mukhlas in December at a mosque. Hambali was captured in Thailand in August 2003 in a joint CIA-Thai operation and transferred to Guantanamo. Azahari Husin died in a 2005 police shootout in Java, Dulmatin in 2010 in the Philippines during a raid, and Zulkarnaen, a senior JI leader, in 2020 in Lampung. Abu Bakar Bashir, JI's spiritual leader, was arrested in October 2002 but initially acquitted of direct charges; convicted in 2005 for

conspiracy and sentenced to two and a half years, he was released in 2006 but rearrested in 2011 for terrorism financing.

The "Operation Alliance" marked a milestone in bilateral cooperation: Australian forensics identified victims via DNA, fingerprints, and dental records, while mobile labs analyzed explosive residues, confirming TNT and PETN. This alliance exposed JI and al-Qaeda links, dismantling several regional cells.

Figure 2: A first wanted list of some of the terrorists, showed by the indonesian authorities next day to the attacks

Trials, Sentences, and Retrospective Justice

Trials began in 2003 under retroactively enacted anti-terrorism laws from October 2002, upheld by Indonesia's Constitutional Court despite criticism for violating non-retroactivity principles. Amrozi, Samudra, and Mukhlas were sentenced to death in public trials in Denpasar and executed by firing squad in November 2008 at Nusakambangan prison after failed appeals. Ali Imron, who expressed remorse and cooperated with authorities, received life imprisonment, becoming a key witness against JI.

In Guantanamo, Hambali and two Malaysians, Mohammed Nazir Bin Lep and Mohammed Farik Bin Ami, faced charges in 2021 for conspiracy in the Bali bombings and the 2003 Jakarta Marriott Hotel attack. In January 2024, the Malaysians pleaded guilty, receiving 23-year sentences reduced to five under cooperation agreements, and were repatriated to Malaysia in December 2024. Hambali remains in Guantanamo, but in January 2025, Indonesia considered his repatriation for local trial, a diplomatic gesture during Trump's second term, describing him as "one of the world's deadliest terrorists."

These judicial processes highlighted ethical tensions: criticism of retroactive laws, allegations of torture in interrogations (e.g., waterboarding in CIA black sites), and debates over human rights versus justice for victims, with organizations like Amnesty International condemning the executions.

Long-Term Impact and Lessons Learned

The attacks transformed Indonesia's counterterrorism landscape: the Detachment 88 elite police unit, funded by Australia and the U.S., was established in 2003, dismantling hundreds of JI cells through covert operations and deradicalization, reducing significant attacks. Bali's tourism recovered slowly (arrivals reached 70–80% by 2004, diversifying to Asian markets with security measures like metal detectors in hotels and airports), but the attack's effects lingered: tourism revenue fell 43% in 2003, v

Figure 3: Kuta Memorial (Bali, Indonesia), built to honour the names of all the victims of the bombings

Globally, the attacks reinforced JI's perception as an al-Qaeda affiliate, leading to its designation as a terrorist organization by the UN in 2002 and financial sanctions. Australia raised travel alerts and strengthened its ASIO intelligence service, while the event united nations in mourning, with memorials erected in Kuta (built in 2003 with victims' names) and Canberra (a monument with 88 bells for the Australian deceased).

Twenty years later, studies show lasting effects on survivors: 21.8% report high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), with elevated psychological stress rates (22% vs. 11% in the general population), linked to physical injuries and complex grief, especially over lost family members.

Nevertheless, JI persists in mutated forms: after internal splits between pro-bombing factions (dismantled post-2002) and non-violent factions (focused on preaching and schools), it evolved toward local tactics, with later attacks like Bali 2005 (20 deaths, using smaller suicide bombs) and Jakarta 2019, shifting from massive explosives to low-tech operations, online recruitment, and sending fighters to Syria. Key lessons include the need for multilateral intelligence sharing, deradicalization programs (e.g., Detachment 88 rehabilitated 700 ex-militants), addressing socioeconomic roots (poverty and inequality fueling radicalization), and engaging moderate extremists to marginalize violent ones. Additionally, the importance of not underestimating terrorist threats despite domestic priorities and protecting "soft targets" with preventive resources is critical.

EPHEMERIS

1

7TH MAY

Regan Prater, a white supremacist, is formally charged with setting fire to the Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee in 2019, a historic hub of the civil rights movement, as well as destroying valuable documents and artifacts.

2

22ND MAY

Two staff members of the Israeli embassy are shot dead by a gunman outside the Jewish Museum in Washington, D.C. Israeli and U.S. authorities condemned the attack.

3

30TH MAY

The National Police arrest two Spanish sisters, aged 19 and 21, in Alcorcón for terrorism indoctrination offenses, as they ran an online platform promoting Daesh's jihadist ideology targeting other women.

4

1ST JUNE

JNIM militants attack a military outpost in a town in Yatenga, Burkina Faso, killing 43 soldiers and two VDP members, including the outpost's commander and deputy commander. JNIM claimed responsibility for the attack and released a video showing the scene of the operation.

5

6TH JUNE

The leader of Jemaah Islamiyah is granted parole after facilitating the group's self-dissolution. Until then, it had been the most dangerous terrorist organization in the Southeast Asia region.

6

27TH JUNE

Malaysian Police announce the arrest of 36 Bangladeshi nationals for their involvement in a radical movement based on Islamic State ideology. Several were formally charged, others received deportation orders, and the rest remain under investigation.

7

1ST JULY

Over 80 JNIM fighters are killed in an attack repelled by the Malian army against seven localities in the west and center of the country, near the border with Senegal. The government called on the population to strengthen cooperation with the military.

8

5TH JULY

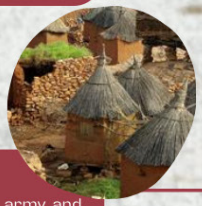
An investigation by The Guardian reveals that the far-right men's network Old Glory Club promotes white nationalist propaganda and antisemitic conspiracy theories, with members in government and the defense sector, raising concerns within national security circles.

9

5TH JULY

An Al Shabaab offensive in the Hiran region (Somalia) leaves dozens of soldiers dead and results in the capture of two villages. In response, the Somali government launches airstrikes and intensifies its media campaign, while the terrorist group seizes control of new territories.

10

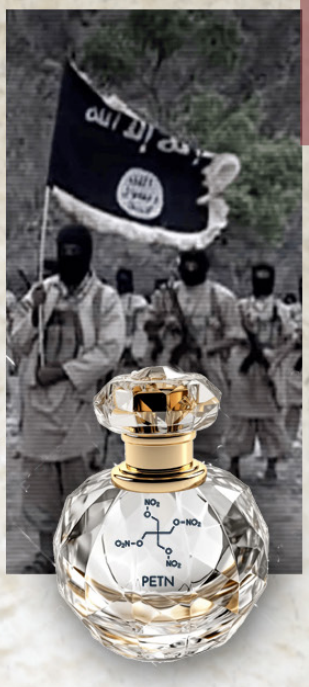


1ST AUGUST

JNIM militants ambush a convoy of the Malian army and the Africa Corps in the Tenema area (Tenenkou, Mopti), killing ten soldiers and auxiliary forces. The group claimed to have seized a military vehicle, rifles, machine guns, ammunition, and other equipment.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

Throughout their history, some terrorist organizations have attempted to design innovative ways to improve their terror capabilities. For example, following are some examples carried out by ***al-Qaeda*** **in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)**.



In 2010, **AQAP** attempted to detonate explosives hidden in perfume bottles on commercial flights. The explosive devices, designed to be activated by a chemical timer, were discovered in a warehouse in Dubai and another in the United Kingdom following an interception by Saudi intelligence. The explosives, based on PETN (a hard-to-detect plastic compound), were camouflaged inside counterfeit perfume bottles, mixed with cosmetics to fool scanners. This incident reinforced security controls on air cargo shipments and highlighted **AQAP**'s creativity in concealing explosives in everyday objects.

In 2011, according to declassified **CIA** reports, **AQAP** experimented with surgically implanting explosives into the bodies of suicide bombers. The idea was to insert PETN devices into the abdomen or thighs, with detonators triggered by chemical injections or external signals. A failed 2011 attempt involved an attacker who died during a test in Yemen due to a premature detonation. Although never successfully executed, this method alarmed security agencies, which began developing more advanced body scanners to detect internal anomalies.

Similarly, in the counterterrorism field, there have also been innovations aimed at eliminating members of terrorist groups. One of the most high-profile is undoubtedly the **Hellfire R9X** missile (official name AGM-114R9X Hellfire), a version of the Hellfire developed by Lockheed Martin and Northorn Grumman.

Nicknamed **"Ninja Bomb"** or **"Flying Ginsu"**, its main feature is that, unlike the conventional Hellfire, the **R9X** does not carry an explosive charge, but rather six retractable blades that deploy when they reach their target, thus minimizing the potential collateral damage generated by an explosive, causing all its damage through the kinetic energy of its weight and blades. Although information on its use is limited, as the Pentagon maintains a certain opacity, there are documented operations in the elimination of high-value targets, such as ***Ayman al-Zawahiri*** (then leader of ***al-Qaeda***) in Kabul in 2022, and ***Muhammed Yusuf Ziya Talay*** (*kunya* ***Jafar al-Turki***, leader of ***Hurras ad-Din***) in Syria in 2025.

Abu Tahsin al-Salihi, a sniper in the Iraqi Armed Forces, had more than 35 years of combat experience. During the Iraqi Civil War, he was credited with killing 384 ***Daesh*** fighters. For this, he earned the nicknames **"Hawkeye"** and **"The Sheikh of Snipers"**.

Al-Salihi perfected his technique throughout five wars: the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict, the Iran-Iraq war, the invasion of Kuwait, the Gulf War, and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

His distinctive image consisted of gloves with cut-off fingers, a keffiyeh around his neck or head, and a motorcycle with which he traveled through the conflict zone. He was said to be greatly feared by ***Daesh***, to the point that the caliphate once offered a $250,000 bounty on his head. In 2017, at the age of 63, ***al-Salihi*** was killed during the Iraqi army's offensive to recapture the town of Hawija from ***Daesh***.

In colaboration with: CENTRO MEMORIAL DE LAS VÍCTIMAS DEL TERRORISMO

From Perpetrators to Victims: The Perversion of Memory

Inés Gaviria and Javier Ruiz

On September 27, 1975, five members of terrorist organizations were executed by firing squad: three from the FRAP (Revolutionary Antifascist and Patriotic Front) and two from ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna). Their names were José Humberto Baena Alonso, Ramón García Sanz, José Luis Sánchez Bravo, Ángel Otaegi Etxebarria, and Juan Paredes Manot (Txiki). All five were sentenced to death in a historical context lacking democratic guarantees, in judicial proceedings that did not meet the minimum standards of a fair trial.

Violence exercised by any terrorist organization or, in this case, by the State itself within the framework of the Francoist dictatorship, must always be condemned, even when the targets of that violence had committed crimes involving bloodshed. Victims of terrorism have never defended the death penalty nor justified the use of terror to combat terror. Their stance has always been clear: terrorists must be detained, tried with all the guarantees of a democratic rule of law, and, if found guilty, sentenced. Any action outside this legal framework—regardless of its source—has always been firmly condemned by them.

However, there is an undeniable fact that some seek to erase, particularly with regard to Txiki and Otaegi: they were members of ETA and had blood crimes on their records. ETA was a terrorist organization that, both during the Franco regime and after its end, killed, injured, kidnapped, threatened, tortured, and forced thousands of people into exile from the Basque Country and Navarre. Moreover, the vast majority of its crimes were committed during democracy, which further underscores, if possible, its totalitarian nature. Both Txiki and Otaegi, as well as the three FRAP members, committed murders during their lifetimes, which is why they deserve neither public recognition nor institutional tributes. They were not antifascist fighters, heroes, or martyrs. They were terrorists who committed

murders. This is the truth that the abertzale left seeks to erase, the perversion of memory they aim to impose upon us.

In this regard, on September 27, they will once again celebrate Gudari Eguna, a day in which they commemorate the figure of the gudari (Basque soldier), indiscriminately mixing those who fought in the Spanish Civil War, those executed in 1975, and those who, already in democracy, murdered or attempted to murder thousands of innocent people. This year, the 50th anniversary of the executions of Txiki and Otaegi will give even greater prominence to their exaltation as supposed "heroes" or "martyrs".

This obscene legitimization and glorification of Txiki and Otaegi by the abertzale left highlights the profound moral abyss separating this social and political spectrum from the victims of terrorism: while victims advocate for justice with democratic guarantees, they glorify those who sowed terror. Victims condemn crime, regardless of who commits it, while the abertzale left honors the criminals who served their political project.

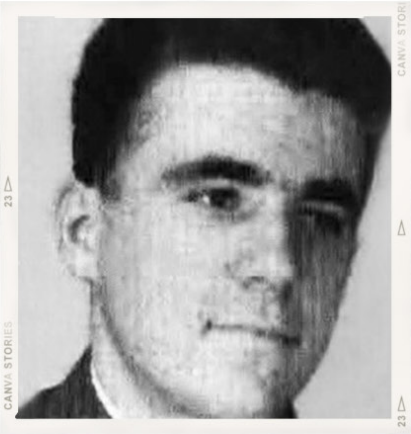
Txiki was involved in the murder of police officers José Díaz Linares in San Sebastián on March 29, 1975, and Ovidio Díaz López in Barcelona on September 14, 1975. Otaegi was a necessary collaborator in the murder of Guardia Civil member Antonio Posada Zurrón on April 2, 1974, in Azpeitia, Gipuzkoa. Within the framework of Gudari Eguna, their faces are reproduced on murals, banners, and Basque flags, sending a message that offends and relegates to oblivion the memory of the true victims: those who did not choose violence but suffered it, such as Gregorio Posada and Ovidio Díaz.

In the Basque Country and Navarre, there are plaques and memorials dedicated to the victims of ETA, but their institutional and public presence remains far less prominent compared to the almost constant display of tributes to terrorists in public spaces. While the names of victims are barely present in public spaces, those of their killers are displayed with complete impunity.

Victims of terrorism know that evil is not fought with more evil. They know this despite having to endure, even in their own towns or in the very places where their loved ones were murdered, the idolization of those who perpetrated those crimes. They see their faces painted on walls, their names on banners, and their trajectories celebrated as if they were role models or heroes. All of this, without a hint of remorse or criticism of the crimes they committed.

Even so, the victims will continue to defend truth, justice, memory, and dignity. Because no one has the right to turn a perpetrator into a victim. And because no cause – none – justifies violence. Let this article serve as a tribute to the four victims of the last individuals executed by the Franco regime, as they deserve to have the full truth told and their memory respected.

OVIDIO DÍAZ LÓPEZ



Born in: Galicia
Age: 31
Children: 1
Marital status: Married
Occupation: First Corporal of the Armed Police
Date of the attack: June 6, 1975
Place of the attack: Barcelona
Weapon: Pistol
Killed by: ETA

Description of the attack:

In the spring of 1975, the political-military branch of ETA decided to send several cells to Barcelona, Galicia, and Madrid with the intention of opening new fronts against the Franco government. A group of ETA members settled in Barcelona, where they carried out several bank robberies. On June 6, they perpetrated one of these assaults. The ETA members entered a Banco Santander branch on Caspe Street, but an employee activated an alarm connected to the Police Headquarters, which dispatched a nearby patrol.

The ETA members encountered the agents at the exit and opened fire on them. First Corporal Ovidio Díaz López was hit by seven shots, one of which struck his heart, causing his death. One of the assailants was wounded, but the entire group of robbers—six or seven—managed to flee. Ovidio Díaz López was married, had one child, and his wife was pregnant when he was killed.

A month and a half later, two members of ETA's political-military branch, Ignacio Pérez Beotegui, alias Wilson, one of the group's main leaders and head of its special commandos, and Juan Paredes Manot, alias Txiki, were arrested in Barcelona. The police caught them while they were preparing another bank robbery. Paredes Manot was executed on September 27, 1975.

GREGORIO POSADA ZURRÓN

Born in: Castilla y León
Age: 32
Children: 2
Marital status: Married
Occupation: Guardia Civil First Corporal
Date of the attack: April 3, 1974
Place of the attack: Azpeitia
Weapon: Other explosives
Killed by: ETA

Description of the attack:

Gregorio Posada Zurrón followed in his father's footsteps, who was a Guardia Civil, and joined the force. In 1974, he was head of the Information Group in Azpeitia after rejecting a transfer to Logroño. On April 3, 1974, the corporal was driving his car through Juan XXIII Street in the Gipuzkoan town. He was moving slowly due to road work on the street. Two terrorists stood in front of the vehicle and shot at him at point-blank range with two foreign-made submachine guns. Gregorio, hit directly, lost control of the car and crashed into the door of a local business.

A ten-year-old boy who witnessed the attack alerted customers at a nearby bar about the terrorist action, and some of them quickly assisted the officer while others went to notify the Guardia Civil barracks. He was taken to the San Sebastián Military Hospital, where he died two hours later.

LUCIO RODRÍGUEZ MARTÍN

Born in: Castilla-La Mancha
Age: 23
Children: 0
Marital status: Single
Occupation: Armed Police Officer
Date of the attack: July 14, 1975
Place of the attack: Madrid
Weapon: Pistol
Killed by: FRAP

Description of the attack:

Armed Police officer Lucio Rodríguez was on duty guarding the Iberia company offices located at 14 Alenza Street. His shift ended at 10:00 p.m., but twenty minutes had passed, and the colleague meant to relieve him had not yet arrived. At that moment, a Seat 127 carrying three FRAP members parked on the street. Two individuals got out and opened fire on the officer, discharging up to eight bullets that wounded him in the head, neck, shoulder, arm, and abdomen. As the terrorists fled, Lucio Rodríguez managed to walk to Cristóbal Bordiú Street, where he collapsed. He died at the Central Red Cross Hospital. The officer, aged 23, was born in Villaluenga, Toledo, and was planning to marry his fiancée in September.

ANTONIO POSE RODRÍGUEZ

Born in: Castilla-La Mancha
Age: 49
Children: 0
Marital status: Married
Occupation: Guardia Civil Lieutenant
Date of the attack: August 16, 1975
Place of the attack: Madrid
Weapon: Submachine gun
Killed by: FRAP

Description of the attack:

It was 2:30 p.m. when Adolfina Fernández heard a detonation. She immediately looked out the window of her home, a third-floor apartment in the Virgen del Rosario neighborhood, and saw her husband on the ground. Antonio Pose Rodríguez, a Guardia Civil lieutenant, was returning home after finishing his shift at the Traffic Division. After parking and getting out of his vehicle, several young men approached and shot him with a shotgun in front of a twelve-year-old boy. The officer lay bleeding on the ground as his attackers fled through an underpass, scattering FRAP (Revolutionary Antifascist Patriotic Front) propaganda along the way. Antonio Pose was taken to the Gómez Ulla Military Hospital, where his death was confirmed.

About RIET

The Revista Internacional de Estudios sobre Terrorismo (RIET), is an electronic e-journal publication born from the idea of offering investigators a platform through which to publish academic articles related to the study of terrorism from any of its different approaches and perspectives (anti-terrorist strategies, security, prevention of violent radicalism, intelligence, etc.). The journal will provide flexibility in terms of content, style and length of the articles, without neglecting professional academic standards.

The research articles and other contents of the journal will be reviewed by members of the Scientific Committee, academic experts and external professionals prior to publication. They will provide the author with feedback, corrections, and pertinent notes if they were necessary.

Publishing every four months, RIET intends to become a reference for those authors who wish to publish in Spanish or English. RIET also intends to be the priority option of consultation for the Spanish-speaking public looking for contrasted quality content in the area of terrorism.

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Publication criteria

Articles and reviews sent to the journal must have scientific rigor. They must be original documents that have not been previously published or submitted for review in any other publication. Articles related to the study of terrorism from any of its multiple approaches will be accepted.

The evaluation system of the content submitted will be carried out through a peer review, guaranteeing the author's anonymity. Said review will be done by two members of the Scientific Committee or specialists external to the journal. The suitability of the subject, originality of the content, contribution in academic terms and its scientific rigor will be subject to evaluation.

The evaluators will present their opinion on the content, deciding whether it meets the conditions required to be published or if modifications are necessary. In the event that the analyzed text does not meet the minimum requirements they may also decide it is not valid for publication.

The author will be informed of the reception of the article within a week. The evaluation process will take less than eight weeks from the moment the article is received. For those articles that must undergo modifications, the maximum time to send the definitive version of the article will be ten days from the moment the author is informed. The definitive version will then be reevaluated. In these cases, corrections should me limited to errors, restricting the possibility of adding content.

About **the periodicity**, the journal will be published every four months. There will be three an nual issues published in the first week of the months of April, August and December. The deadline for submissions will be three months before the publication of each issue. If the content is received later than the stipulated date, it will be incorporated into the review for the next issue.

The submission of the original manuscripts must be sent to the Editorial Team through the e-mail jy@observatorioterrorismo.com. The e-mail must be carbon copied (CC) to the direction: c@observatorioterrorismo.com.

Two files must be sent in Word format. One including the author's name, professional affiliation and a brief description of the author's CV at the footer, and the other with an anonymous version of the paper.

Instructions for authors

– The papers can be written both in Spanish and English.
– The papers must comply with the spelling standards of the Royal Spanish Academy, following the 2019 update of the 2010 edition.
– The minimum length of scientific articles will be 4,000 words, and the maximum of 5,000, excluding references and footnotes. The latter should not exceed 2,000 words. Every article must include a maximum 200-word abstract, and maximum 5 keywords. Both the abstract and the keywords must be included in Spanish and English. Bibliographic reviews will have a maximum length of 1,500 words.
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- Title, centered.
- Name of the author or authors along with their institutional affiliation. Under the title and with the surnames in capital letters.
- Introduction
- Main sections must be numbered and highlighted in bold (1.), the first one being the introduction.
- Second level sections must be numbered and in italics (1.1).
- Third level sections must be numbered and underlined (1.1.).
- Conclusions
- Bibliographic references arranged alphabetically.

– The text must follow Arial 12 style with 1.5 line spacing. Double space will not be used except in the heading of each main section. Tabs will be avoided, with exceptions. The paper must present a justified alignment.
– Citations longer than four lines must be tabulated and spaced from the upper and lower paragraphs.
– The citation model will be based on APA format, adding in the text in parentheses the surname(s) of the authors along with the year of publication of the work and the page, if necessary (González, 2015:35). It will be fully cited in the final section of bibliographic references. Footnotes will be reserved for clarifications, comments or punctuations, and used with moderation.
– Numerically ordered tables or graphs may be included. All of them must have a short description beginning with FIGURE X. (FIGURE 4. EVOLUTION TABLE OF ATTACKS). It will be necessary to indicate the origin of the source at the end of the description, whether it is from another author or self-elaborated (SOURCE: own elaboration).

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