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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE PROGRESSION OF COUNTER-TERRORISM AND COUNTER-EXTREMISM: DIMENSIONS OF GLOBAL RESPONSES

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ABSTRACT

"Terrorism" may well prove to be the most crucial word in the political vocabulary these days. Hundreds of billions of dollars are spent worldwide to bring this particular form of violent political crime or illicit mode of waging conflict under control while people die every day from acts of terrorism. Nevertheless, some people do not seem to bother to define terrorism and violent extremism, nor do they consider it worthwhile defining the concept. This study will probe the criteria applied by various nation-states while choosing the military and non-military actions and policies to counter terrorism and extremism, when framing it in a particular perception.

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INTRODUCTION

Case Studies of Selected Nations

U.S., Israel, and Russia: Counter-Terrorism Strategies: The counter-terrorism strategies of the United States, Israel, and Russia reflect their unique geopolitical contexts, historical experiences, and security priorities. Each nation has developed distinct approaches to combat terrorism, influenced by the nature of threats they face and their broader foreign policy objectives. Analyzing these strategies provides insights into the effectiveness and limitations of various counter-terrorism models, as well as the potential for international collaboration in addressing global extremism.

United States: Comprehensive and Global Counter-Terrorism

The U.S. counter-terrorism strategy is characterized by its global reach and emphasis on intelligence, military action, and homeland security. The 9/11 attacks in 2001 showcased a turning point, leading to the launch of the "War on Terror" and the establishment of extensive domestic and international counter-terrorism frameworks.

Military Interventions and Drone Strikes: Following 9/11, the U.S. initiated large-scale military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq to dismantle Al-Qaeda and remove state

sponsors of terrorism. The use of drone strikes became a cornerstone of U.S. strategy, targeting terrorist leaders and infrastructure in regions such as Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. While effective in neutralizing high-value targets, these strikes have faced criticism for causing civilian casualties and fueling anti-American sentiment (LaFree et al., 2018).

Intelligence and Surveillance: Intelligence gathering is central to U.S. counter-terrorism efforts, with agencies such as the CIA, NSA, and FBI playing pivotal roles. The Patriot Act expanded the government's surveillance powers, enabling the monitoring of communications and financial transactions. While these measures have disrupted numerous plots, they have also raised concerns about privacy and civil liberties.

Homeland Security and Border Protection: The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), established in 2002, coordinates efforts to secure U.S. borders, critical infrastructure, and transportation systems. Programs such as the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the No-Fly List aim to prevent terrorist entry and attacks on domestic soil. However, these measures have been criticized for their perceived focus on specific communities, particularly Muslim Americans.

Counter-Radicalization and Community Engagement: The U.S. has invested in counter-radicalization programs that address online propaganda and community-level grievances.

Initiatives such as the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) program seek to build resilience against radical ideologies through education, dialogue, and partnerships with local leaders. However, the effectiveness of these programs has been questioned due to inconsistent implementation and a lack of trust in some communities.

Israel: Pre-emptive and Targeted Counter-Terrorism: Israel's counter-terrorism strategy is shaped by its unique security environment, characterized by ongoing conflicts with neighbouring states and non-state actors such as Hamas and Hezbollah. The country's approach emphasizes pre-emption, intelligence, and rapid response to threats.

Intelligence -Driven Operations: Israel's intelligence agencies, including Mossad, Shin Bet, and Aman (military intelligence), are among the most advanced in the world. These agencies conduct extensive surveillance and infiltration of terrorist networks to gather actionable intelligence. For example, Israel's intelligence operations have thwarted numerous planned attacks and disrupted smuggling routes for weapons and explosives.

Targeted Killings and Pre-emptive Strikes: Targeted killings are a hallmark of Israel's counter-terrorism strategy, aimed at eliminating key leaders and operatives of terrorist groups. For instance, Israel's assassination of Hamas leader Ahmed Yassin in 2004 was intended to weaken the group's operational capabilities. While effective in the short term, such actions have drawn international criticism for their legality and potential to escalate violence.

Border Security and Barrier Construction: Physical barriers, such as the West Bank security fence, are central to Israel's efforts to prevent cross-border attacks. These barriers, combined with advanced technology like surveillance drones and biometric checkpoints, have significantly reduced suicide bombings. However, they have also sparked debates over their impact on Palestinian livelihoods and human rights.

Public Awareness and Civil Defence: Israel places a strong emphasis on public awareness and civil defense. Citizens are trained in emergency response, and public spaces are equipped with bomb shelters and alert systems. This culture of preparedness has enhanced societal resilience and minimized casualties during attacks.

Diplomatic and Military Engagements: Israel actively seeks international support for its counter-terrorism efforts, forging alliances with countries like the U.S. and pursuing peace agreements to reduce regional tensions. However, its military actions in Gaza and Lebanon have often been criticized for causing disproportionate civilian harm.

Russia: Suppression and Military Dominance: Russia's counter-terrorism strategy is shaped by its history of separatist movements and terrorism in the North Caucasus, particularly from groups in Chechnya and Dagestan. The approach is characterized by heavy-handed military action, centralized control, and suppression of dissent.

Military Operations in the North Caucasus: Russia's counter-terrorism efforts have focused heavily on suppressing insurgencies in the North Caucasus. Military operations, such as those during the Chechen wars, involved large-scale

offensives to dismantle rebel groups. These actions, while successful in reducing terrorist activity, have been criticized for widespread human rights abuses and collateral damage.

Crackdowns on Domestic Extremism: Russian authorities have implemented strict measures to monitor and suppress extremist activities within its borders. The Federal Security Service (FSB) plays a central role in identifying and neutralizing threats. However, these measures often target political dissenters and minority groups, raising concerns about their legitimacy and effectiveness.

Control of Information and Propaganda: The Russian government heavily regulates information to combat extremist propaganda. This includes blocking websites, monitoring social media, and promoting state narratives to counter anti-government sentiments. While this approach limits the spread of extremist content, it also restricts free expression and dissent.

International Counter-Terrorism Efforts: Russia has expanded its counter-terrorism operations beyond its borders, particularly in Syria, where it has supported the Assad regime under the guise of combating ISIS. These actions align with Russia's geopolitical interests and aim to strengthen its influence in the Middle East. However, critics argue that Russia's involvement has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the region.

Rehabilitation and Reintegration: Russia has also experimented with rehabilitation programs for former extremists, particularly women and children returning from conflict zones in Syria and Iraq. These programs focus on psychological support and reintegration into society, though their scale and effectiveness remain limited. The counter-terrorism strategies of the United States, Israel, and Russia reflect their distinct security priorities and challenges. The U.S. emphasizes global engagement and counter-radicalization, Israel focuses on pre-emption and rapid response, and Russia employs heavy-handed suppression and military dominance. While each approach has its strengths, they also face criticism for ethical concerns, unintended consequences, and challenges in addressing root causes. By learning from these strategies and fostering international collaboration, nations can develop more balanced and effective approaches to combat terrorism in a complex and interconnected world.

Comparison of Policies and Outcomes: A comparative analysis of counter-terrorism policies and their outcomes reveals how different approaches reflect unique geopolitical contexts, security challenges, and political priorities. The policies implemented by countries like the United States, Israel, and Russia offer distinct strategies that highlight variations in military engagement, intelligence gathering, community involvement, and legal frameworks. Evaluating these policies' outcomes allows for a deeper understanding of their effectiveness, limitations, and broader implications.

United States: A Global and Multi-Pronged Approach Policy Highlights: The U.S. has adopted a comprehensive counter-terrorism framework focused on military interventions, intelligence-led operations, homeland security, and counter-radicalization programs. This includes large-scale military actions, such as those in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the

use of drone strikes to target terrorist leaders globally. Domestically, programs like the Patriot Act and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) address potential threats through enhanced surveillance and community outreach (LaFree et al., 2018).

Outcomes

- **Successes:** The U.S. has achieved significant tactical victories, such as the elimination of high-profile targets like Osama bin Laden and the disruption of major terrorist plots. Enhanced border security and intelligence-sharing mechanisms have improved domestic safety.
- **Challenges:** Prolonged military interventions have incurred high economic and human costs while fuelling anti-American sentiment in affected regions. Programs like the CVE have faced criticism for disproportionately targeting Muslim communities, undermining trust and cooperation.
- **Broader Impact:** U.S. policies have significantly shaped global counter-terrorism norms, but their unilateral actions, such as drone strikes, have strained international relations and raised ethical concerns.

Israel: Pre-emptive and Targeted Strategies Policy Highlights

Israel's counter-terrorism approach is characterized by pre-emptive strikes, intelligence-driven operations, and robust border security. The construction of the West Bank barrier and the use of advanced surveillance technologies are central to preventing cross-border attacks. Israel also employs targeted assassinations to disrupt the leadership of groups like Hamas and Hezbollah (Mahan & Griset, 2012).

Outcomes

- **Successes:** Israel's pre-emptive measures have significantly reduced the frequency of suicide bombings and large-scale attacks within its borders. Its intelligence agencies are lauded for their effectiveness in infiltrating terrorist networks and foiling plots.
- **Challenges:** The heavy reliance on military action and targeted killings has escalated tensions and often provoked retaliation. The West Bank barrier and strict border controls have disrupted Palestinian livelihoods, leading to international criticism for alleged human rights violations.
- **Broader Impact:** Israel's emphasis on pre-emption serves as a model for nations facing persistent threats. However, its policies often deepen divisions with neighbouring states, complicating peace efforts.

Russia: Suppression and Centralized Control Policy Highlights

Russia's counter-terrorism strategy prioritizes military suppression, centralized governance, and strict control of information. Its efforts in the North Caucasus include large-scale military operations and intensive surveillance to dismantle extremist networks. Internationally, Russia has engaged in military interventions under the guise of combating terrorism, such as its involvement in Syria (Jones, 2013).

Outcomes

- **Successes:** Russia has successfully reduced terrorist activity in the North Caucasus through aggressive suppression and intelligence operations. Military actions in Syria have bolstered its geopolitical influence while disrupting ISIS's territorial control.
- **Challenges:** Russia's heavy-handed approach has been criticized for human rights violations, including indiscriminate violence and the suppression of political dissent. These tactics often exacerbate local grievances and fuel long-term instability.
- **Broader Impact:** While effective in neutralizing immediate threats, Russia's strategies risk alienating affected populations and undermining its international standing.

Comparison of Strategies

Aspect	United States	Israel	Russia
Military Engagement	Global operations, drone strikes	Pre-emptive strikes, targeted killings	Suppressive campaigns, foreign interventions
Intelligence Focus	Surveillance, global partnerships	Advanced surveillance, infiltration	Domestic monitoring, information control
Community Engagement	CVE programs, public awareness	Limited community involvement	Minimal focus on community engagement
Legal Frameworks	Patriot Act, expansive surveillance	Defensive security laws	Strict anti-extremism laws
Human Rights Concerns	Privacy violations, civilian casualties	Border restrictions, retaliation	Widespread suppression

Analysis of Outcomes

Effectiveness in Preventing Attacks

- **United States:** Combines global reach with domestic resilience, achieving significant operational successes but facing challenges in balancing security with civil liberties.
- **Israel:** Excels in preventing attacks within its borders through pre-emptive measures but struggles with the long-term consequences of heightened regional tensions.
- **Russia:** Effective in neutralizing immediate threats through military dominance but risks perpetuating cycles of violence and alienation.

Long-Term Stability

1. **United States:** Prolonged interventions have destabilized regions like the Middle East, fostering conditions for extremist resurgence.
2. **Israel:** Sustains internal security but struggles to address the root causes of conflict, perpetuating hostility with Palestinian communities.
3. **Russia:** Maintains centralized control but undermines long-term stability through indiscriminate violence and suppression.

Global Influence

- **United States** : Shapes international counter-terrorism norms but faces criticism for unilateral actions.
- **Israel**: Serves as a model for rapid response but faces international condemnation for human rights issues.
- **Russia**: Asserts geopolitical influence but at the cost of strained relations with Western nations.

The counter-terrorism strategies of the United States, Israel, and Russia reflect their distinct contexts and priorities, yielding varied outcomes. While the U.S. emphasizes global engagement and resilience, Israel focuses on pre-emption, and Russia relies on suppression. Each approach has demonstrated successes and challenges, highlighting the need for balanced strategies that address both immediate threats and underlying causes. By integrating lessons from these models, nations can develop more effective and sustainable approaches to combating terrorism.

Lessons from International Efforts: Counter-terrorism efforts across the globe have yielded valuable lessons through both successes and challenges. These lessons are derived from diverse approaches to combating terrorism, reflecting the varying geopolitical contexts and threat landscapes. By analyzing success stories and addressing recurring challenges, policymakers and practitioners can refine strategies to enhance the effectiveness of global counter-terrorism initiatives.

Success Stories in Counter-Terrorism

The United Kingdom's Prevent Strategy: The UK's Prevent Strategy is a notable example of a proactive approach to countering violent extremism. Launched in 2003, Prevent focuses on identifying individuals at risk of radicalization and providing early intervention through mentorship, counselling, and educational programs.

Key Successes:

- **Community Engagement:** The strategy emphasizes collaboration with schools, community leaders, and religious institutions to create a supportive environment for at-risk individuals.
- **Early Intervention:** By addressing vulnerabilities before they escalate, Prevent has disrupted numerous radicalization pathways. The Channel Program, a component of Prevent, offers tailored support to individuals showing signs of radicalization, helping them reintegrate into society (Thomas, 2010).

Lessons Learned: Prevent demonstrates the importance of balancing security measures with community trust. Engaging local stakeholders and tailoring interventions to specific contexts are critical for building resilience and reducing radicalization.

Indonesia's Rehabilitation Programs: Indonesia has implemented successful rehabilitation programs targeting former extremists and their families, particularly in the aftermath of the Bali bombings in 2002. These programs combine religious counselling, education, and vocational training to address the psychological and socio-economic factors driving radicalization.

Key Successes:

- **Community Reintegration:** Programs focus on reintegrating former extremists into society by addressing their grievances and providing alternative pathways.
- **Family Involvement:** Engaging families as part of the rehabilitation process has strengthened support networks and reduced recidivism (Jones, 2013).

Lessons Learned: Rehabilitation programs must address both ideological and socio-economic drivers of extremism, which are pragmatic in providing long-term support and monitoring ensures sustained success.

Saudi Arabia's Deradicalization Model

Saudi Arabia's Prince Mohammed bin Nayef Center for Counselling and Care is a comprehensive deradicalization program designed to rehabilitate extremists through religious re-education, psychological therapy, and vocational training.

Key Successes:

- **Religious Counselling:** Scholars work with participants to correct misinterpretations of Islamic teachings that justify violence.
- **Holistic Approach:** The program provides financial incentives, housing, and job opportunities to facilitate reintegration. Its success rate, with over 80% of participants reintegrated without relapse, is a testament to its effectiveness (Horgan & Braddock, 2010).

Lessons Learned: A holistic approach addressing psychological, ideological, and material needs is essential for successful deradicalization. Family involvement and post-release monitoring are critical components of such programs.

Challenges in International Counter-Terrorism Efforts

Balancing Security and Civil Liberties: A significant challenge in counter-terrorism is balancing the need for security with the protection of civil liberties. Measures such as surveillance, preventive detention, and expanded law enforcement powers can undermine trust in governments if perceived as discriminatory or overly intrusive.

Examples:

- The U.S. Patriot Act expanded surveillance powers but faced criticism for violating privacy rights and disproportionately targeting Muslim communities (Deflem, 2010).
- France's state of emergency after the 2015 Paris attacks led to widespread house raids and detentions, raising concerns about human rights violations.

Lessons Learned: Counter-terrorism policies must prioritize transparency, accountability, and proportionality to maintain public trust and protect democratic values.

Addressing Root Causes: Many counter-terrorism efforts focus on neutralizing immediate threats without addressing the underlying causes of extremism, such as socio-economic

inequality, political disenfranchisement, and identity-based grievances.

Examples

- Military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq successfully disrupted terrorist networks but failed to address the conditions that allowed extremism to thrive, leading to the resurgence of groups like ISIS.
- Counter-terrorism measures that stigmatize specific communities can exacerbate grievances and fuel radicalization.

Lessons Learned: Sustainable counter-terrorism requires a holistic approach that combines security measures with efforts to address socio-economic and political grievances. Development programs, education initiatives, and inclusive governance are essential components of this strategy.

Adapting to Evolving Threats: The dynamic nature of terrorism poses a significant challenge, as groups continually adapt their tactics and exploit new technologies. Cyber-terrorism, online radicalization, and decentralized operations are emerging threats that require innovative responses.

Examples: Extremist groups like ISIS have leveraged social media platforms to spread propaganda and recruit followers globally. Efforts to counter this trend have been hampered by the speed at which groups adapt to platform bans and restrictions (Montasari, 2024). Lone-wolf attacks, such as the Christchurch mosque shootings, highlight the difficulty of detecting isolated actors who operate outside traditional networks.

Lessons Learned: Counter-terrorism strategies must prioritize agility and innovation to address evolving threats. Partnerships with technology companies, investment in cyber security, and enhanced intelligence-sharing are critical for staying ahead of terrorist tactics.

International Cooperation: The transnational nature of terrorism necessitates international collaboration, but differing political priorities and definitions of terrorism often hinder cooperation.

Examples

- The lack of a universally accepted definition of terrorism complicates international legal frameworks and enforcement.
- Geopolitical rivalries, such as those between the U.S. and Russia, often undermine joint efforts to address shared threats.

Lessons Learned: Harmonizing international laws and fostering multilateral cooperation are essential for addressing cross-border terrorism effectively. Organizations like INTERPOL and the United Nations must play a central role in facilitating collaboration and resolving conflicts of interest. International counter-terrorism efforts provide valuable lessons for addressing the complex and evolving threat of extremism. Success stories, such as the UK's Prevent strategy, Indonesia's rehabilitation programs, and Saudi Arabia's deradicalization model, highlight the importance of tailored approaches that

address ideological, psychological, and socio-economic factors. At the same time, challenges such as balancing security and civil liberties, adapting to emerging threats, and fostering international cooperation underscore the need for holistic and collaborative strategies. By learning from these experiences, the global community can enhance its collective capacity to combat terrorism and build a more secure and inclusive world.

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