



RESEARCH ARTICLE

GLOBALISATION AND HOMELAND SECURITY: MILITANCY, TERRORISM, AND INSURGENCY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Globalisation has fundamentally reshaped militancy, terrorism, and insurgency in the twenty-first century. It has compressed distance, accelerated the flow of finance, ideology, and weapons, and blurred the boundary between domestic and international security. This paper examines the two-way relationship between globalisation and homeland security. It argues that globalisation has given non-state armed actors new tools for mobilisation and reach, while also expanding states' ability to detect, deter, and respond to threats through intelligence sharing, international cooperation, and technology-driven security systems. Drawing on evidence from the post-9/11 United States and India's internal security experience, the paper argues that effective homeland security in a globalised era requires an integrated approach that combines counterterrorism with governance reform, economic inclusion, and multilateral cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the twenty-first century marked a decisive change in how states understand security. For much of the twentieth century, national security was viewed mainly in interstate terms and centred on defending territorial borders against conventional military aggression. The attacks of September 11, 2001, together with the spread of insurgent and militant movements across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, forced states to rethink security in relation to diffuse, non-state, and often transnational threats. This shift took place amid accelerating globalisation, broadly understood as the growing economic, social, political, and technological interconnectedness of states and societies. The relationship between globalisation and political violence is neither simple nor one-directional. On the one hand, globalisation can facilitate terrorism by giving militant networks easier access to finance, weapons, recruits, and audiences across borders. On the other, recent empirical research suggests that higher levels of globalisation, especially economic and social globalisation, are associated with lower rates of domestic and transnational terrorism because globalised societies tend to be wealthier,

institutionally stronger, and better connected for cooperative security responses (LaFree & Jiang, 2025). This paper explores this dual character of globalisation, its effect on militancy, terrorism, and insurgency, and the resulting transformation of homeland security doctrine in the twenty-first century. The paper proceeds in six parts. It first defines globalisation and considers its relationship with security. It then examines how globalisation has shaped the strategies and reach of terrorist and militant organisations, before turning to the changing nature of insurgency and asymmetric conflict. The paper next traces the development of homeland security frameworks, focusing on the post-9/11 United States, and offers a regional perspective through India, whose internal security landscape reflects many of the paper's wider themes. It concludes by identifying the main challenges states face as they seek to protect their homelands in an interconnected world.

Conceptualising Globalisation and Security: Globalisation is commonly understood as a multidimensional process encompassing the economic integration of markets, the diffusion of information and communication technologies, the movement of people across borders, and the spread of ideas,

norms, and cultural practices. Scholars typically disaggregate the concept into economic, social, and political dimensions, each of which interacts differently with patterns of conflict and security (LaFree & Jiang, 2025). Economic globalisation refers to cross-border trade, investment, and financial flows; social globalisation captures the movement of people, information, and cultural products; and political globalisation concerns the spread of international institutions, treaties, and governance norms.

Homeland security, by contrast, is a relatively recent addition to the security lexicon. Before the early 2000s, the term had little presence in policy discourse. It emerged in the United States as a distinct concept after the September 11 attacks, when policymakers recognised that national security institutions designed for external military threats were poorly equipped to prevent or respond to attacks by non-state actors exploiting open borders and civilian infrastructure. Even two decades later, homeland security remains contested and lacks a single universally accepted definition. It brings together counterterrorism, border management, critical-infrastructure protection, cybersecurity, and disaster response under one institutional umbrella (Congressional Research Service, 2012). The convergence of globalisation and homeland security reflects a central paradox of the contemporary security environment: the same processes that connect societies economically and socially also create vulnerabilities that a purely territorial view of security cannot address.

Globalisation as a Catalyst and a Constraint on Terrorism

Globalisation has changed the operating environment for terrorist organisations in several connected ways. First, advances in transport and communication have made it easier for militant groups to recruit, train, and coordinate across national boundaries. Second, the liberalisation of international finance has created both legal and illegal channels through which terrorist organisations can move money to fund operations. This vulnerability has encouraged the development of specialised financial-intelligence and anti-money-laundering regimes worldwide. Third, digital and social-media platforms have allowed terrorist propaganda and radicalisation to reach global audiences almost instantly, a development often described as the globalisation of terrorism's psychological and communicative dimension (Brookings Institution, 2016).

At the same time, a growing body of empirical research complicates the assumption that globalisation automatically increases terrorism. Using cross-national data covering nearly five decades, LaFree and Jiang (2025) find that higher levels of globalisation are consistently associated with lower rates of terrorist violence. Economic globalisation has the strongest dampening effect, particularly on domestic terrorism. This finding echoes earlier work by Li and Schaub (2004), who found that trade and foreign direct investment do not directly increase transnational terrorist incidents; instead, their effects are indirect, as the economic development they encourage is associated with reduced terrorism. Other scholars reach more mixed conclusions. Research on Sub-Saharan Africa suggests that political and social globalisation can, in some settings, increase domestic and transnational terrorism even as economic globalisation reduces it. The relationship is therefore highly dependent on regional governance capacity and on the particular dimension of globalisation being considered. A further complication is the geographic distribution of terrorist violence. Despite the popular image of a borderless, globalised

terrorist threat, most attacks remain domestic rather than transnational. This suggests that globalisation has not erased the local and national roots of political violence. Yet when terrorism does cross borders, the effects of globalisation are clear. Networks associated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, for example, have operated as genuinely transnational enterprises, exploiting weak or contested state authority, informal financial networks, and digital media to sustain operations across several continents (Murphy, 2002).

Militancy and Insurgency in the Twenty-First Century:

Insurgency is generally understood as a prolonged struggle by non-state actors to overthrow or fundamentally change an existing political order. It has historically been distinguished from terrorism by its focus on contesting territorial and political control rather than only creating fear through violence against civilians (Galula, 1964). In practice, however, the line between insurgency, militancy, and terrorism has become increasingly blurred in the twenty-first century, as groups often combine guerrilla tactics, political mobilisation, and terrorist attacks within a single campaign.

Scholars involved in the post-9/11 reassessment of counterinsurgency doctrine, notably Metz and Millen (2004), argue that twenty-first-century insurgencies differ significantly from their twentieth-century predecessors. Cold War-era insurgencies were often organised around a single hierarchical movement with a coherent ideology and the clear goal of taking state power. Contemporary insurgencies are more often networked, fragmented, and transnational, drawing on diasporic support, ungoverned spaces, and porous borders. Such movements may lack a single command structure, making them harder to analyse and making effective counterinsurgency responses more difficult to design.

This shift has been reinforced by information technology, which allows insurgent and militant groups to run sophisticated information operations, coordinate dispersed cells, and maintain morale and recruitment even when territorial control is contested or lost. At the same time, insurgencies remain deeply rooted in local political, economic, and social grievances. Purely military responses therefore rarely succeed on their own. As classical theorists such as Galula (1964) argued, and contemporary scholars largely agree, effective counterinsurgency depends on gaining civilian support through security, governance, and economic development, alongside efforts to disrupt insurgent networks.

Homeland Security: Evolving Frameworks and Responses

The institutional response to twenty-first-century militancy and terrorism is most visible in the reorganisation of homeland security architecture, particularly in the United States. After the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration created a new White House office that, within a year, developed into the Department of Homeland Security. The department consolidated dozens of previously separate agencies and was tasked with counterterrorism, border security, and disaster response. This reorganisation reflected the view that traditional national-security institutions, designed for external state adversaries, were not equipped to address threats that emerged from within civil society or exploited global mobility and communication networks. Over the following decades, the American counterterrorism toolkit broadened steadily. It came to include expanded surveillance and investigative powers under the USA PATRIOT Act, dedicated financial-intelligence

and border-security agencies, and greater emphasis on international intelligence sharing and interagency coordination (RSIS, 2024). Later strategies placed increasing weight on prevention rather than reactive measures alone, seeking to counter online radicalisation and build community resilience against violent extremism, even as counterterrorism had to compete with renewed great-power competition for strategic attention. This evolution points to a broader lesson for homeland security in a globalised era: because the threats it addresses, including transnational terrorist networks, cyberattacks, and pandemics, are not limited by national borders, homeland security cannot rely on domestic measures alone. It increasingly depends on the same globalised infrastructure, intelligence-sharing arrangements, financial-regulation regimes, and international legal cooperation that can also facilitate threats. As one influential analysis of the post-9/11 shift observed, the transnational nature of contemporary terrorism requires counterterrorist efforts to be organised on an equally global scale (Brookings Institution, 2016).

A Regional Perspective: Internal Security in India: India's experience of militancy, terrorism, and insurgency provides a valuable comparative lens. It shows how a large and diverse democracy has confronted overlapping internal-security threats shaped by globalisation, geography, and history. India's challenges are commonly grouped into several streams: cross-border terrorism and separatist militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, ethnic insurgencies in the northeastern states, and Left-Wing Extremism, or Naxalism, in central and eastern India (Vajiram & Ravi, 2026). Each has a distinct origin, support base, and operational logic, so applying one uniform national-security doctrine across all three has proved difficult.

Since the late 1980s, militancy in Jammu and Kashmir has been sustained by a combination of local separatist sentiment and support from across the border. Organisations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, and Hizbul Mujahideen have carried out infiltration, ambushes, and attacks on security forces and civilians. Indian authorities and independent analysts have documented external state and non-state support for this militancy for more than three decades, even as large-scale infiltration and violence declined markedly after the abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir's special constitutional status in 2019 and intensified security operations in the region (India Foundation, 2024). The Northeast has experienced a different pattern of ethnic and separatist insurgency, driven by demands for greater autonomy or independence among groups such as the United Liberation Front of Asom and factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland. Central and eastern India, meanwhile, have faced a persistent Maoist insurgency rooted in grievances over land, livelihoods, and governance among marginalised rural populations. Across these theatres, India's counterinsurgency approach has historically combined periods of military suppression with political dialogue and, eventually, efforts at constitutional and institutional integration. This reflects an implicit recognition that force alone cannot resolve insurgencies rooted in political and economic exclusion. More recently, Indian security planners have stressed the growing importance of non-conventional threats layered onto these traditional challenges. These include cyber-enabled radicalisation, terror financing through informal and digital channels, and drones used to smuggle weapons and narcotics across international borders. Analysts note that continued progress will depend on stronger interagency coordination, intelligence-led operations, and

anticipatory governance that can respond to rapidly changing regional developments (Observer Research Foundation, 2025).

Challenges, Critiques, and the Way Forward: Several challenges complicate efforts to achieve effective homeland security in a globalised world. First, there is an inherent tension between security and civil liberties. Expanded surveillance and investigative powers may help detect and disrupt terrorist plots, but they have repeatedly raised concerns about privacy, due process, and discriminatory enforcement against minority communities. Second, homeland-security institutions face an expanding threat spectrum that includes cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and the possible misuse of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and biotechnology by non-state actors. These pressures strain agencies originally designed around a narrower counterterrorism mandate.

Third, the global and domestic dimensions of security remain difficult to reconcile institutionally. Effective counterterrorism and counterinsurgency require sustained international intelligence cooperation and often military or development engagement abroad. Yet domestic political attention and resources are often drawn to more visible, immediate threats at home, creating a persistent tension between forward-deployed and homeland-focused security postures. Finally, coercive counter-militancy strategies alone have repeatedly proved insufficient where insurgency and terrorism are rooted in unresolved political grievances, economic marginalisation, or contested claims to self-determination. Sustainable security in such settings depends on parallel investment in governance, economic opportunity, and political inclusion. Looking ahead, states are likely to benefit from an integrated security posture that treats globalisation not only as a source of vulnerability but also as a resource for cooperative action. Such a posture would combine shared intelligence systems, coordinated financial regulation, and multilateral counterterrorism frameworks with locally tailored governance and development strategies that address the grievances sustaining militancy and insurgency.

CONCLUSION

Globalisation and homeland security are mutually constitutive rather than simply opposed. Globalisation has extended the reach of terrorist, militant, and insurgent organisations by reducing the cost of cross-border movement, communication, and finance. At the same time, it has strengthened the tools available to states for intelligence sharing, financial regulation, and coordinated response. The development of homeland-security architecture since the early 2000s, from dedicated departments to expanded international counterterrorism cooperation, reflects an ongoing effort to reconcile territorially organised state institutions with fundamentally transnational threats. India's experience of managing cross-border, ethnic, and ideological insurgencies at the same time further shows that durable security depends not only on coercive capacity but also on addressing the political and economic conditions in which militancy takes root. As globalisation continues to evolve, and may fragment amid renewed geopolitical competition, states will need to keep adapting their homeland-security frameworks to remain effective against threats that do not respect borders.

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