

## Global terrorism: trends in 2014/2015

### SUMMARY

Terrorism continues to present one of the main challenges to international stability. Despite political agreement that terrorist threat needs to be addressed jointly by the whole international community, a number of obstacles persist, including disagreements over the definition of terrorism. This latter poses a significant impediment for research on terrorism and only a few institutions have undertaken this difficult task.

According to the existing data, the number of terrorist attacks in 2014 was double that of 2004, an increase primarily linked to the growing number of countries affected by terrorism, in particular in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and southern Asia. The same three regions have also been the most affected by terrorism, with the number of attacks increasing in all three, most significantly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Altogether, the number of casualties almost doubled compared to 2013, even though the number of terrorist attacks increased by 40%.

Political instability and weak governance in many countries have provided fertile ground for radicalism and growth in terrorist activities, in particular in Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. Although Al-Qaeda and its offshoots maintain a strong position internationally, and continue to pose a serious threat, their standing has been increasingly challenged by the emergence of the 'Islamic State' Group (ISIL/Da'esh). The creation of a terrorist enclave on Syrian and Iraqi territory, and the establishment of a self-proclaimed caliphate, provided an appealing narrative that has fuelled a continued influx of foreign fighters to join the ranks of ISIL/Da'esh.



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## Terrorism: the concept and data sources

The international community is divided over a universally acceptable [definition](#) of terrorism. Despite broad consensus that the threat of global terrorism needs to be addressed, differences about what constitutes terrorism have resulted in a patchwork of approaches, ranging from setting out a catalogue of terrorist acts to adopting legal definitions of terrorism. This is primarily due to diverging views among the international community on what constitutes terrorism, as opposed to exercising peoples' right to [self-determination](#), as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and established by UN practice. The highly sensitive and politicised nature of this phenomenon has direct implications on the study of terrorism, data collection, and the elaboration of counterterrorism policies (see Box 1). To date, only a few research centres have developed sound methodologies that allow for a comparative analysis of trends in terrorism worldwide.

The **Global Terrorism Database (GTD)** is a regularly updated open-source database managed by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland. The database covers the period between 1970 and 2014 and includes more than 140 000 cases of domestic and international incidences of terrorism. Within the limits of information available publicly, the database allows for extensive analysis and comparison by gathering information on the dates and locations of incidents, the weapons used and nature of the targets, the number of casualties, and the groups or individuals responsible. Given that there is no one definition of terrorism, GTD allows for some degree of flexibility through filtering tools. GTD [defines](#) a terrorist attack as 'the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious or social goal through fear, coercion or intimidation'. Consequently, the database includes only incidents meeting the following three criteria: a) intentionality; b) some level of violence or immediate threat of violence; c) subnational nature of perpetrators. The database is used extensively by researchers (e.g. for the [Global Terrorism Index](#) published by the Institute for Economics and Peace) and policy-makers (e.g. [Country Reports on Terrorism](#) produced by the US Department of State) despite some [criticism](#) over the [methodology](#) applied by START.

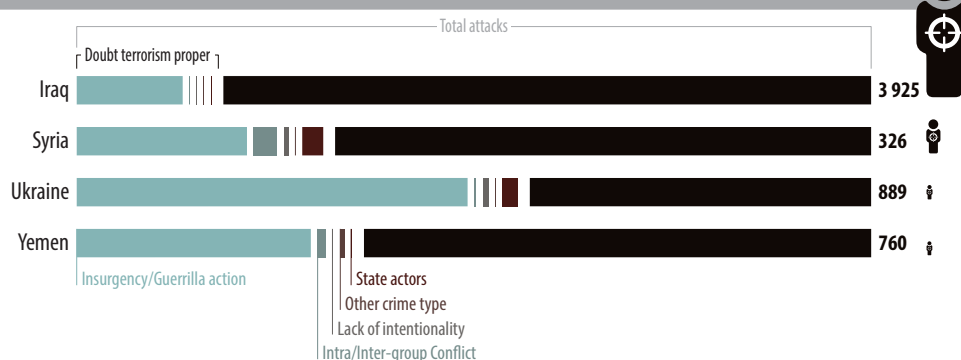
The **Suicide Attacks Database (CPOST SAD)** by the Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism at the University of Chicago is the most comprehensive and searchable database on suicide attacks since 1982. As of November 2015, the CPOST SAD included information about a total of 4 620 attacks in over 40 countries. The database contains information about the location of attacks, the target type, the weapon used, and systematic information on the demographic and general biographical characteristics of suicide attackers. The definition of a suicide attack adopted for the database covers 'an attack in which an attacker kills himself or herself in a deliberate attempt to kill others', but only if such attack has been executed by a non-state actor. While CPOST SAD allows for the analysis of terrorist attacks, the explicit focus on a specific mode of attack does not allow conclusions to be drawn about the scope of suicide attacks of a terrorist nature. This implies that, in addition to terrorist acts, such attacks can also be used as a guerrilla attack method. Consequently, according to the [methodological](#) approach adopted for the database, any suicide attack committed by a non-state actor and verified by two independent sources is included in the database.

In addition, the analysis of terrorism trends is conducted by national governments and international organisations relying on their own terrorism-reporting mechanisms. The **US Department of State** provides the Congress with [Country Reports on Terrorism](#) which include a detailed assessment of terrorist incidents in each country where major terrorist attacks have occurred, countries which provide sanctuary to terrorist organisations, information about terrorist groups, and the extent to which foreign countries cooperate with the United States in the fight against terrorism. Since 2001, the **European Police Office** (Europol) produces an annual EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report ([TE-SAT](#)) based on information provided by Member States, third countries, Eurojust and open sources. TE-SAT is a situation report providing the analysis and overview of terrorist activities in the EU, including basic facts and figures. Types of terrorism addressed in the report include religiously inspired terrorism, ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorist groups, left- and right-wing terrorist groups, and single issue terrorism (i.e. animal rights or environmental terrorist groups).

### Box 1 – Definitional ambiguity and its impact on data about terrorism

Definitional complexity bears implications for the process of data collection and analysis. The data for 2014, for instance, suggest high numbers of terrorist attacks in Iraq, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen. However, a closer look at the data (see Figure 1) suggests – to a varied degree – that in some instances a specific event could be classified not as an act of terrorism but rather as insurgency/guerrilla action, action by a state actor, intra/inter-group conflict, other crime type or an event with no specific intentions. 'Doubt terrorism proper' is a term used in the Global Terrorism Database to indicate such ambiguous cases. For instance, the data suggest that a significant percentage of attacks registered in Ukraine and Yemen could be classified as either acts of terror or [insurgency](#), opening the way for interpretation and political assessment.

FIGURE 1. DEFINITIONAL UNCERTAINTY: TERRORISM OR INSURGENCE



Source: [START](#), 2015; Graphics: EPRS.

## Trends in terrorism in 2014

In many aspects, 2014 can be described as a year of 'terrorist awakening'. The number of terrorist attacks doubled in comparison to 2004, primarily due to the volatilities in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and southern Asia (see Map 1). The same three regions remain the most affected by terrorism, with the sharpest increase in Sub-Saharan Africa (from 990 attacks in 2013 to 2 305 attacks in 2014). At the same time, attacks have become more deadly. The number of casualties due to terrorism almost doubled compared to 2013. CPOST SAD data also shows that 2014 registered the highest number of suicide attacks (545) since 1982. In addition, weak governance structures have provided fertile ground for radicalisation while constraints on the capacities of security forces facilitated the growth of jihadi and separatist groups,

including in Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. Even though Al-Qaeda and its offshoots maintained a strong position internationally and continued to pose a serious threat, their position was challenged by the so-called 'Islamic State' Group ([ISIL/Da'esh](#)). The establishment of a self-proclaimed caliphate on parts of Syrian and Iraqi territories provided an appealing narrative that has fuelled a continued influx of [foreign fighters](#) to join the ranks of ISIL/Da'esh.

### Box 2 – Methodological note

The Global Terrorism Database – the main source of data for this report – defines a terrorist attack as 'the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation.' In order to consider an incident for inclusion in the GTD, all three of the following attributes must be present:

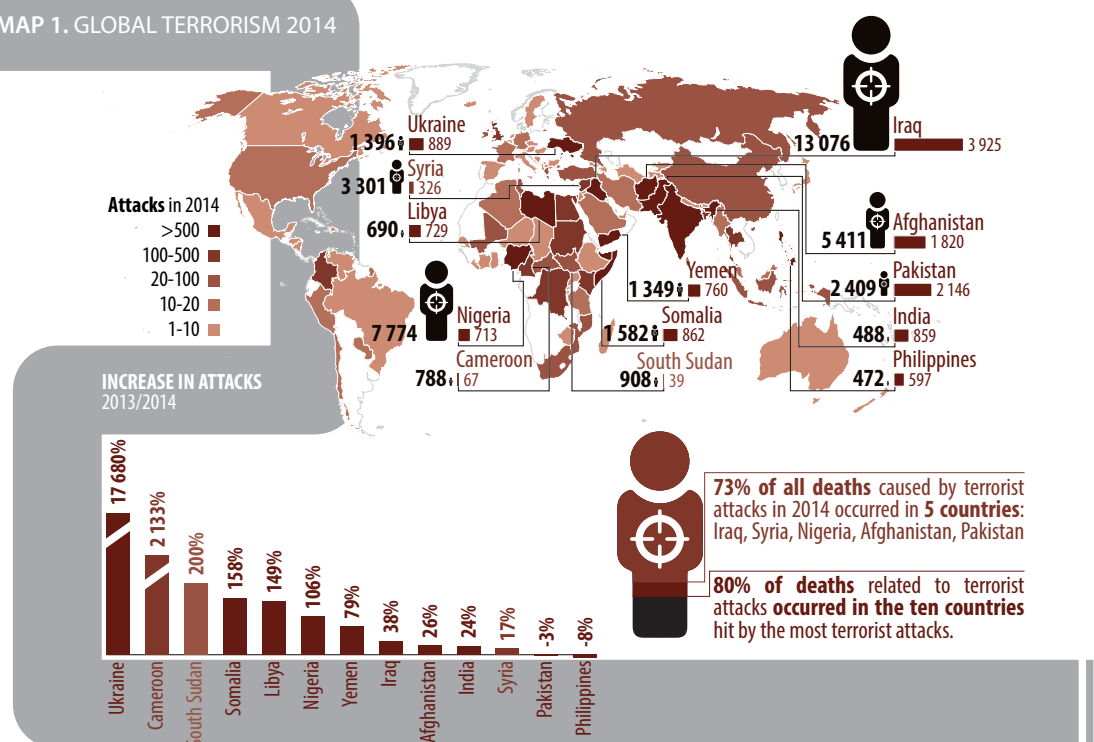
- The incident must be intentional
- The incident must entail some level of violence or immediate threat of violence – including violence against property and people
- The perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national actors.

In addition, two of the following three criteria also had to be met for inclusion in GTD:

1. The act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal;
2. There must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) other than the immediate victims; and
3. The act must fall outside the precepts of legitimate warfare activities as prescribed by international humanitarian law, in particular the prohibition against deliberately targeting civilians or non-combatants.

The acts taken into account in this briefing meet all three criteria. It should also be noted that GTD includes names of perpetrator groups which are not necessarily designated as terrorist organisations by the [United Nations](#), the [United States](#) or the [European Union](#) (see Annex 1).<sup>1</sup>

MAP 1. GLOBAL TERRORISM 2014



Source: [START](#), 2015; Graphics: EPRS.

## Regional developments

Although all regions have been affected to a varied degree by different types of terrorism (i.e. motivated politically and religiously, by separatist or anarchist groups). Political instability and weak governance across the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia allowed these three regions to become the main theatres for terrorist operations. Even though the number of terrorist attacks in other parts of the world has not increased significantly, the threat of terrorism persisted due to growing radicalisation – in particular via the internet.

### *Middle East and North Africa*

The Middle East and North Africa registered the **highest number of attacks** (6 913). Iraq remains the country with most terrorist attacks (13 076) – twice as many as for the rest of the region altogether – followed by Yemen, Libya, Egypt and Syria. In addition, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen registered the highest numbers of victims. Substantial increases in terrorist attacks and victims were registered in Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Yemen and the West Bank: almost a seven-fold increase in Israel and over two-fold in Libya and the West Bank. Algeria and Bahrain saw a slight decrease in the number of terrorist attacks. In the case of Algeria, this could be explained by the government's more decisive approach following the [hostage crisis](#) of January 2013. In [Bahrain](#), the government intensified a crackdown on anti-government groups labelled as 'terrorist organisations'. The most active perpetrator groups in the region were: in Egypt – Ajnad Misr and Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis; in Iraq – ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Naqshabandiya Army; in Yemen – Al-Islah Party, AQAP and Houthis; in Israel – Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis and Hamas; and in Syria – Al-Nusrah Front and ISIL/Da'esh.

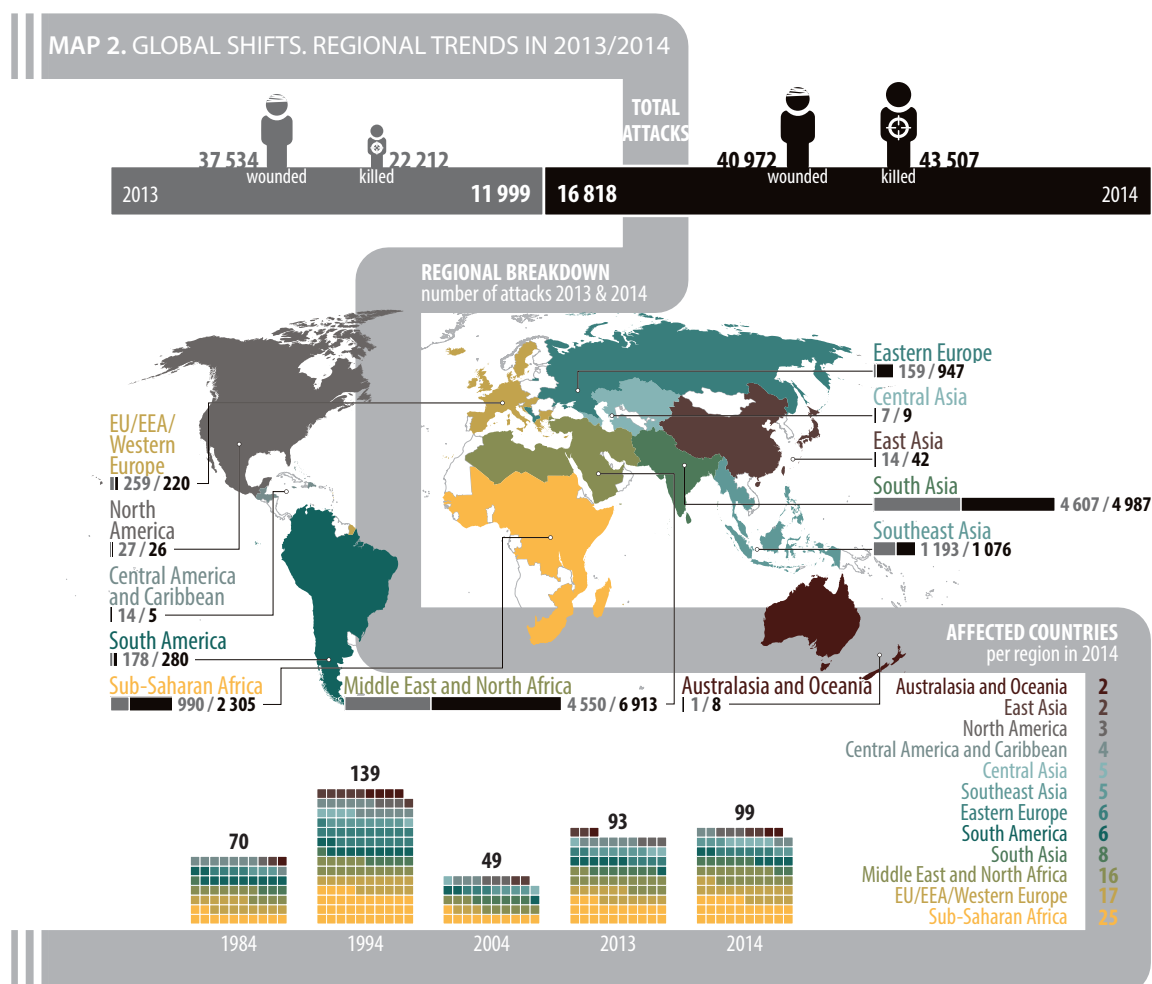
### *Sub-Saharan Africa*

Sub-Saharan Africa registered one of the **highest increases in terrorist activity**. This was due to the growing number of countries affected by terrorism – more than double compared to 2004 (see Map 2). The highest numbers of terrorist attacks were registered in Somalia (862), Nigeria (713), Sudan (157), Kenya (115) and Democratic Republic of Congo (109). The attacks also became more deadly: while the number of attacks in Nigeria has doubled, that of individuals killed in attacks has tripled. The number of attacks in Somalia and Sudan almost tripled, but that of people killed doubled. Relatively low numbers of attacks in South Sudan (39) and Cameroon (67) do not reflect the damage caused by terrorism in those countries, where the numbers of casualties were among the highest in the region (908 and 788 respectively). Terrorists have also intensified their operations in Uganda where six attacks took place and 98 individuals were killed. The region has also recorded numerous instances of hostage-taking, especially in Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo and Cameroon. [Boko Haram](#) and al-Shabaab remained the most dangerous terrorist groups in the region. In addition, operations by groups like South Sudan's Liberation Movement, Allied Democratic Forces and Seleka contribute to instability in the region (see Maps 3 and 4).

### *Asia and the Pacific*

Terrorism in southern Asia **remained one of the main sources of instability** in the region. Al-Qaeda and other like-minded groups (e.g. the [Afghan Taliban](#), the [Hagqani Network](#), and Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan) continued to launch attacks against NATO's forces in the International Security Assistance Force ([ISAF](#)). Pakistan was the country with most terrorist attacks (2 149) – committed primarily by [Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan](#) (TTP) and groups such as [Baloch Republican Army](#) (BRA) and [Lashkar-e-Balochistan](#). The

number of attacks in Afghanistan has increased compared to 2013, resulting in 5 411 people killed and 5 108 wounded (compared to 3 696 and 4 323 respectively in 2013). The number of terrorist attacks in India has also increased slightly, to 859 attacks. The most deadly attacks were [orchestrated](#) by the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) in retribution for the anti-insurgency operation conducted by Indian security forces, but also due to the conflict between the [Adivasi](#) – considered an aboriginal population of India – and Bodo militants. Other organisations active in India include [Communist Party of India – Maoist](#) (CPI-Maoist) which has targeted government institutions but also civilians refusing to allow their children to join CPI-Maoist; [Lashkar-e-Taiba \(LeT\)](#) primarily attacking military targets; and [People's Liberation Army](#) operating in Manipur. Terrorist acts in the remaining parts of Asia and the Pacific caused less damage, but some worrying trends are emerging. Most attacks in **East Asia** took place in China (37), and were conducted primarily in Xinjiang province by [Uighur](#) separatists and Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM). The latter was also responsible for the [2013 attack](#) in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Even though the specific motive is unknown, there has been speculation that the attack was motivated by China's hardline regional policies.



Source: [START](#), 2015; Graphics: EPRS.

Concerning the rest of Asia, the Philippines and Thailand remained two countries in **south-east Asia** with a relatively high number of terrorist attacks (597 and 423 respectively) – higher than Egypt, Syria or Israel. Terrorism in the region was related primarily to separatist movements in Indonesia ([Free Papua Movement](#), OPM), Thailand (mostly [separatist movements](#) in the Narathiwat and Patani), and Philippines (e.g. the



[Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement](#), [New People's Army](#)). Attacks in **Australasia and Oceania** were primarily organised by anarchist organisations targeting private property. The only recorded attack – among the total of seven attacks in Australia – that was [politically and religiously](#) motivated took place in Sydney in December 2014. Two hostages and the attacker were killed after [police](#) stormed the building. Malaysia and the Philippines were also the main theatres of the activities of the Islamist group [Abu Sayyaf Group](#). **Central Asia** was affected by attacks in Azerbaijan (three) and to a lesser degree by Taliban attacks in Turkmenistan (one), and attacks by unknown groups on government property in Georgia (two) and Kyrgyzstan (two). However, the motivation for these attacks has varied, including political and religious reasons.

### *Europe*

The most publicised case in the **European Union** in 2014 was the attack on the [Jewish Museum](#) in Brussels which brought to the fore – yet again – the question of [radicalisation](#) of EU citizens and their recruitment to the ranks of ISIL/Da'esh and other terrorist groups. The United Kingdom remained the EU Member State with the highest number of terrorist attacks (103) followed by Ireland (33), Greece (26), France (12) and Germany (12). The numbers of terrorist attacks in **Eastern Europe** has skyrocketed, due to the conflict in eastern Ukraine, which brought the number of attacks classified as terrorist acts from only five in 2013, to 889 in 2014. However, these data need to be approached with some caution, given the ambiguity over interpretation of these attacks (see Box 1) and designation of entities operating in the region as terrorist organisations (see Box 3). In addition, Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia continued to be the main theatres of terrorist operations in Russia, even though the number of attacks has dropped, from 144 in 2013 to 46 in 2014.

#### **Box 3 – Ukraine**

The status of groups operating in eastern Ukraine is not entirely clear. The Verkhovna Rada – Ukrainian parliament – passed a [resolution](#) in January 2015 in which it [designated](#) the self-proclaimed 'Donetsk People's Republic' and 'Lugansk People's Republic' as terrorist organisations. The EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs have [addressed](#) the issue on several occasions and concluded that further consideration would be given to a possible designation of militant groups in eastern Ukraine as terrorist organisations. Nonetheless, in the framework of the restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, the EU Council [decided](#) on 25 July 2014 to freeze any assets of the 'Donetsk People's Republic' and the 'Lugansk People's Republic' in the EU and to prohibit funds being made available to it from the EU. Consequently, 149 persons and 37 entities are subject to an asset freeze and a travel ban, including six persons with close links to the Russian president. On 14 September 2015 the Council took a [decision](#) to extend the validity of these measures until 15 March 2016.

### *The Americas*

The United States remains the country with the highest number of terrorist attacks in **North America** (19) but no attacks similar to the 2013 [Boston Marathon](#) attack took place in 2014. Instead, the US has experienced a series of attacks conducted by [home-grown](#) extremists against government buildings, law enforcement officials and minorities. In [Mexico](#), there has been a shift from assassination of journalists, businessmen and government officials – like those in the state of Chihuahua in 2013 – towards hostage-taking of NGO workers in Chiapas as an intimidation tactic related to their work on the environment. However, for many reasons (see Box 1), qualification of these attacks as terrorism – as opposed to common crime – might be debated.

The highest number of attacks in **South America** was registered in Colombia (230), which continued the [struggle](#) against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN). Chile (17) and Paraguay (14) were also confronted with acts of terror, albeit on a much smaller scale. Major attacks in **Central America and the Caribbean** were primarily targeted against government institutions in [Honduras](#) (one) and [Nicaragua](#) (two).

### Organisational evolution

Probably the most significant development in 2014 has been the [dissociation](#) of Al-Qaeda in Iraq – currently known as ISIL/Da'esh – from the Al-Qaeda network. This process gave further impetus to the evolution of terrorist networks towards more decentralised and independent structures, whereby decisions are no longer taken only by the organisations' leadership but are delegated to individuals. To achieve this effect, Al-Qaeda and ISIL/Da'esh have made extensive [use of the internet](#) for the purpose of propaganda, recruitment, funding and training. Access to the internet has allowed terrorist groups to circulate 'self-help' manuals and guidebooks providing individuals with information on how to build a bomb or convert regular objects into one. Even though a large majority of terrorist attacks worldwide were conducted by unknown perpetrators, and many groups have contributed to the horrifying statistics, two main terrorist groups and their affiliates were particularly active in 2014 and posed a significant danger: ISIL/Da'esh (1 241 attacks) and Al-Qaeda's affiliates such as al-Shabaab (864 attacks), Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (283 attacks) and Al-Nusra Front (72 attacks). Two other organisations, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (166 attacks) and [Boko Haram](#) (493 attacks) have in the past confirmed their affiliation with Al-Qaeda.

### Major developments in 2015

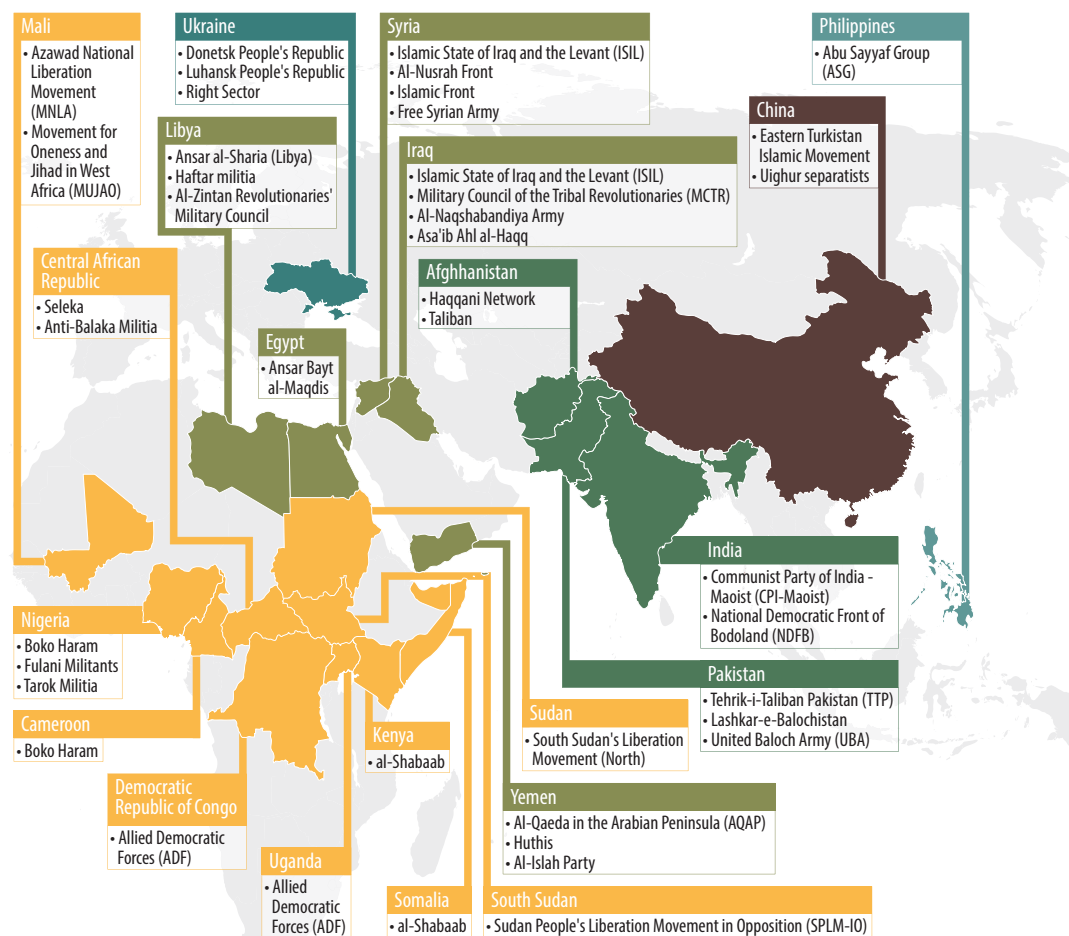
The beginning of 2015 confirmed that ISIL/Da'esh and its offshoots pose a serious threat to international security. In particular, their focus on establishing functioning state-like entities or power-sharing arrangements with local communities poses a long-term challenge. Furthermore, the terrorist attack at the [Charlie Hebdo](#) headquarters in Paris and the incident aboard a high-speed train from Amsterdam to Paris accentuated the problem of [radicalisation](#) in Europe and the need to counter the capacity of terrorist groups to [recruit](#) new adepts.

### Inter-group competition

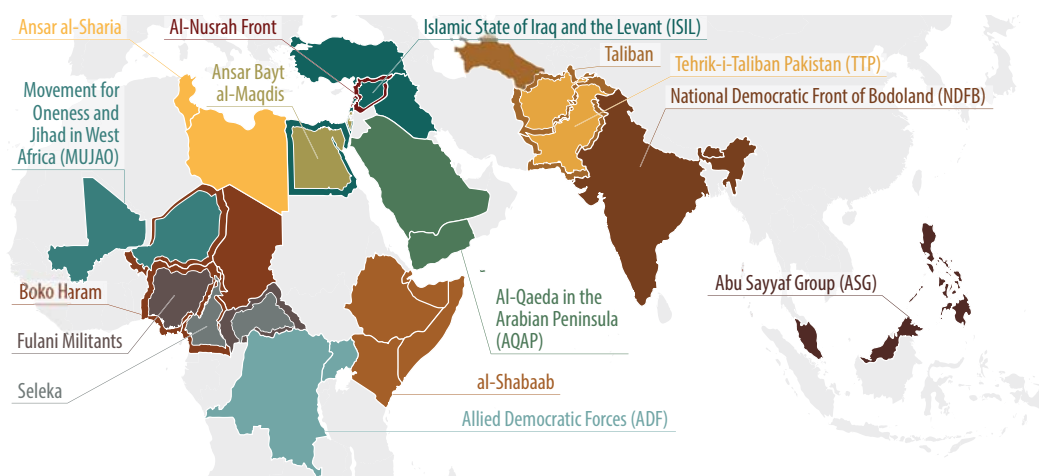
The rivalry for influence between Al-Qaeda and ISIL/Da'esh has continued throughout 2015. The unprecedented territorial advances made by ISIL/Da'esh have influenced other organisations like [Boko Haram](#), [Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement](#) and the [Abu Sayyaf Group](#) – who used to be affiliated with Al-Qaeda – to pledge allegiance to the self-proclaimed caliphate, which in turn extended the reach of ISIL/Da'esh beyond Syria and Iraq. Others, like [al-Shabaab](#), are still weighing the potential benefits of shifting their allegiance from Al-Qaeda. Analysis of the ISIL/Da'esh propaganda magazine *Dabiq* suggests that the group's leadership is increasingly concerned with the challenge posed by Al-Qaeda affiliated groups like al-Nusra Front and rebel groups like the Islamic Front in Syria, which *Dabiq* tries to discredit as allies of the West and 'jihad claimants'. Consequently, there is a risk that the struggles for publicity, financing and manpower between these two terrorist 'mega-networks' will result in more frequent attacks but also new methods of recruitment and funding.



MAP 3. MOST DANGEROUS PERPETRATORS (2014 BY REGION)



MAP 4. PERPETRATOR ORGANISATIONS OPERATING IN MORE THAN ONE COUNTRY (2014)



Source: [START](#), 2015; Graphics: EPRS.

### Territorial expansion and consolidation

Intelligence reports suggest that ISIL/Da'esh is increasing its operations in [Central Asia](#), particularly in [Uzbekistan](#) and Turkmenistan. The [Western Balkans](#), too, are increasingly at the centre of attention given their role as hubs for transit and logistics for jihadists travelling to and from the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq. Several smaller groups have also emerged – for instance, ISIL/Da'esh affiliated [Ansar Biet al-Maqdis](#) in Egypt and al-Qaeda's offshoot [al-Mourabitoun](#) in Mali – highlighting their continued capacity to

attract new supporters. Terrorist organisations in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa continue to exploit weak governance and the absence of security forces. [Boko Haram](#) and [al-Shabaab](#) have in recent months increased hit-and-run attacks in more peripheral parts of Nigeria and Kenya respectively. At the same time, both ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Qaeda are focused on consolidating their powers, albeit with different approaches: while the former [attempts](#) to transform into a functioning state by imposing its rules, the latter seeks to integrate with local Muslim militant movements, deferring administrative tasks to local actors (e.g. [AQIP in al-Mukalla](#) or the 'Army of Conquest' [coalition](#) led by al-Nusra Front in Syria).

### **Evolving strategies and tactics**

With regard to the tactics used, there have been instances of attacks on civilian targets (e.g. [universities](#), [hotels](#), [shopping malls](#) or [places of worship](#)) suggesting that, rather than large-scale attacks, the sympathisers of these groups will continue to conduct small-scale and unsophisticated attacks but with higher frequency. Consequently, the risk of attacks by small groups or '[lone wolves](#)' remains high. At the same time, human rights advocates highlight [serious crimes](#) committed by ISIL/Da'esh and its affiliates against religious and ethnic [minorities](#), including killing, kidnapping, and [sexual crimes](#). Additionally, in August 2015, al-Qaeda released another [message](#) from Osama bin Laden's son Hamza, calling for attacks in Washington, London, Paris and Tel Aviv. The use of internet and new technologies has increased the capacity of terrorist groups to collect funds, recruit new members or spread propaganda via the [internet](#). Analysis of the primary sources of ISIL/Da'esh [funding](#) also confirms its reliance on bank robbery and extortion, control of oil fields and refineries and theft of economic assets. The military operations in Syria conducted by the United States and Russia also seem to have influenced a shift in ISIL/Da'esh strategy, from one traditionally focused on 'the near enemy' (i.e. apostates and the Arab countries cooperating with the United States) to arbitrary attacks against Westerners. There is also a risk that an increasing military presence of external actors in the country will strengthen the jihadi narrative.

### **EU policy response in 2015**

Following the terrorist attacks in Paris in January 2015, EU counterterrorism has [focused](#) in particular on the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters and radicalisation. The EU Justice and Home Affairs Ministers adopted the Riga [joint statement](#) on counter-terrorism followed by the European Council [statement](#) on counter-terrorism of 12 February 2015. The document puts forward an agenda based on three pillars: ensuring the security of citizens, preventing radicalisation and safeguarding values, and cooperating with international partners. Counter-terrorism figures as one of the priority areas in the European Agenda for Security [adopted](#) by the European Commission on 28 April 2015. With regard to limiting terrorist activities online, the pilot phase of the Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU) at Europol was launched on 1 July 2015 – with a view to achieving operational capability by January 2016. The reports on the implementation of the EU priorities laid out in February were presented by the EU Counterterrorism Coordinator in [June](#) and [October](#) 2015. Following discussion in the Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI) Support Group, in October the Luxembourg Presidency and the EU Counter Terrorism Coordinator [presented](#) five priority actions, in view of the European Council in December.

**Box 4 – Terrorism and sanctions regime in the European Union**

The definition of the term 'terrorist offences' adopted by the Member States in their national legislation is provided in Article 1 of the Council Framework Decision of 13 June 2002 on combating terrorism ([2002/475/JHA](#)). This Framework Decision specifies that terrorist offences are intentional acts which, given their nature or context, may seriously damage a country or an international organisation, where committed with the aim of:

- Seriously intimidating a population, or
- Unduly compelling a Government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act, or
- Seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation.

The EU [defines](#) terrorist groups as 'a structured group of more than two persons, established over a period of time and acting in concert to commit terrorist offences'. But individual countries and international organisations have developed their own procedures for designating such groups – most notably the [EU](#), the [United States](#) and the [UN](#). The EU's list of persons, groups and entities involved in terrorist acts and subject to restrictive measures is [established](#) on the basis of the Common Position [2001/931/CFSP](#). It implements UN Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). The list includes persons and groups active both within and outside the EU and is reviewed regularly, and at least every six months. A separate EU regime has developed to implement UN Security Council resolution 1989 (2011) on the freezing of funds of persons and entities associated with Osama bin Laden, the Al-Qaeda network and the Taliban (including ISIL/Da'esh).

With regard to EU assistance to third countries, the Foreign Affairs Council of 9 February 2015 adopted [conclusions](#) on counter-terrorism which underline the importance of strengthening cooperation with the EU's partners in North Africa, the Middle East, the Gulf, Turkey and the Balkans. On 16 March 2015, the EU Council [adopted](#) the EU Regional Strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/Da'esh threat. In July 2015, the EU updated the [list](#) of persons, groups and entities subject to restrictive measures. On 22 October 2015, the Luxembourg Presidency signed, on behalf of the EU,<sup>2</sup> the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism ([CETS No 196](#)) and its Additional Protocol ([CETS No 217](#)). The Protocol criminalises acts such as taking part in an association or group for the purpose of terrorism, receiving terrorist training, travelling abroad for the purposes of terrorism and financing or organising travel for this purpose. It also provides for the establishment of a network of national 24/7 contact points, facilitating the rapid exchange of information.

In addition to legislative activities, in 2015 the European Parliament took a stance on issues linked to global terrorism on several occasions. In February, the Parliament adopted a resolution on [anti-terrorism measures](#) which focuses, among other things, on combating the root causes of terrorism and radicalisation leading to violent extremism, and adopting an EU external strategy to combat international terrorism. Successive resolutions related to global terrorism dealt with [attacks and abductions](#) by ISIL/Da'esh and the [destruction of cultural sites](#).

## Main references

Europol, (2015), [European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2015](#).

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) (2015), [Global Terrorism Database](#).

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Any reference to a 'terrorist act' or 'terrorist group' in this briefing reflects its inclusion in the Global Terrorism Database and therefore should not be interpreted as the European Union's position or the author's personal view. The decision whether to regard a specific group as a terrorist organisation is left to the reader's discretion.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to the EU, the following Member States have signed the Additional Protocol: Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and United Kingdom.

## Annex 1 – Organisations listed as terrorist groups and/or subject to sanctions

Terrorist organisation	EU*	US	UN**
Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)	Y(B)	Y	Y(1)
Al Mourabitoun	Y(B)	N	Y(8)
Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)	Y(B)	N	Y(9)
Al-Nusrah Front / Jabhat al-Nusrah	Y(A)	Y	Y(8)
Al-Qaeda	Y(B)	Y	Y(1)
Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)	Y(B)	Y	Y(1)
Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)	Y(B)	Y	Y(5)
Al-Shabaab	Y(B)	Y	Y(4)
Ansar al-Shari'a	Y(B)	Y	Y(10)
Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis	N	Y	N
Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic	N(C)***	Y	N
New People's Army (NPA)	Y(A)	Y	N
Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM)	Y(B)	N	Y(2)
Boko Haram	Y(A)	Y	Y(8)
Hamas, including Hamas-Izz al-Din al-Qassem	Y(A)	Y	N
Haqqani Network (HQN)	Y(B)***	Y	Y(7)
Houthi movement	N(B)***	N	N(11)***
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) / Da'esh	Y(B)	Y	Y(8)
Lashkar-e Tayyiba (LeT)	Y(B)	Y	Y(3)
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	Y(A)	Y	N
Mouvement pour l'Unification et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO)	Y(B)	N	Y(6)
Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	Y(B)	Y	Y(6)

**Sources:** [United Nations](#), [Council of the European Union](#), [US Department of State](#).

\* Pursuant to (A) List of terrorist organisations in the Council Decision (CFSP) [2015/1334](#), (B) the EU's [regime implementing UN Security Council resolutions](#), (C) the EU's [own sanction regime](#).

\*\* Sanctions pursuant to UNSC (1) [Resolution 1333 \(2000\)](#) (2) [Resolution 1390 \(2002\)](#) (3) [Resolution 1526 \(2004\)](#) (4) [Resolution 1844 \(2008\)](#) (5) [Resolution 1904 \(2009\)](#) (6) [Resolution 1989 \(2011\)](#) (7) [Resolution 1988 \(2011\)](#) (8) [Resolution 2083 \(2012\)](#) (9) [Resolution 2078 \(2012\)](#) (10) [Resolution 2161 \(2014\)](#) (11) [Resolution 2140 \(2014\)](#)

\*\*\* Sanctions do not concern the whole group but rather specific individuals.

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