Chapter 16

Prevention of the Procurement of Arms and Explosives by Terrorist Groups

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This chapter analyses how to prevent the procurement of arms and explosives used by terrorist organizations. It defines arms and explosives broadly, ranging from conventional arms to improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and close combat weapons. It explains key factors that lead to the creation of favorable environments for terrorist groups to gain access to arms and explosives. With a focus on terrorist groups who have perpetrated frequent attacks, the chapter showcases the jihadist and Maoist groups and their commonalities in terms of procurement of arms and explosives. Finally, the chapter explores the challenges to develop a policy model that can be applied to whole regions where terrorist groups procure arms and explosives, and discusses policy implications and actions that need to be taken in order to prevent such procurement. It is meant as a primer for experts, academics, and boots on the ground law enforcement officers to prevent organized as well as ad hoc acquisition of arms and explosives by terrorists.

Terrorist organizations across the world have been responsible for more than 8,000 attacks in 2018, resulting in the deaths of 33,000 people and the wounding of nearly 23,000 others, according to the US State Department's 2018 Statistical Annex Report.[1] Although the overall number of terrorist attacks has decreased in recent years, the number of casualties resulting from specific attacks remains high largely because terrorist groups continue to use a wide variety of weapons. In 2018, firearms and explosives (e.g., dynamite, grenades, and improvised explosives devices or IEDs) were the most common types of weapons used by terrorist organizations. They also used vehicle borne improvised explosives devices (VBIED) and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).[2]

Terrorist groups in different regions of the world have the capacity to get access to a wide array of dangerous arms and explosives – from firearms, rocket-propelled grenades bombs, and IEDs to chemical weapons – and a few of them have even expressed a desire to lay their hands also on biological agents, radioactive devices, and chemical and nuclear weapons. Their ability to access and deploy conventional weapons in public places against unarmed civilians and in combat zones against unsuspecting soldiers makes terrorist tactics formidable. In some cases, terrorist weapons are technologically more sophisticated than those used by law enforcement and military.

A number of terrorist groups procure arms and explosives from rogue governments that support and sponsor terrorism. Additionally, endemic corruption, porous borders, weak law enforcement capacity, vast financial resources of some terrorist groups, and developed criminal networks have helped terrorist groups get access to arms and explosives on the black market. This chapter describes the arms and explosives terrorist groups have used, examines factors that allowed terrorist groups to access these arms and explosives, and recommends cogent policies for countering this trend.

Arms and Explosives

There is great variety in the arms and explosives procured and used by terrorists. The US Department of State categorizes various weapon types in its global terrorism database, including fake weapons, incendiaries, melee weapons, vehicles, and sabotage equipment.[3] "High range" weapons include biological agents, chemical weapons and radiological agents. "Medium range" weapons are automatic weapons, rocket launchers, and military-grade explosives. These are widely available from states sponsoring terrorism and on the international black market. "Low range" weapons include homemade weapons that can be manufactured from commercially available components. For instance, IEDs were used as roadside bombs against American forces in Iraq with lethal effects. IEDs can be homemade from ammonium nitrate and fuel oil (ANFO) - easily accessible materials.[4] At the other end are sophisticated weapons of mass destruction which, except for some chemical weapons, are still beyond the reach of most terrorist groups.[5]

One type of combat weapons are so-called "melee weapons", varying from knives and machetes,[6] to ropes or other strangling devices. Hands, feet, and fists also fall under the melee category.[7] Melee weapons the primary group of weapons in the early history of terrorism. The Sicarii in antiquity and the Assassins in the Middle Ages had a preference for daggers to kill their targets.[8] While melee weapons were do not have the visceral impact of an explosive device, they can easily be hidden and inflict serious bodily and psychological harm to their targets.[9] Melee attacks have been more commonly seen in Africa and Latin America and lone actors continue to use melee weapons in Western European countries,[10] and against Israel.[11]

Firearms make up the second category of conventional weapons. The wide availability and short-range effectiveness of firearms account for their popularity among terrorist groups.[12] Firearms include light and heavy infantry weapons and include assault rifles, machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, mortars, and precision-guided munitions, but also, pistols, rifles and

submachine guns.[13] Rifles use higher-powered ammunition than handguns, which makes the rifle useful in outdoor environments, thanks to its added length, power, and stability. Rifles can be semi-automatic, automatic, or single-shot. One of the most common type of rifles that terrorists prefer to use is the AK-47, or "Kalashnikov," designed by the Soviet Union in 1946. With its minimal cost, ease of use and maintenance, and cheap, plentiful, powerful firing cartridge make the AK-47s one of the most preferred weapon among terrorists according to some authors.[14] Similar to AK-47s, the American-made M-16 has been produced in large numbers and has been used by conventional as well as irregular forces.[15]

Submachine guns are commonly used by the police and paramilitary services. Many older models are still accessible to terrorists on black and open markets.[16] Shorter and lighter than rifles, terrorists appreciate their handling. The Precision-Guided Munitions (PGMs) use infrared or other targeting technologies and include the American Stinger, a shoulder-to-air missile. It was provided to Afghan mujahideen to target Soviet helicopters in the 1980s. It was an effective weapon, although it is not common to see PGMs in the hands of contemporary terrorists.[17]

Explosives comprise the third category of conventional weapons, and they are the category most frequently used by terrorist groups. In 2017, bombing was the most frequent category of attack by terrorist groups, as 47 percent of terrorist incidents recorded involved the use of explosives.[18] Explosives can vary from crude homemade devices to advanced commercial or military-grade devices. Hand grenades are one of the simplest forms of explosives - they are easily portable with an effective range of at least five meters from the blast's center. Its outer casing is designed to send out fast-moving projective metal fragments that maim and kill. Terrorists prefer to use hand grenades because they are easy and simple to carry, conceal, and to use.[19]

Rocket-Propelled Grenades (RPGs) are uncomplicated but powerful explosives used by some terrorist groups to target bunkers and buildings.[20] Terrorist groups who are capable of doing complex coordinated attacks often use RPGs in their operations. Hamas, the Taliban, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) are groups which commonly use RPGs. For example, Hamas fired over 4,000 RPGs and other rockets against Israeli targets in 2014 alone.[21]

Bombs are one of the largest categories of the explosives. The vast majority of terrorist bombs are self-constructed and improvised weapons. Mines which are buried in the soil to be detonated as booby traps are also used. While terrorists use antipersonnel mines to kill their targets, anti-tank mines are designed to destroy entire vehicles.[22] Terrorist groups in the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America which have used mines include the PKK in Turkey, the FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN) in Colombia, and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Improvised bombs are manufactured from commercially available explosives such as dynamite and trinitrotoluene (TNT).[23] The invention of dynamite (made of nitroglycerin, sorbents, and stabilizers) in 1867 was one of the factors behind the rise of 19th century terrorism by anarchists and social-revolutionaries. It was first used by revolutionary groups in Russia and anarchists in Western Europe adhering to "the philosophy of the bomb."[24] Some of the compounds of 20th century terrorist bombs involved plastic explosives such as Semtex and Composite-4 (C-4), and ANFO explosives. The "shoe bomber," Richard C. Reid, used plastic explosives in his attempt to target American Airlines' Flight 63 by molding plastic explosives into his shoe. Semtex, a plastic explosive of Czech origin, is very common on the international market and large amounts of it were detected in Libya after the fall of Colonel Gaddafi in October 2011. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) was one of the groups who used Semtex obtained from Libya for its attacks in Northern Ireland and England. Like Semtex, C-4 is a powerful plastic explosive, based on nitroamine, developed originally by the US Armed Forces. It is not as easy as to obtain Semtex due to its high price. C-4s became accessible for terrorist groups after a rogue Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent had shipped 21 tons of

C-4 to Libya in the 1970s. Finally, ANFO explosives are developed when ammonium nitrate fertilizers are soaked in fuel oil. ANFO explosives have frequently been used for car or truck bombs, e.g., by the IRA in the UK and by the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. Timothy McVeigh, a disgruntled American army veteran, used a two-ton ANFO explosive device, when he targeted the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma in 1995.[25]

Terrorist bombs vary from gasoline bombs, pipe bombs, and vehicular bombs to barometric bombs. Gasoline bombs, also called "Molotov cocktails," are the most commonly used explosive weapon, manufactured by a gasoline-filled bottle with a burning cloth wick. Pipe bombs are easily formed and common types of explosives; they are filled with explosives and then capped on both ends. Pipe bombs have been used by single issue terrorists targeting abortion clinics in the US as well as in the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. Vehicular bombs wired with explosives are frequently used by terrorists. The fact that vehicular bombs are mobile and non-identifiable and capable of transporting large amounts of explosives make them appealing to terrorist groups. To date, a large number of terrorist groups have used such car and truck bombs in their attacks, including Peru's Shining Path, the IRA, the Tamil Tigers, several Palestinian groups and the Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA).[26]

Homemade improvised rockets are also popular among terrorist groups, although they generally lack precision. Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad have used improvised rockets (dubbed *Qassam*) against Israel targets. Finally, barometric bombs are constructed with triggers that are activated by changes in atmospheric pressure. Such bombs have the capacity of blowing up an airliner in midair at a pre-set altitude, such as in the case of Pan Am Flight 103 en route from London to New York in December 1988, killing 259 people.[27]

Bombmakers use various types of explosives to construct more or less sophisticated triggering devices, enabling them to control timing and direction of the blast. Some examples of triggers are time switches, fuses, pressure triggers, electronic triggers, and high-technology triggers.[28]

Chemical weapons can have a serious impact, especially indoors while their lethality outdoors depends on wind and weather factors. When it comes to biological weapons, these are difficult to develop and control because of possibly longer infection paths and incubation times; but they can cause widespread and long-term mortality. Radiological devices have rarely been used and have mainly a psychological impact, but their casualty rates are low. Nuclear weapons (atomic and thermonuclear) are the most threatening type of WMD. So far, these have been beyond the reach of non-state terrorists.[29]

Factors That Enable Terrorist Groups to Procure Arms and Explosives

The 2017 Global Terrorism Database, produced by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), located at the University of Maryland, listed more than 300 active terrorist groups in 2017. These represent a broad spectrum of ideologies, including tenets espoused by ethno-nationalist groups, left-wing groups, right-wing groups, as well as separatist and jihadist groups. Despite differences in their ideological leanings, all of these groups have one thing in common: the capability to procure arms and explosives to inflict harm in terrorist attacks. State-sponsored terrorism, endemic corruption, porous borders, financial capacity of terrorist groups, weak law enforcement, and the occasional convergence of criminal and terrorist networks all facilitate the ability of terrorist groups to acquire tools of destruction.

The Role of States in Sponsoring Terrorism

Acts of terrorism have been committed by single individuals, organized groups, and state-sponsored actors.[30] Individually committed terrorist acts are often labeled "lone actor terrorism"; violent acts committed by militant organizations are labeled "group terrorism"; and violent acts committed by government agents may be listed as "state or regime terrorism."[31] State or regime terrorism has been defined as

> "…. an attack by a head of state and his law enforcement officers and the military on individuals, groups, political party opponents, or on other states, who are seen as threats to the government to deter others in the country and beyond from ever challenging its policies or messing with its vital interests."[32]

State terrorism can target political adversaries in the international domain or domestic enemies in the national domain.[33] States taking a role in promoting terrorism provide ideological, financial, military, and operational support to perpetrators. A government's military support includes supplying a broad range of weapons as well as military training, whereas operational support refers to the provision of false documents, special weapons, and safe havens.[34]

The US Department of State has created a detailed list of states that sponsor terrorism. It includes North Korea, Iran, Syria and (until recently) Sudan.[35] Sudan supported regional terrorist groups throughout the Middle East and provided safe havens for the Al-Qaeda network, the Abu Nidal Organization, Hamas, and Hezbollah. Syria sponsored terrorist groups in particular in the Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon at least until 2005. Libya was another active country sponsoring terrorism in the 1980s and 1990s, providing training camps for many left-wing and jihadist groups.[36] Iran actively sponsors terrorist groups in various parts of the world. Iran yearly spends $1 billion USD to sponsor terrorism.[37] The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), which numbers some 125,000 personnel, was designated as a terrorist organization by the US in 2019.[38] The IRGC continues to provide conventional weapons to a broad range of groups, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Kata'ib Hezbollah in Iraq and the al-Ashtar Brigades in Bahrain.[39]

Proxy Wars

In the Cold War and beyond, states have used local proxies to defend or expand their interests abroad. The proxies can be local tribal militias or transnational terrorist groups or a combination of these. Currently, there has been such a proxy war between Iranian-backed and Saudi-backed groups in Syria and Yemen. In Syria, many foreign-supported jihadist groups mushroomed in different towns and provinces across the countryside since 2011, for example, the Hamza Division, the Sham Legion, the Syrian Front, Jash al-Nasr, and the Samarkand Brigade[40] as well as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, Ahrar al-Sharqiya, Jaysh al-Izza, Hurras al-Din, and Ansar al-Tawhid. In Yemen, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Ansar Allah (Houthis), and ISIS' Yemen branch have received, at one time or the other, foreign support.[41]

One of the procurement sources for arms and explosives for jihadist groups in Syria was governments which provided weapons to Syria's belligerent groups. Saudi Arabia and the US provided weapons to allegedly "moderate" groups, but these weapons often changed hands. In some cases, arms and ammunition were looted from government forces in Iraq and Syria.[42] In other cases, weapons were stolen from, or given away by members of moderate groups, who had been given weapons due to their resistance against Bashar al-Assad's government.[43] Turkey is another country that had strong links to jihadist groups targeting the Bashar al-Assad

government. For years, Turkey kept its border open for ISIS militants who traveled to Syria.[44] A police investigation in 2014 proved the existence of arms and explosives transfers from Turkey to jihadist groups in Syria.[45]

Conflict and post-conflict periods often create new opportunities for terrorist groups. For example, terrorist groups looted Iraqi military's arms and explosives depots in 2003 when Saddam Husain was ousted. Some of these explosives were later used by ISIS and Hasd al-Shabi militias. Similarly, ISIS militants looted several Iraqi military weapon depots, containing tons of tank ammunitions, as well as anti-aircraft guns, mortars, shoulder-launched missiles, rockets, and mines.[46] Similar looting on an even grander scale took place in Libya after the fall of Gaddafi in 2011.

Porous Borders

Porous borders enable terrorist groups and criminal organizations to move members, money, and equipment. Porous borders are those that cross treacherous terrain which is difficult to monitor, police, or govern. There are also undefined or new, ill-defined borders disregarding historical borders with people of the same ethnic or religious affiliation living on both sides. Both terrorist groups and criminal organizations can smuggle arms and explosives from one side to the other with few, if any, checkpoints standing in their way.

Terrorist groups in Africa enjoy the porosity of borders – borders drawn when European colonial powers carved up the African continent with little regard for ethnicity, religion, and local culture. The colonial powers aimed to create spheres of influence based on political and economic motives, thereby often creating artificial insecure and porous borders. Additionally, many borders in Africa lack effective administration and management.[47] The lack of enforcement on Nigerian borders allowed Boko Haram to cross into neighboring Cameroon and Chad. The police seized a huge number of weapons including RPGs, rocket launchers, anti-craft missiles, and AK-47s smuggled from Libya and Mali to Nigeria's Boko Haram.[48] The porous border between Kenya and Somalia allows Al-Shabaab to target Kenya.[49] In one incident in 2014, two Al-Shabaab affiliated guards bribed Kenyan border guards and transferred 50kgs of ammunition from Kenya to Somalia.[50] Bangladesh is another example that shows how porous borders facilitate arms and explosives smuggling. Since 2016, the country recorded an upsurge of political violence by jihadist groups who procure weapons from across the India-Bangladeshi border. Produced in factories in India, weapons found their way to Bangladesh through the latter's porous borders.[51] Libya's porous border with Chad and Niger is frequented by smugglers to transport arms and explosives.[52]

The porous border between Turkey and Syria allowed the arrival of tens of thousands of foreign fighters with the Turkish government looking the other way for a long time. Most of ISIS militants traversed Turkey's borders to travel to Syria.[53] Turkey served as a base for the manufacture of improvised explosive devices used by ISIS.[54] As a result, ISIS enjoyed Turkey's neglect of its eastern borders.

One way terrorist groups smuggle arms and explosives is by tunneling under the borders.[55] Nigeria's police took some time to detect tunnels controlled by Boko Haram on its borders.[56] Tunnels dug by Hamas were used to smuggle weapons from Egypt into Gaza. According to Israeli authorities, Hamas imported tons of explosives, fertilizers, and rocket-propelled grenades from Egypt via underground tunnels.[57]

Endemic Corruption

Corruption in government creates operating spaces for terrorists.[58] Terrorist groups capitalize on corruption by officials for avoiding controls while at the same time using claims of

corruption to legitimize their attacks against governments. Al-Qaeda leaders in particular were keen to use rampant corruption to motivate militants to target Muslim rulers.

Corruption is not only a facilitating factor for crime, but also for terrorism. According to one criminological theory, crime, corruption, and terrorism are entangled and can become inseparable.[59] The list of some of the most corrupt countries overlaps with lists of countries with the highest number of terrorist incidents. For example, Somalia, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen are among the top ten countries when it comes to terrorist incidents,[60] and they also figure among the most politically corrupt countries.[61] Terrorist groups in such countries find it sometimes easier to procure arms and explosives from corrupt customs and law enforcement officials and disloyal members of the military establishment.

Links between, and Convergence of, Criminal and Terrorist Networks

The convergence of criminal and terrorist networks creates a favorable environment for terrorist groups to access weapons. In a number of countries, criminal and terrorist groups are linked in various ways and they collaborate, sometimes on an ad hoc basis, sometimes permanently.[62] Like terrorist organizations, many organized crime groups have evolved from top-down hierarchical organizations to loosely-connected functional units, often with a broad scope of activities, ranging from kidnapping to assassinations.[63]

Terrorist groups often network with each other. Similar to left-wing groups who collaborated and cooperated in the 1970s and 1980s in Latin America and Europe,[64] jihadist groups from the Middle East have also networked with each other. Al-Qaeda-affiliated and ISIS-affiliated groups, while rivalling with each other, have cooperated at times in conflict zones in Syria. Investigations into the background of the Christchurch attack in New Zealand in 2019 unearthed evidence that right-wing extremist groups also network with each other. The Australian Brenton Tarrant traveled to Europe and attended training programs in Ukraine provided by the Azov Battalion.[65]

The relationship between terrorist and criminal groups takes several forms, ranging from mere illegal business transactions as in arms sales, to alliances[66] and even unification.[67] Such alliances are based on sharing and exchanging expert knowledge on bomb making, money laundering, communication technologies, or operational support, such as access to smuggling tunnels and routes.[68] Examples of this include Russian organized crime groups and the FARC trading weapons and cocaine, the IRA offering bomb-making expertise to the FARC and receiving financial assistance,[69] and the Medellin cartel collaborating with the ELN to plant car bombs.[70] Unification, while rare, can arguably be observed in the case of the Abu Sayyaf group, which sometimes had a political face and sometimes a more criminal appearance. Terrorist groups can degenerate into merely criminal groups. On the other hand, in some cases criminal groups develop political ambitions and their violence is not only based on profit motives. The situation gets even worse when rogue elements from government become part of such networks and when they ultimately manage to capture the machinery of the government itself.[71]

Financial Capacity of Terrorist Groups

Terrorist groups are capable of buying arms and explosives due to various sources of income. A number of states were sponsoring guerrilla and terrorist groups abroad during the era of the Cold War. However, globalization and democratization trends accelerating during and after the 1990s have brought more accountability and transparency, making it riskier for governments to fund terrorist organizations. Nevertheless, there are still a number of states, including oil-

producing autocracies in the Middle East, sponsoring rebel groups engaging in terrorist tactics and providing them with arms or money to procure arms.

Most terrorist groups use more than one method to procure funds for acquiring arms and explosives, including donations, taxation, extortion, and money earned from cross-border smuggling and trafficking. Some terrorist groups generate millions of dollars from criminal activities. Both the Colombian FARC and Peru's Shining Path have been involved in drug trafficking,[72] while Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines has generated revenues from kidnapping.[73]

The IRA, operating in Northern Ireland, generated at one time $50 million USD in yearly revenues in donations from Irish Americans, while also profiting from dealing with electronics, oil, and cattle smuggling. Boko Haram in Nigeria reportedly made more than $50 million USD in revenue from kidnapping, bank robberies, and other illegal activities. Al-Shabaab, which seeks to overthrow the Somali government in order to form an Islamic caliphate, is said to earn more tens of millions of dollars a year from tolls and taxes.[74]

The list of wealthiest terrorist organizations also features Laskar-e-Tayyiba,[75] a Pakistani based terrorist group, that seeks to end Indian rule in the Kashmir region. Its reported $100-million USD revenue mostly comes from donations and, allegedly, also from contributions by Pakistan's intelligence agency. Al-Qaeda, based in Pakistan and Afghanistan, is said to have $150 million USD in annual revenues, including from drug trafficking and ransom money from kidnappings.[76] The Taliban is said to have a yearly $400 million USD in revenues, much of it from taxing opium farmers in Afghanistan. Lebanon's Hezbollah is said to have a yearly annual budget of $500 million USD, half of which from the Iranian government and the rest from other donations and criminal activities like drug smuggling.[77] Drugs are one of the main sources of income for the FARC which at one time was thought to be the source of half of the global cocaine supply. The Palestinian Hamas generated until recently much of its $1 billion USD budget from donations from Muslims abroad, the main donor being Qatar.[78] The world's richest terrorist organization is – or was – the Islamic State.[79] ISIS was said to have a budget of around $2 billion USD in 2014 when it was controlling a huge swath of territory in Iraq and Syria. Reportedly, ISIS made $550 million USD from oil smuggling, and perhaps twice as much from looting banks in the towns it conquered, while also making between $20 and $45 million USD from kidnapping ransoms.[80] In addition, revenue from antiquities sold on black and open markets was estimated to be around $36 million USD in 2014.[81]

Weak Law Enforcement

One of the most effective counterterrorism strategies is to increase the capacity of law enforcement agencies. While law enforcement agencies are generally well-equipped and well-trained in developed countries in the Western world, and have the capacity to perform surveillance and wiretapping, and to deploy undercover agents and informants, their law enforcement counterparts among a number of countries in the developing world lack basic tools to fight terrorist groups, especially in rural areas. Weak state capacity has allowed the flourishing of criminal and terrorist groups in many parts of the world. For example, violence is all too common in Central America's countries, ranking them among the top countries in homicide statistics. However, while most of the violence there is not political, it nevertheless affects the overall security situation.

Terrorist groups can more easily procure arms and explosives in states where law enforcement officials are not capable of enforcing the laws. The Afghan army and police have grave difficulty with fighting against well-trained Taliban militants. In some conflict zones, the government hires militia groups, such as the Civilian Joint Task Force in Nigeria,[82] the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq,[83] and the Rapid Support Forces in Sudan, to enforce the law and to fight terrorist organizations.[84] However, such militia groups generally do poorly

against well-trained terrorist groups. Furthermore, such state-sponsored vigilante groups often violate both human rights and humanitarian law in their anti-terrorist missions.

Weak state capacity to fight against terrorist groups in sub-Saharan African countries led to the formation of international forces. ECOWAS, for example, consists of member states from the Lake Chad region and French forces, which fight against Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda affiliated groups in Mali. AMISOM consists of troops from four eastern African countries which fight against Al-Shabaab. In doing so, they have suffered from high casualties.

How Terrorist Groups Procure Arms and Explosives

In the following pages, the focus is on two types of terrorist groups, one secular, the other religious. The top ten terrorist groups, based on the number of terrorist incidents in 2017, include seven jihadist groups, two Maoist groups,[85] and one separatist group.[86] The jihadist groups were more violent than the Maoist groups.[87] They procure arms and explosives using various tactics.

Jihadist Groups

Islamist organizations like ISIS, Taliban, Boko Haram, and Al-Shabaab are among the most violent terrorist groups in the world. Countries where these groups operate have recorded more than 60 percent of all deaths from terrorism in 2017.[88] To kill so many people, they have developed a commensurate capacity to procure arms and explosives.

Al-Shabaab mainly uses firearms such as handguns, automatic weapons and rifles and explosives such as mortars, RPGs, IEDs, and landmines. Suicide bombing is frequently carried out by Al-Shabaab. Two of its primary sources of weapons are based in Yemen and Iran.[89] In 2014, the Puntland administration in northern Somalia's Bossaso port seized a boat carrying landmines and artillery shells, originating from Yemen. Another source of weapons for Al-Shabaab are African Union military bases, where the organization has seized weapons following successful attacks. For example, in 2016, Al-Shabaab attacked the El Adde military base where Kenyan troops were stationed,[90] seizing assault rifles, machine guns, mortars, and rounds of ammunition. Al-Shabaab also seized weapons after it attacked Burundian and Ugandan military bases in Lower and Middle Shabelle. Furthermore, there have been reports indicating that Somali military personnel sell weapons and ammunition to Al-Shabaab.

ISIS has used basic assault weapons during many of its operations in Iraq. In addition, it uses IEDs, VBIEDs, suicide attacks, incendiary, and sabotage equipment.[91] Houthis in Yemen are capable of using drones, ballistic missiles and boat-borne IEDs, with Iran said to be the main source providing arms and explosives to Houthis in Yemen.[92]

Two widely acknowledged sources of arms and equipment for militant groups in Afghanistan are the black market and their disloyal elements from their enemies. Given the endemic corruption plaguing Afghanistan, these two often overlap. Corrupt officials have been alleged to sell weapons to militants, and the Taliban is also known for having been able to infiltrate Afghan security forces. Additionally, both ISIL-Khorasan and the Taliban often seize materials on the battlefield and during raids on government facilities. As a result, militants have been able to acquire night-vision goggles, high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles (Humvees), and other high-tech equipment.

Foreign support to the Taliban has also been reported. Russian agents have been accused of sending medium and heavy machine guns, small arms, and night-vision devices to the Taliban in recent years. Similarly, Iranian sources have been accused of supplying arms to anti-government forces in Afghanistan. To highlight such claims, American officials displayed Iranian-produced Fadjr rockets that had been confiscated from the Taliban at a public event in

November 2018. While it was noted that the markings and paint scheme show evidence of Iran origins, some political observers noted that the materials could have been purchased indirectly on the black market. Lastly, American officials, as well as many independent observers, have long stated that elements of Pakistan's government provide material support to the Afghan Taliban.

In recent years, there have been reports of large transfers of rockets and other military equipment from Iran to Hezbollah in Lebanon. Some of these have reportedly been smuggled on land through tunnels and over water by small fishing boats to the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and Hamas. In 2014, Hamas attempted to use a Lebanon-based trading company to negotiate an arms deal involving missiles and communications equipment with North Korea.

Additionally, online marketplaces have provided a convenient source of dual-use military equipment. Palestinian militants have placed large orders with a China-based online marketplace for shooting gloves, tactical boots, small drones, laser sights, handheld radio equipment, knives, small motors, flashlights, and more. Rockets of varying types have been shipped to Palestinian terrorist groups, including GRAD rockets and laser-guided anti-tank missiles such as the Kornet, both manufactured in Russia; the M-302 long-range rocket manufactured by Syria and the FAJR-5 manufactured in Iran. Short-range mortars smuggled from Libya through Egypt are regularly used to strike border communities in Israel's south.

Palestinian militant group members have also developed homemade weapons. The Al-Qassam Brigade, the armed wing of Hamas, developed its missile, appropriately names Qassam which is little more than a metal pipe packed with explosives with a 6-mile range, but lacking accuracy. Another locally manufactured missile is the M-75, a version of the Iranian Fajr 5 rocket with a 45-miles range. Palestine militants also use the "Carlo," a home-made submachine gun, often built with spare gun parts in small workshops throughout the West Bank. The Carlo has been used in several high-profile attacks.[93]

Maoist Groups in India and the Philippines

Maoist and communist groups operating in India and the Philippines are among the most active terrorist groups, based on the number of incidents.[94] The New People's Army have been conducting a protracted people's war in the Philippines. Formed in 1969, the goals and strategies of the NPA closely aligned with Mao Zedong's. In the 1970s, during China's cultural revolution, the NPA sought support from Mao, who, in an effort to spread the communist ideology and China's power, provided the group with weapons and funds from 1969 to 1976. With the conclusion of Mao's Cultural Revolution, China's government was stabilized and direct support for the NPA ceased. Without support from China, the NPA reportedly sought help from the Japanese Red Army (JRA), a Maoist faction of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, as well as the Communist party of El Salvador.[95]

Today, without external support, the NPA primarily funds itself through imposing "revolutionary taxes" on the rural population and local businesses. In exchange for regular payment, the NPA refrains from attacking a business or farm. Others prefer to pay for this sort of Mafia-style "protection" in the form of small arms. While extortion activities pay for part of the NPA's weaponry, most supplies are looted after ambushes on the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), stolen from military vehicles, or purchased on the black market.[96] Assault rifles like the Russian AK-47 and the American M-16 are relatively easy for the NPA to procure and maintain.

Militants of the Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI, the Naxalites), are armed with cheap pistols, homemade weapons, and flintlocks. Naxalite arm-makers in the jungle are capable of making "Pahar" pellet guns and ammunition, as well as primitive rocket launchers. However, poorer members of the Naxalites are often armed with bows and arrows, axes, and

other primitive weapons. Better armed guerrilla squads, or "dalams," each numbering up to 40 fighters are trained in special camps and sometimes even conduct dry runs before operations. They now possess US made submachine guns, Thomson guns as well as Russian and Chinese-made assault rifles

Larger Naxalite units use, in addition to RPGs and rocket launchers, light machine guns, AK-47, L1A1 self-loading rifles, GF lightweight battle rifles, high-explosive hand grenades, and VHF radio sets to coordinate their attacks. The Naxalites have their own weapons manufacturing unit, the "Technical Research and Arms Manufacturing" (TRAM). The Naxalites frequently use IEDs and landmines against security forces in their areas of operation. Since a new CPI (Maoist) leader took over in November 2018, the use of explosives received renewed attention as the Naxalites started to use more sophisticated IEDs which can even be planted on trees. Explosive materials are acquired from mining areas. Though the majority of Naxalite weapons are captured or stolen from police and security forces – typically AK-47s, sometimes RPGs and heavy weapons – they also use underground arms market networks to purchase other, more sophisticated, weapons.

Prevention of Arms and Explosives Acquisitions

Effective counterterrorism models need to include strategies on how to prevent the procurement of arms and explosives by terrorist groups. There is an urgent need for many governments to make legislative and policy changes to ensure the implementation of preventive measures, strengthen the criminal justice response on the domestic front, and increase international cooperation and information exchange between states.[97]

Upstream Prevention

Upstream prevention includes macro-level strategies. According to Schmid, the pillars at this level of anti-terrorist prevention strategies encompasses good governance, democracy, rule of law and social justice.[98] States sponsoring or enabling terrorism are actively providing arms and explosives to terrorist groups, despite the fact that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) requires them to prevent weapons getting into the hands of terrorists. For example, the United Nations Security Council's Al-Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee 1267 asks member states to

> "Prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer, to these [the listed] individuals, groups, undertakings and entities from their territories or by their nationals outside their territories, or using their flag vessels or aircraft, of arms and related materiel of all types including weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary equipment….(…)….Member States are required to stop any supply or sale or transfer of arms and related material and services to listed individuals and entities.…(…)….to prevent Al-Qaeda and other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with it from obtaining, handling, storing, using or seeking access to all types of explosives, whether military, civilian or improvised explosives, as well as to raw materials and components that can be used to manufacture improvised explosive devices or unconventional weapons, including (but not limited to) chemical components, detonating cord, or poison.…"[99]

Terrorists take advantage of porous borders in order to transfer arms and explosives from one country to another. Monitoring border areas surrounding conflict zones needs to be improved. Where states are weak, as is the case in some sub-Saharan countries, donors should provide local border guards, police with knowhow, equipment, and funding. UN conventions, protocols and Security Council resolutions on the prevention of arms transfers should be better implemented and continuously monitored by international observers.[100]

Midstream Prevention

Effective law enforcement models for fighting terrorism exist. These include curbing official corruption. In models where the element of countering corruption is missing, law enforcement has only limited success.[101] A second element involves the fight against organized crime since that often involves smuggling and trafficking which, in turn, are linked to facilitating cross-border movements of terrorists. In several regions of the world, the fight against terrorist financing is failing. Furthermore, police and military need better training to detect the procurement of arms and control the theft of explosives. Additionally, regional cooperation among law enforcement agencies needs to be advanced, because terrorist groups operate across borders in networks. Finally, it is vital that governments support firearms identification, create effective record keeping of ownership of legal guns and rifles among members of society, and enhance control of storage facilities for explosives needed for legitimate purposes like road building in civil society.[102]

Downstream Prevention

Many law enforcement agencies and military units still lack modern training when it comes to combat terrorist groups. The law enforcement model of fighting terrorism and the military's war model of fighting terrorism are difficult to integrate but it can be done as the British experience in Northern Ireland exemplified. Yet, further integration is needed, including the one between financial institutions and intelligence agencies. Since organized crime groups and terrorist groups often cooperate, government agencies tasked with fighting one for the other also need to cooperate better than traditionally. Domestic intelligence agencies and those dealing with foreign intelligence need to exchange information not only on an ad hoc basis but also as a daily routine. This should also go for international intelligence exchange. While this is already the case between many developed countries, there is still a long way to go in less developed parts of the world. In addition, embargoes should be imposed on states providing arms and explosives to terrorist groups. Banks which are found to enable money transfers between terrorist groups and arms dealers should be heavily fined if not shut down.

Conclusion

Terrorist groups have been able to get access and use a variety of arms and explosives ranging from handguns, long rifles, submachine guns, incendiary, rocket artillery, mortars, and IEDs to grenades, VBIEDs, sabotage equipment, and unmanned aerial vehicles. Terrorist groups have commonly used firearms or explosives in their attacks, whereas a small percentage of terrorist incidents recorded the use of both in the same attacks.[103] They have different sources to acquire arms and explosives. A greater part is due to spill-overs from the legal arms industry and military markets into illegal channels. Despite standard denials, it is clear that regular arms dealers and governments sponsoring militant groups abroad provide a large part of the weapons and explosives. Libya, Pakistan, Syria, and Iran are among the countries which reportedly

supported armed groups abroad, some of which have been involved in acts of terrorism in the past.[104]

Terrorist groups take advantage of inter-state rivalries and, in turn, are used by state actors. They also take advantage of badly policed borders, corrupt government officials and weak law enforcement capacity on the national level and insufficient or lacking regional law enforcement cooperation. Furthermore, organized crime groups operating black markets enable terrorist groups to procure weapons.

Against this background, it is difficult to prevent the procurement of arms and explosives by terrorist groups. However, counter arms procurement strategies can reduce terrorist groups' access to weapons and explosives, as long as they include effective policies in the areas of preventive and security measures, criminal justice response, and international cooperation. More specifically, the international community needs to strengthen its cooperation and continue engaging national institutions. There is a need to do policy analysis and develop models on how terrorists obtain weapons on the dark web. It is imperative to encourage postal agencies to flag suspicious packages, considering the fact that terrorist groups increasingly use mailing systems to transfer weapons. States need to share best practices to prosecute arms traffickers. Tracing of weapons still remains a challenge for many states. The governments need to prioritize their preventive measures against the diversion of weapons from government stockpiles to terrorist groups. States need to develop tracing technologies and conduct investigations to determine where illicit weapons originate. These are several recommendations for national institutions and the international community. The world urgently needs effective measures to prevent the procurement of arms and explosives by terrorists. Otherwise, global terrorism databases will continue recording thousands of casualties each year.

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