

M Ashique Rahman

UNDERSTANDING THE CHANGING NATURE OF GLOBAL TERRORISM: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

Terrorism and violent extremism surpassing every region and almost all the countries of the contemporary world are posing the most crucial threat to international security and stability. Terrorism as a 'tool, technique and method of achieving specific political objective' has a history that can be traced back to millennia. An analysis of the history of modern terrorism, however, shows that over the years there have been unprecedented changes in the nature of global terrorism in terms of organising ideologies of terrorist groups, the tactics and weapons they have made use of and the targets. The main objective of the paper is to explore and understand these changes through historical analysis. The paper uses David C. Rapoport's Four Waves Theory of the history of modern terrorism that provides a very useful framework in tracing and analysing the changes. Analysis in the paper reveals that changes in the nature of global terrorism in terms of transformations in tactics, weapons and targets have gone through an evolution buttressed by contemporary political factors, changes in sources of motivations *i. e.*, ideologies, changes in technology and the enabling environment. The paper also reflects on the contemporary discourse as to whether we are experiencing a 'new wave' or 'fifth wave' and upholds the view that any analytical construction that suggests a 'fifth wave' based on differences in tactics, weapons and targets will be flawed and misconstrued.

1. Introduction

The world is in turmoil and terrorism and/or violent extremism occurring worldwide can be held predominantly responsible for such intensified uncertainty and insecurity. If the Cold War is considered as the determining factor of international relations and politics since World War II till its end in the late 1980s, terrorism and violent extremism can easily be conceived as the determining feature since the ushering of the 21st century. The disastrous terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the consequent unleashing of the Global War on Terrorism (GWoT) by the United States (US) and its allies defined and dictated so far the directions of international politics and events in this new century.¹ New alliances are formed; relationships and institutions

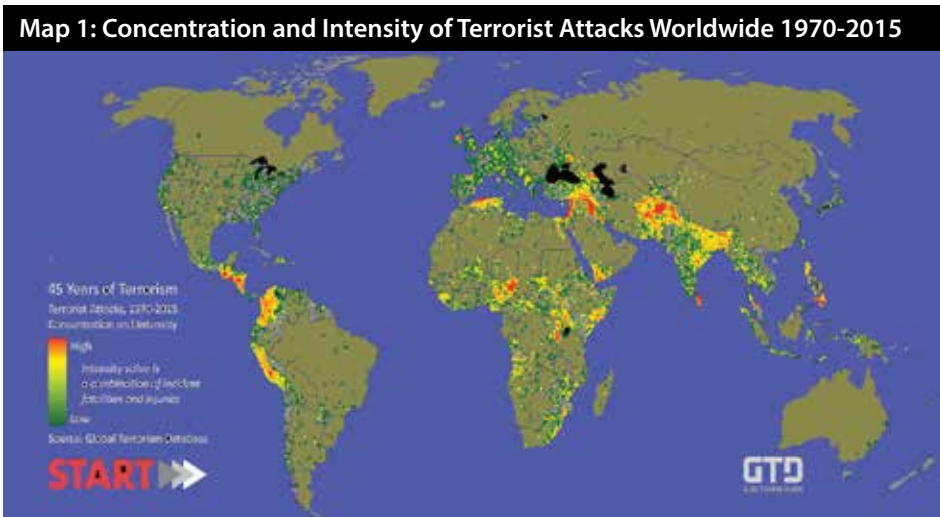
M Ashique Rahman is Research Fellow at Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS). His e-mail address is: ashique04@gmail.com

© Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), 2017.

¹ Doug Stokes writes, "Similar to the Cold War ideology of anti-communism, the new ideology of anti-terrorism serves to provide an optic through which international relations are viewed and Western

have been redefined and restructured; and countries have reconceptualised and reframed their national interests and priorities.

A defining characteristic of contemporary terrorism, however, is its global reach surpassing every region and almost all the countries of the world if not directly, then certainly indirectly (Map1). Thousands of people are killed each year and the lives of millions are affected. Occurrences of terrorist incidents in some countries are so pervasive, frequent and fatal that they even challenge the very structure and organisation of the state authority engendering state-failure and a potential for ultimate breakdown. Examples of such countries include but certainly are not limited to Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia etc. In 2016 alone, a total of 11,072 terrorist attacks occurred worldwide, resulting in more than 25,600 total deaths and 33,800 injuries.² These casualty figures also include more than 6,700 perpetrator deaths and 1,600 perpetrator injuries.³ In addition, more than 15,500 people were kidnapped or taken hostage. Table 1 in Annex 1, shows the total number of terrorist attacks, deaths and injuries in the ten most affected countries around the world in the year 2016.



Source: University of Maryland, *Global Terrorism Database (GTB)*, available at http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/images/START_GlobalTerrorismDatabase_TerroristAttacksConcentrationIntensityMap_45Years.png, accessed on 20 March 2017.

Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, which was no doubt, a watershed event in the history of humankind, al-Qaeda emerged as the dominant

intervention in the global South is justified." Doug Stokes, "Ideas and Avocados: Ontologising Critical Terrorism Studies", *International Relations*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2009, p. 85.

² National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland, "Annex of Statistical Information", in the US Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016*, July 2017, p. 4.

³ *Ibid.*

terrorist organisation and the front liner of international terrorism. As far as the structure is concerned, al-Qaeda emerged more as a terrorist network with branches and affiliates spreading across various countries and regions. In terms of tactics and weapons, suicide bombings and the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) have had been the hallmark of al-Qaeda and contemporary terrorist groups. Al-Qaeda, over the years, has also adopted some of the guerrilla tactics – hit and run – especially in Iraq and Afghanistan. Terrorist acts carried out by al-Qaeda mostly targeted armed forces and government installations although often with collateral civilian casualties. Moreover, assassination tactics for targeted killings of political leaders and high government officials, both civilian and defence forces, have also been practised. Following the death of its supreme leader Osama bin Laden, the network, however, exhibits considerable signs of weakness and impotency.

In 2013-2014, a new extremist group⁴ emerged namely Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)⁵ that posed significant challenges to the conceptualisation of the nature of a terrorist group as for the first time in the history of terrorism a violent extremist group established its political authority over a territory, thereby, led some scholars⁶ to coin a new term Terrorist Semi-States (TSSs) and/or pseudo-state⁷. However, to establish and maintain that political authority, apart from frontal military combat with various opposing forces, ISIS has also employed excessive violence and brutality.⁸ Some of its tactics involve perpetrating ultra-violent acts in terms of indiscriminate killings, hostage taking and ransom seeking, beheading of the hostages, trading slaves, killing of civilians including women and children etc. In terms of weapons, ISIS has also made massive use of IEDs in addition to conventional military weapons. However, in terms of weapons, tactics and targets, ISIS has made some innovations.⁹ Organisationally, it has exceeded the al-Qaeda model of networked organisation,

⁴ I have avoided using the term ‘terrorists’ for ISIS as the group holds authority over a territory, possesses its own army, engages in frontal combat with government forces as well as devises financing mechanism to fund its governance system over that particular territory. The group, nevertheless, is imbued with many vestiges of a terrorist organisation carrying out acts of terrorism *i.e.*, suicide bombing, targeted killing, beheading, kidnapping, hostage taking etc., to terrorise the society.

⁵ The organisation has many names *viz.*, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), mostly used by the US; the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham; Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS); a shorter version Islamic State (IS); and an Islamic nomenclature *Daesh*. Throughout the paper the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is used.

⁶ Or Honig and Ido Yahel, “A Fifth Wave of Terrorism? The Emergence of Terrorist Semi-States”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, published online on 09 June 2017, available at <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09546553.2017.1330201> accessed on 15 July 2017.

⁷ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won’t Stop the Latest Jihadist Threat”, *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015, available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/isis-not-terrorist-group>, accessed on 15 January 2017; Jessica Anderson, “ISIS: State or Terror Group?”, *Small Wars Journal*, June 2016, available at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/isis-state-or-terror-group>, accessed on 15 January 2017.

⁸ For a recent account of the origin, organisation and strategies of ISIS, see, Fawaz A. Gerges, *ISIS: A History*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016.

⁹ “No One Wants to See ISIS Defeated More Than Muslims”, *The World Post*, available at https://www.huffingtonpost.com/dean-obeidallah/isis-defeat-muslims_b_10825028.html, accessed on 26 July 2017.

which inspired various extremist groups and individuals all around the world to carry out terrorist acts to achieve its objectives. Hence, we have witnessed innovative terrorist acts such as ramming heavy vehicles on the pedestrians and on crowds, shooting in concerts, theatres, pubs etc., carried out in the name of ISIS. Moreover, ISIS has also made tremendous use of modern information and communication technology (ICT), especially the internet and the social media. All these new tactics of ISIS and the ensuing brutality raised few questions about the changing nature of terrorism and violent extremism at the global level.

While the common element of terrorising in the society is the basic ingredient of all terrorist groups, various groups in different times used different means to achieve that objective. There are many factors that determined these choices, for example, local conditions and circumstances, the specific goals and objectives and obviously, the availability of weapons that they use. Nevertheless, there remain some questions as: are the tactics and weapons used by contemporary terrorist/extremist groups new? Why are there changes? Why are they adopting new tactics, weapons and targets? The paper intends to answer these questions through historical analysis of global terrorism.

If we look at the history of terrorism, we see using terrorism as a 'tool, technique and method' of achieving political objective, is nothing new. It has been there for centuries or even millennia. They have used different tactics and weapons while they have different objectives. Since, the history of terrorism is old, for convenience of analysis, the theoretical framework of David C. Rapoport, a renowned scholar of terrorism studies, is employed here to analyse the changing nature of modern terrorism. According to Rapoport, modern terrorism started in the latter half of the 19th century, with the advent of Anarchism in Russia. Therefore, employing Rapoport's theory also helps us to analyse a relatively shorter period – one and half a century – of history of terrorism rather than the millennia.

The main objective of the paper is to explore the changing nature of global terrorism. However, since Rapoport's four waves of modern terrorism is used as a theoretical framework, this paper intends to reflect briefly on the discourse whether the present spate of global terrorism ushered in a 'new wave' or, as noted by some scholars and observers, the 'fifth wave' of modern terrorism. The paper is expected to make threefold contribution to the voluminous literature of terrorism studies. Firstly, it will re-emphasise the fact that a neutral, value-free conceptualisation of terrorism must define it as a 'tool, technique and method of achieving political objective' no matter what the political objective is. As Alex P. Schmid mentioned, "few subjects are as plagued by normative questions and infested by politics as is terrorism."¹⁰ Hence, a value-free definition is required to bring in all the groups into a neutral and

¹⁰ Alex P. Schmid (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, London: Routledge, 2011, pp. 201-202.

comprehensive analysis of the history of terrorism, irrespective of their ideological inspiration and political objective. Secondly, the exercise will enable us to understand the changing nature of global terrorism as an evolution buttressed by contemporary political factors, changes in technology and enabling environments, thereby, to sketch out how and why we have reached at this point of apocalyptic terrorism¹¹ that seeks a worldwide transformation through violence and annihilation. And thirdly, the paper will hopefully put the discourse of 'fifth wave' towards a right direction by highlighting the fact that the required premises of the 'wave theory' need to be tested and satisfied with.

The paper has six sections including introduction and conclusion. Section two involves conceptual discussion of the term terrorism. Section three initiates the discussion on the history of terrorism and introduces David Rapoport's 'Four Waves Theory'. Section four elaborates the Four Waves Theory in detail and shows how the nature of global terrorism changes over time, in terms of tactics, weapons and targets. The discourse on whether we are experiencing a 'new wave' or 'a fifth wave' of terrorism is dealt with in section five. Section six is the conclusion of the paper.

2. Defining Terrorism amid Divergences and Discrepancies

Terrorism is perhaps, the most controversial and contested term in contemporary times and over the years there have been divergences and discrepancies among the scholars regarding its meaning and conceptualisation. Ironically, it seems that there is at least one universal consensus about the definition and meaning of terrorism, *i.e.*, there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. Alex P. Schmid, a renowned scholar of terrorism studies, has compiled and analysed more than 250 definitions of terrorism and found out that there were more dissimilarities and divergences than coherence and consensus.¹² He however, mentioned a few reasons for such divergences and diversities *viz.*, political, legal, social and popular notions about terrorism are divergent; definition often involves legitimisation, de-legitimisation and/or criminalisation of certain group or groups; different types of terrorism assume different forms of manifestations; and the term itself has undergone changes in its meaning in the past 200 years of history.¹³

However, from the etymological point of view, the original historical meanings of both 'terror' and 'terrorism' are relatively straightforward. The word 'terror' is derived from the Latin verb *terrere*, which means 'bring someone to tremble through

¹¹ Frances L. Flannery, *Understanding Apocalyptic Terrorism: Countering the Radical Mindset*, London: Routledge, 2016. Another similar term is millenarian terrorism. See, James F. Rinehart, "The Rise of Millenarian Terror", in James F. Rinehart, *Apocalyptic Faith and Political Violence: Prophets of Terror*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp. 33-78.

¹² See Alex P. Schmid (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 99-157.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

great fear'.¹⁴ A simple definition of terrorism is provided by Walter Laqueur, who considered terrorism as "the illegitimate use of force to achieve political objectives".¹⁵ This definition is too simple as it can involve too many types of activities. Moreover, it avoids a definitional problem by shifting the focus to a determination of what constitute legitimate or illegitimate thereby, adding new problem *i.e.*, who is going to define it. A very prolific definition is provided by Enders and Sandler that captures most of the elements of terrorism. According to them, "terrorism is the premeditated use or threat to use violence by individuals or subnational groups to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience beyond that of the immediate victims".¹⁶ This is one of the most appropriate definitions of terrorism as it emphasises the most important aspect of terrorism *viz.*, intimidating a large audience beyond that of the immediate victims. It is because of this aspect of instilling incisive fear that terrorism is also termed as a 'psychological warfare'.

However, if we look at some official definitions we will find that various agencies of the same country use different definitions of terrorism to suit their mission and agenda. In fact, almost all the agencies and federal organisations of the US have their own definitions of terrorism. For example, the US Department of Defence defines terrorism as "the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological".¹⁷ A similar definition is also used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). On the other hand, the United States legal code defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents; 'international terrorism' as terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country; and 'terrorist group' as any group practicing, or which has significant subgroups which practice, international terrorism."¹⁸ This definition is used by the US Department of Justice (DoJ) and the US State Department.

According to Lutz and Lutz,¹⁹ a definition of terrorism needs to include six essential elements to become a value-free concept: (1) the use of violence or threat of violence with an intention of creating fear or terror; (2) by an organised group; (3) to achieve political objectives; (4) the violence is directed against a target audience that extends beyond the immediate victims, who are often innocent civilians; (5) a government can either be the perpetrator of violence or the target – at least one

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁵ Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism*, Boston: Little Brown 1987. Quoted in James M. Lutz and Brenda J. Lutz, *Global Terrorism*, 2nd Ed. Oxon: Routledge, 2008, p. 9.

¹⁶ Walter Enders and Todd Sandler, *The Political Economy of Terrorism*, 1st Edition, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006 (e-book), p. 3.

¹⁷ Joint Chiefs of Staff DOD, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2008.

¹⁸ Section 2656f (d) of Title 22 of the United States Code.

¹⁹ James M. Lutz and Brenda J. Lutz, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-14.

has to be a non-state actor; and (6) terrorism is a weapon of the weak. Lutz and Lutz mentioned that all six of the above elements are necessary for an action to be considered a terrorist act.²⁰ Some might contest this conceptual construction by referring to the contemporary 'lone-wolf phenomenon' which is an exception to the second element. However, the value-free aspect of the definition lies in the fact that it helps us apply terrorism to any group's acts that use violence to induce fear irrespective of its political objective.

2.1 *Typology of Terrorism and International Terrorism*

Conceptual understanding of terrorism is further complicated by the fact that various groups with diverse political objectives resort to the tools and tactics of terrorism. There are many groups that use religion as their organising ideology and pursue religious as well as political objectives. And there are many secular variations *viz.*, violent extremist groups pursuing national, ethnic and regional goals, left-wing vs. right-wing ideological goals, and even global issue based extremism like eco-terrorism. Moreover, we have renowned scholar like Noam Chomsky who also talks about western terrorism.²¹ And then we also have a completely different type of terrorism which, perhaps defy many characteristics of terrorism *i.e.*, state terrorism. As it is understood today and as mentioned by Gérard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin, state terrorism applies mainly to the support provided by certain governments to terrorist groups, but it takes many other forms as well. It can also be considered as a tool systematically employed by totalitarian regimes.²² They also noted, "A state's terrorism is also manifest in the military doctrine of its armed forces. The doctrine of 'strategic bombing', for example, developed in the West in the 1930s, was based entirely on the terror incited by the mass bombing of civilian populations to compel governments to surrender. This doctrine resulted in the bombing of Dresden and the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki."²³

However, for the purpose of our discussion of global terrorism, we need to differentiate between domestic and international terrorism. Not all terrorism is international, although, from an historical perspective, as noted by Albert J. Bergesen and Omar Lizardo, "both domestic and international terrorism seem endemic to organised social life, appearing and reappearing throughout history"²⁴. Nevertheless, international terrorism is "where the perpetrator, target group, or national locale of

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²¹ Noam Chomsky and Andre Vltchek, *On Western Terrorism: From Hiroshima to Drone Warfare*, London: Pluto Press, 2013.

²² Gérard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin (eds.), *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to Al Qaeda*, translated by Edward Schneider, Kathryn Pulver and Jesse Browner, California: University of California Press, 2007, p. 7.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Albert J. Bergesen and Omar Lizardo, "International Terrorism and the World-System", *Sociological Theory* (Theories of Terrorism: A Symposium), Vol. 22, No. 1, March 2004, p. 39.

the incident involves at least two different countries”²⁵ According to Lutz and Lutz, “international terrorism usually will include situations that involve a target in another country attacked by a group from another, thus creating a situation in which more than one government has an interest”²⁶ It is to be noted that in today’s interconnected world this distinction can often be a false one as ultimately all domestic terrorism has international implications and that all international terrorism one way or the other has domestic ramifications.²⁷ However, scholar like Fawaz A. Gerges upholds that although there were instances of international terrorism earlier, as far as religious variant of terrorism is concerned, it transformed into a genuine transnational character during the Afghanistan war of the 1980s and later, in the 1990s, al-Qaeda emerged as the vanguard of international terrorism, which was unprecedented before it.²⁸

3. History of Terrorism and the Four Waves Theory

History of terrorism dates back centuries or even millennia. As Louise Richardson noted, “terrorism is a tactic employed by many different groups in many different parts of the world in pursuit of many different objectives”²⁹ If we consider terrorism using religion as motivations, the earliest instance of such violent extremism can be traced back to the very first-century when the Jewish Zealots, also known as the *sicarii*, incited an uprising against the Roman occupation in the ancient city of Judea. The Islamic variant of such violent extremism can be dated back to the late 11th century when the *Ismaili* sect in the Middle East, also known as the Assassins, assassinated their opposing governors, political and military leaders. Some might refer to the fact that as the genealogy of the term ‘terrorism’ suggests, modern terrorism can be traced back to the French Revolution, although it was the state terrorism variant. However, the paper uses David Rapoport’s time frame of the history of modern terrorism for convenience of analysis.

David C. Rapoport, now a Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and “one of the founding figures of terrorism studies,”³⁰ propounded his famous ‘waves theory’ of history of terrorism in the late 20th century. He first narrated the argument in his small piece of entry entitled, “Terrorism”, in the First Edition of *Encyclopaedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict*, published in 1999.³¹ The discussion, however, drew little attention. It was after the 11 September 2001 attacks, David Rapoport published an article entitled, “The Fourth

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ James M. Lutz and Brenda J. Lutz, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁸ Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*, 2nd Edition, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

²⁹ Louise Richardson *FRSE*, “Forward”, in Alex P. Schmid (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. xv.

³⁰ John Horgan and Kurt Braddock (eds.), *Terrorism Studies: A Reader*, London: Routledge, 2012, p. 1.

³¹ David C. Rapoport, “Terrorism”, in *Encyclopaedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict*, 1st Edition, Vol. 3, San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 1999, pp. 497-500.

Wave: September 11 and the History of Terrorism"³² and as noted by T. Parker and N. Sitter, it is "one of the most influential articles ever written in the field of terrorism studies."³³ However, he concretised his theory later in a book chapter titled, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism,"³⁴ published in 2004. And later he very comprehensively elaborated his theory in his massive four-volume book titled, *Terrorism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, published in 2006.³⁵ Each wave of his four waves has been comprehensively elaborated in each volume of the book.

There are some critical reflections³⁶ on this Four Waves Theory of Rapoport as well as there are some very high acclamations as well. Jeffrey Kaplan noted, "Rapoport's work has shaped, defined and indeed invented the study of religious terrorism."³⁷ In 2009, Karen Rasler and William R. Thompson systematically tested the wave argument and commented that, "our findings...provide empirical support for the Rapoport model. Waves do indeed appear to characterise terrorist activity."³⁸ Critiques of the theory T. Parker and N. Sitter, before refuting some of its premises mentioned, "to this day, it provides the basic conceptual framework for many academic courses taught around the world on this subject."³⁹ Alex P. Schmid emphasised that it was "one of the greatest contributions to the study of terrorism in the past two decades"⁴⁰

However, it is beyond the scope of the paper to delve into a critical assessment of the theory itself, testing its various parameters and premises as well as revealing its shortcomings, rather, the paper uses the theory to trace the changing nature of terrorism over the last nearly one and half centuries, and especially to make use of an analytical framework to understand the changing nature of terrorism and violent extremism in this 21st century.

³² There were in fact, two versions of the article published concurrently viz., David C. Rapoport, "The Fourth Wave: September 11 and the History of Terrorism", *Current History*, Vol. 100, No. 650, Special Issue, December 2001, pp. 419-424, and "The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11", *Anthropoetics*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Spring/Summer 2002, available at <http://anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0801/terror/>, accessed on 12 January 2017.

³³ Tom Parker and Nick Sitter, "The Four Horsemen of Terrorism: It's Not Waves, It's Strains", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2016, p. 198.

³⁴ David C. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism", in Audrey Kurth Cronin and James Ludes (eds.), *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004, pp. 46-73.

³⁵ David C. Rapoport, *Terrorism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, Four Volumes, London: Routledge, 2006.

³⁶ Tom Parker and Nick Sitter, *op. cit.*, pp. 197-216; Lindsay Clutterbuck, "The Progenitors of Terrorism: Russian Revolutionaries or Extreme Irish Republicans?", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2004, pp. 154-181.

³⁷ Jeffrey Kaplan, "David Rapoport and the Study of Religiously Motivated Terrorism", in Jean E. Rosenfeld (ed.), *Terrorism, Identity and Legitimacy: The Four Waves Theory and Political Violence*, Oxon: Routledge, 2011, pp. 66-83.

³⁸ Karen Rasler and William R. Thompson, "Looking for Waves of Terrorism", in Jean E. Rosenfeld (ed.), *Ibid.*, pp. 13-29.

³⁹ Tom Parker and Nick Sitter, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

⁴⁰ Alex P. Schmid (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 228.

4. Rapoport's Four Waves of Modern Terrorism

Summarising the history of modern terrorism, Rapoport⁴¹ delineated four waves of modern terrorism. According to him, the Anarchist wave is the first wave, which began in Russia in the 1880s and spread to Europe, Asia, and the Americas. The second is the Anti-Colonial wave *i.e.*, the nationalist-separatist movements beginning in the 1920s, during which minority groups sought to be liberated from their colonial masters in their countries. The New Left wave which is social revolutionary is the third wave. And the Religious wave was punctuated by the Iran hostage crisis of 1979 and the simultaneous onset of the Afghanistan War. Rapoport defines a wave as "a cycle of activity in a given time period, with international character; with similar activities occurring in different regions, driven by a common predominant energy that shapes the participating groups".⁴² He refers to the groups' motivating ideology as the common predominant energy. Nevertheless, Rapoport distinguishes each of his waves with its own ingredients, different audiences, sympathisers and supporters, or *modus operandi*, meaning the way these groups operate. He also noted that each of these waves last for a few decades. Each wave lasts for three to four decades, after which they might still be there but attract less sympathisers and supporters. And finally, following a certain period of time, they gradually fade away. These four waves are elaborated in more detail in the next section to delineate the changing nature of global terrorism in terms of tactics, targets and weapons.

4.1 *Understanding the Changing Nature of Global Terrorism: Tactics, Weapons, and Targets*

Rapoport's first wave *i.e.*, the Anarchist Wave was inspired by a number of Russian writers namely Bakunin and Kropotkin who espoused their doctrine or strategy of terror. These anarchists used new technologies, new communication tools of their age, such as the telegraph and newspapers. One of the most notorious organisations of that era is the Russian organisation *Narodnaya Volya*, best translated as 'the people's will'. Members of that group assassinated, amongst others, a very high profile political leader, a Russian Tsar. According to David Rapoport, these people call themselves terrorists, and the 1890s has been described as the 'Golden Age of Assassination'.⁴³ This wave, however, lasted until the early twentieth century, and some other high profile victims were the Empress Elisabeth of Austria, *Umberto* the first, King of Italy and the US President William McKinley.

⁴¹ David C. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism", in Audrey Kurth Cronin and James Ludes (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 46-73.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

The second wave that started in the 1920s is described as a struggle for self-determination, for independence, and to liberate *i.e.*, liberating former colonies from their occupiers *e.g.*, French rule, British rule, etc. And the tactics these groups used were different from those in the previous wave. They used guerrilla tactics – hit and run – which was difficult for the colonial powers to deal with. And some of these groups were quite successful in managing to almost defeat their opposing forces. Also very important is that, according to David Rapoport, these rebels stopped calling themselves terrorists and were beginning to use the term ‘freedom fighters’ struggling against ‘government forces.’⁴⁴ Among the most well-known organisations of that wave was the Irish Republican Army (IRA). From the 1920s and a little earlier, they were fighting for independence, a free Irish state and a united one. Another similar group was the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) of Algeria that managed in the end to fight for an independent Algeria from French rule. And then the third organisation is Irgun, a militant Zionist group that was fighting against the British authorities who at that time were governing what we now call Israel and Palestine. They bombed the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, one of their most notorious attacks, which at that time was the headquarters of the British mandatory authorities over Palestine.

The third wave of terrorism is what David Rapoport calls the New Left Wave or extreme left terrorism. Groups like the Red Brigades, the *autonomi* faction, and other groups that started in the 1960s, fell in this category. The Vietnam War that raged from the late 1950s up until the 1970s was the predominant driver for these groups. David Rapoport observes that many groups during this wave in the developed world including the Weather Underground, a group of students from North America, and *autonomi* in Germany saw themselves as vanguards for the masses of the Third World. Other groups include groups in Latin America, who were revolutionary groups and who used urban guerrilla warfare to fight the authorities and governments being supported partly by the then Soviet Union and its allies. However, the context of this wave, of course, is the context of the Cold War. And at international level, according to Rapoport, international terrorism of those days was very much associated with Palestinians and in particular the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the PLO of Yasser Arafat. The *modus operandi*, the techniques, and the tactics during this wave also included hostage taking and hijacking specially, hijacking of the commercial airliner. More than 100 of such airliner hijackings occurred every year during the 1970s.⁴⁵ However, hijackings of the airliners were simply a tactic or tool to create or get attention or to press upon the governments to heed to their demands. And in most cases, the perpetrators of the hijacks managed to get out alive and the hostages were unharmed.

A very famous example of hostage takings during this wave was the hostage taking of Israeli athletes during the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972. That event was

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁴⁵ David C. Rapoport, “The Fourth Wave: September 11 and the History of Terrorism”, *op. cit.*, p. 421.

watched by millions around the globe. The organisation behind it was called Black September, and unfortunately, it ended with all the athletes being killed, partly in an attempt to emancipate them.

The fourth and the last wave distinguished by David Rapoport is what he calls the Religious wave that started in the year 1979, the year of the Islamic revolution in Iran and the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. David Rapoport shows that there were many different religious groups that resorted to terrorism since 1979. He mentions not only the Islamic groups but also the Sikhs from Punjab who organised one of the vicious forms of violent extremism against the Indian authorities from their holy centre, the Golden Temple in Amritsar. He also mentioned about the Jewish religious terrorists, who murdered the former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 while giving a speech in Tel Aviv.

The religious wave also includes Christian groups for instance, the anti-abortion militants who have carried out nearly 300 extreme acts of violence including arson and bombings of abortion clinics in the US since mid-1970s.⁴⁶ It also includes religious sects. And the most well-known attack was the attack on the Tokyo subway by the Japanese *Aum Shinrikyo i.e.*, the *Aum* sect. Members of this group released the nerve gas Sarin in the Tokyo subway and attempted to kill hundreds of people. At the end, only 12 people died while thousands were injured. The *modus operandi* of these religious groups includes, like earlier waves, assassinations of key leaders, military representatives of the states, as well as hostage taking. However, they adopted a new tactic *i.e.*, the suicide bombings. The first such attacks were carried out by the Lebanese militant *Shi'ite* organisation Hezbollah on the US and French military forces in Lebanon, where they used trucks to commit suicide terrorism by blowing up the headquarters of the Americans and the French. Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that suicide bombings were not completely new with the religious extremist groups. Suicide bombings were also carried out by the non-religious groups as well. For instances, the Kurdish workers parties, a Maoist separatist group in Turkey and the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka who were trying to liberate or create autonomy for the Tamils on the island of Sri Lanka often used or commit suicide attacks against their opponents mostly the government. Table 2 provides a snapshot view of Rapoport's four waves of terrorism highlighting the differential targets and strategies.

⁴⁶ Kimberly Hutcherson, "A brief history of anti-abortion violence", *CNN*, 01 December 2015, available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/30/us/anti-abortion-violence/index.html>, accessed on 20 January 2017.

Table 2: A Snapshot of Rapoport’s Four Waves of Terrorism

Waves	Primary Strategy	Target Identity	Precipitant	Special Characteristics
Anarchists 1870–1910s	Elite assassinations/ Bank robberies	Primarily European States	Failure/ slowness of political reform	Developed basic terrorism strategies and rationales
Nationalist 1920s–1960s	Guerrilla attacks on police and military	European empires	Post-1919 delegitimisation of empire	Increased international support (UN and diasporas)
New Left/ Marxist 1960s–1980s	Hijackings, kidnappings, assassination	Governments in general; increasing focus on U.S.	Viet Cong successes	Increased international training/ cooperation/ sponsorship
Religious 1970s–2020s	Suicide bombings	U.S., Israel, and secular regimes with Muslim Populations	Iranian revolution, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan	Casualty escalation, decline in the number of terrorist groups

Source: Karen Rasler and William R. Thompson, “Looking for Waves of Terrorism”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2009, p. 31.

Therefore, an analysis of the history of modern terrorism since late 19th century reveals that as the sources or dominating energy as mentioned by Rapoport, of terrorists’ motivations changed over the periods, so did the tactics, weapons and strategies. Tactics are followed and strategies are devised to achieve the objectives in line with organising ideologies. Hence, during the first wave, assassinations dominated as the most favoured tactic by the terrorist groups of the time. Similarly, during the second wave, *i.e.*, during the anti-colonial movement, dominance of guerrilla tactics was witnessed. However, it does not mean the ineffectiveness of the earlier tactics, rather adaptation by the extremists and terrorist groups to newer challenges by adopting new tactics to be more effective in creating fear among the larger society.

During the third wave, we have seen the predominance of guerrilla tactics as well as hostage taking and airliner hijacking. And in the fourth wave, suicide bombings emerged as the dominant tactic and massive use of IEDs emerged as the dominant weapons. In fact, suicide bombing emerged as the hallmark of terrorism in the 21st century. However, it is to be noted that adopting new tactics and new weapons by terrorists groups in any point of history of terrorism does not mean complete rejection of terrorist tactics and weapons used by previous terrorist groups or in Rapoport’s terms in previous waves. Hence, we see while in the fourth wave, some tactics and weapons dominate *viz.*, suicide bombings and use of IEDs, terrorist tactics in this wave also include assassinations, kidnapping/hostage taking, guerrilla warfare,

indiscriminate killings, hijacking etc. And in the last one decade, online platform *i.e.*, the internet and the social media are used as a major source of radicalisation and recruitment for the terrorist groups as well as organising acts of terrorism. However, apparently, it may seem new, but throughout the history of terrorism, terrorist groups have always made use of the latest technology of their age or time. Particular use of tactics, weapons and targets by terrorist groups is an important phenomenon as these choices by the terrorists led to a group of scholars⁴⁷ analysing terrorists as rational actor against public perception of unscrupulous and often abnormal actor. Similarly, excessive use of beheadings by ISIS is not new in the history, and it has strategic logic benefitting them in achieving their objectives.⁴⁸ However, considering the contemporary terrorist groups' use of online technology and platform, and their use of unprecedented tactics, weapons and excessive brutality, some scholars are inclined to designate contemporary terrorism as 'a new wave' or the 'fifth wave'. The following section reflects on this particular postulation.

5. Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and Present-day Terrorism: Is It the Fifth Wave?

Building on Rapoport's four waves theory, some scholars⁴⁹ consider ushering of a fifth wave of terrorism and directed their efforts to specify the parameters of such wave. However, these kinds of efforts are not new. Following the suicide bombings in the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salam, Tanzania, and the emergence of al-Qaeda network in the mid-1990s, many scholars initiated a debate regarding the advent of a 'new terrorism' substantially different from the 'old or traditional terrorism'. Scholars like Hoffman⁵⁰, Laqueur⁵¹, Simon and Benjamin⁵², Neumann⁵³,

⁴⁷ D. E. Long, *The Anatomy of Terrorism*, New York: Free Press, 1990; C. J. M. Drake, "The Role of Ideology in Terrorists' Target Selection", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1998, pp. 53-85; A. Vinci, "The Strategic Use of Fear by the Lord's Resistance Army", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2005, pp. 361-81.

⁴⁸ For an interesting analysis of why ISIS beheads and its historical instances see, Robert Pape, Michael Rowly and Sarah Morell, "Why ISIL Beheads its Victims: The Islamic State's brutality has a strategic logic", *Politico Magazine*, 07 October 2014.

⁴⁹ To mention a few, Or Honig and Ido Yahel, *op. cit.*; Fawaz A. Gerges, "ISIS and the Third Wave of Jihadism", *Current History*, Vol. 113, No. 767, December 2014, pp. 339-343; Anthony N. Celso, "The Islamic State and Boko Haram: *Fifth Wave* Jihadist Terror Groups", *Orbis*, Vol. 59, No. 2, Spring 2015, pp. 249-268; although in a different context, Jeffery Kaplan, *Terrorist Groups and the New Tribalism: Terrorism's Fifth Wave*, London: Routledge, 2010; Emilio Sánchez de Rojas Díaz, "Are we facing the fifth international terrorist wave?", Analytical Document 02/2016, *Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, available at http://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2016/DIEEEA02-2016_Oleada_Terrorismo_Internacional_ESRD_ENGLISH.pdf, accessed on 20 January 2017; and also a BlogSpot that promote the concept of fifth wave through hosting relevant blogs. Available at <https://thefifthwave.wordpress.com/> accessed on 25 January 2017.

⁵⁰ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, London: Indigo, 1998.

⁵¹ Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*, London: Oxford University Press, 1999.

⁵² S. Simon and D. Benjamin, "America and the New Terrorism", *Survival*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2000, pp. 59-75.

⁵³ P. Neumann, *Old and New Terrorism*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009.

and Kurtulus⁵⁴ are of the opinion that ‘old terrorism’ in the form of, for example, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), or the Red Army Faction (RAF), is fundamentally different from the “new terrorism” predominantly perpetrated by radical Islamist groups such as al-Qaeda. However, the dichotomy of Old vs. New terrorism is created with differences in their motivations, behaviour pattern, and the nature of organisation.⁵⁵

This dichotomous construction has been met with scepticism by a number of more critical scholars. Copeland⁵⁶; Tucker⁵⁷; Crenshaw⁵⁸; Duyvesteyn⁵⁹; Spencer⁶⁰; and Field all have criticised the notion of “new terrorism”. Most of them have questioned the truthfulness of the newness claims based on historical real world examples. Some of them have also questioned the accuracy of a new categorisation. According to them, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to objectively categorise the phenomenon of terrorism in one category rather than the other. They are particularly concerned that some of the attributed “new” characteristics, such as an emphasis on the fanatical religious motivations, would function politically and ideologically to dehumanise and often de-politicise the grievances of such groups. Sometimes, such grievances might have significant value and constitute part of their rightful claims. Moreover, too much emphasis on the fanaticism of the extremist groups would legitimise the use of excessive force and counter violence.

Similarly, scholars like Jeffrey Kaplan, Or Honig and Ido Yahel, Anthony Celso, and organisation such as *Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos* (Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies) initiated and carried forward a discourse identifying contemporary terrorism as the fifth wave. Or Honig and Ido Yahel are of the opinion that the emergence of terrorist semi-states (TSSs)⁶¹ mostly in the broader area of the Middle East and North Africa today (including Pakistan) should be considered as the beginning of a fifth wave.⁶² Violent extremist groups like al-Shabaab took control over large parts of south

⁵⁴ E. Kurtulus, “The ‘New Terrorism’ and its Critics”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 34, No. 6, 2011, pp. 476-500.

⁵⁵ Alexander Spencer, “New Versus Old Terrorism”, in Richard Jackson (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies*, Oxon: Routledge 2016, p. 270.

⁵⁶ T. Copeland, “Is the New Terrorism Really New?: An Analysis of the New Paradigm for Terrorism”, *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2001, pp. 91-105.

⁵⁷ D. Tucker, “What is New about the New Terrorism and How Dangerous is It?”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2001, pp. 1-14.

⁵⁸ Martha Crenshaw, “New Versus ‘Old’ Terrorism”, *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2003, pp. 48-53.

⁵⁹ I. Duyvesteyn, “How New Is the New Terrorism?”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 27, No. 5, 2004, pp. 439-454.

⁶⁰ Alexander Spencer, “Questioning the Concept of New Terrorism”, *Peace, Conflict and Development*, Vol. 8, 2006, pp. 1-33.

⁶¹ Or Honig and Ido Yahel used the term Terrorist Semi-States (TSSs) for groups like al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Hamas, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and obviously for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

⁶² Or Honig and Ido Yahel, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

Somalia in 2009; the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) was established since Boko Haram took over north-east Nigeria in 2014; the Hamas has ruled over the Gaza Strip since 2007; al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) located in the province of Hadhramaut, South Yemen has controlled the area since 2015; and finally the Houthis since 2015. Anthony Celso, based on Jeffrey Kaplan's work, has categorically identified distinguishable traits of violent extremist groups such as the ISIS and Boko Haram and claimed the commencement of a fifth wave of terrorism. Some distinguishable components of this proposed fifth wave are highlighted in Table 3.

Rejection of Existing Social-Political Order	Muslim society is in a state of jahliyyah, or ignorance of divine truth, that is promoted by apostate regimes. This requires separation from society and rebellion against it.
Idealisation of a Mythic Past	Reconstituting the Prophet's Medina Community and the caliphate, developed by his four righteous successors are the desired end-states.
The Quest for Millenarian Justice	The destruction of apostasy and the return to the purity of Muhammad's Medina experience will generate universal happiness as a caliphate develops.
Youth Culture	Males between 18 and 39 form the bulk of jihadi groups.
Brutalisation of Women and Children	Women and children frequently kidnapped and sold into slavery.
Ethnic and Sectarian Cleansing	Campaign of targeted killing of religious minorities (Shi'ites, Alawites, Sufis), Yazidi and Christians. Destruction of Mosques, Shrines, Burial Sites and Churches associated with religious minorities or deemed polytheistic. Broad use of takfir (e.g., excommunication) of Muslim opponents justifying their killing.
Unrestrained Violence	Relentless military campaign of suicide bombings, IEDs and car bombs aimed at soldiers, police and civilians. Takfir facilitates killing of opponents including fellow Sunnis.
Charismatic Leadership	Islamist fifth wave groups typically led by powerful dynamic emir who combines religious and military authority.
Development of a New Society	Violent destruction of decadent apostate order and creation of modern version of Muhammad's Medina community and caliphate of his immediate successors.

Source: Anthony N. Celso, "The Islamic State and Boko Haram: *Fifth Wave Jihadist Terror Groups*", *Orbis*, Vol. 59, No. 2, Spring 2015, p. 257.

According to Jerrold M. Post,⁶³ existence of virtual community *i.e.*, use of social media and lone wolf terrorisms are the hallmarks of this changing face of terrorism.

⁶³ Jerrold M. Post, "Terrorism and Right-Wing Extremism: The Changing Face of Terrorism and Political Violence in the 21st Century: The Virtual Community of Hatred", *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, Vol. 65, No. 2, 2015, pp. 243-271.

Sebastian Jäckle and Marcel Baumann⁶⁴ have also identified excessive brutality and indiscriminate killing as the distinguishing characteristic of contemporary terrorism.

Therefore, it can be held that excessive brutality, indiscriminate killing, reliance on internet or social media for radicalisation and recruitment and 'lone wolf' phenomenon are the defining characteristics of the fifth wave. While such claims may have very strong grounds and seem appalling to some scholars, a critical analysis also has the potential of refuting such claims. The first and foremost problem with the fifth wave is that, the ideological motivations are still derived from religious interpretations. Rapoport's original four wave's theory is clearly based on the differences of dominant motivations or ideologies that ushered in a new wave. But as we can see, in present time, use of religion still remains the source of motivations for most of the extremists groups although they differ in their explanation of religious precepts and practices. Moreover, Rapoport's waves theory postulates fading out of the previous wave preceding the emergence of a new wave. Contemporary terrorism also does not satisfy this very important premise of wave theory.

And secondly, the audiences, supporters, and the objectives remained more or less the same. Rapoport's wave theory is based on differing motivations and then he showed how these groups in different waves have used different tactics, weapons and targets; not the other way around. We cannot assume ushering in a new wave on the basis of weapons, tactics and targets. Dominant energy or motivations has to be the deciding parameter. Any analytical construction that suggests a new wave or 'fifth wave' based on differences of tactics, weapons and targets, hence, will be flawed and misconstrued. Nevertheless, it should be noted that it remains an area of further research.

6. Conclusion

Terrorism and violent extremism in many regions and in many countries of the world wreak havoc in contemporary times. However, terrorism as a 'tool and technique' of achieving specific political objective is nothing new and has a long history of a millennium. History of modern terrorism is relatively new, and throughout terrorism's history we see different groups using different tactics, weapons and targets. Rapoport's four waves theory has been instrumental in providing a framework of analysis to explore the changes that have taken place in the selection of various tactics and strategies.

An analytical review of the history of terrorism reveals that terrorist groups' tactics and strategies have evolved over the centuries. However, numerous factors

⁶⁴ Sebastian Jäckle and Marcel Baumann, "New Terrorism" = Higher Brutality? An Empirical Test of the "Brutalization Thesis", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 29, No. 5, 2017, pp. 875-901.

contribute in the determination of particular tactics, weapons and targets by a terrorist group *viz.*, local conditions, their goals and objectives, availability and effectiveness of the weapons etc. As exemplified by Rapoport's theory, in a particular time frame, certain tactics and strategies dominated, nevertheless, terrorist groups build on the previous history and experiences and, accordingly, make adaptation and innovation in their tactics, weapons and targets to achieve their objectives at present. Therefore, whatever tactics and weapons are used by contemporary terrorist groups, no matter how brutal and lethal they are, in essence, they are the culmination of long history and experiences of terrorism to be more effective and achieve their objectives.

Moreover, as some scholars try to attribute contemporary terrorism perpetrated mainly by the ISIS and its affiliated and cognate organisations as a new wave or 'fifth wave', such construction is flawed. Contemporary terrorism does not satisfy the premises and parameters of Rapoport's wave theory as a new wave, hence, any effort of distinguishing contemporary time as a 'fifth wave' would be misplaced and misconstrued.

ANNEX 1

Table 1: Ten Countries with the Most Terrorist Attacks, 2016. ⁶⁵												
	Total Attacks		Total Deaths		Deaths per Attack		Total Injured		Injured per Attack		Total Kid-napped/ Hostages	
	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015
Iraq	2965	2417	9764	6973	3.44	3.01	13314	11900	4.74	5.25	8586	4008
Afghanistan	1340	1716	4561	5312	3.58	3.24	5054	6250	4.03	3.99	1673	1134
India	927	798	337	289	0.38	0.38	636	500	0.73	0.66	317	866
Pakistan	734	1010	955	1087	1.34	1.11	1729	1338	2.43	1.37	450	279
Philippines	482	490	272	260	0.58	0.54	418	430	0.90	0.90	216	127
Nigeria	466	588	1832	4940	4.35	9.13	919	2786	2.66	7.70	265	858
Syria	363	387	2088	2767	6.42	7.91	2656	2830	9.16	9.63	1406	1476
Turkey	363	309	657	337	1.81	1.11	2282	828	6.37	2.78	18	141
Yemen	363	460	628	1517	1.89	3.90	793	2599	2.44	6.97	173	456
Somalia	359	241	740	659	2.18	3.05	943	463	3.91	2.28	3731	161
World-wide	11,072	12,121	25,621	29,424	2.44	2.56	33,814	37,419	3.32	3.40	15,543	12,264

⁶⁵ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland, "Annex of Statistical Information", in the United States Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016*, July 2017, p. 5.

BIISS Publications

- **BIISS Journal (Quarterly)**
- **Bangladesh Foreign Policy Survey (Quarterly)**
- **BIISS Papers (Monograph series)**
 - The Assam Tangle : Outlook for the Future (1984)
 - The Crisis in Lebanon: Multi-dimensional Aspects and Outlook for the Future (1985)
 - India's Policy Fundamentals, Neighbours and Post-Indira Developments (1985)
 - Strategic Aspects of Indo-Sri Lanka Relations (1986)
 - Indo-Bangladesh Common Rivers and Water Diplomacy (1986)
 - Gulf War : The Issues Revisited (1987)
 - The SAARC in Progress : A Hesitant Course of South Asian Transition (1988)
 - Post-Brezhnev Soviet Policy Towards the Third World (1988)
 - Changing Faces of Socialism (1989)
 - Sino-Indian Quest for Rapprochement: Implications for South Asia (1989)
 - Intifada : The New Dimension to Palestinian Struggle (1990)
 - Bangladesh : Towards National Consensus (in Bangla, 1990)
 - Environmental Challenges to Bangladesh (1991)
 - The Gulf War and the New World Order : Implication for the Third World (1992)
 - Challenges of Governance in India : Fundamentals under Threat (1995)
 - Bangladesh in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (1998)
 - Nuclearisation of South Asia : Challenges and Options for Bangladesh (1998)
 - The Middle East Peace Process and the Palestinian Statehood (2000)
 - Pakistan and Bangladesh : From Conflict to Cooperation (2003)
 - Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Bangladesh : A Case for People's Management (2003)
 - WTO Dispute Settlement System and Developing Countries: A Neorealist Critique (2004)
 - State Sovereignty and Humanitarian Intervention : Does One Negate the Other? (2006)
 - Unipolarity and Weak States: The Case of Bangladesh (2009)
 - Japan's Strategic Rise (2010)
 - The Fallacy of Fragile States Indices: Is There a 'Fragility Trap'? (2017)
- **BIISS Seminar Proceedings**
 - Contemporary Development Debate: Bangladesh in the Global Context
 - Moving from MDGs to SDGs: Bangladesh Experience and Expectation
 - SAARC at 30: Achievements, Potentials and Challenges
 - Bangladesh's Relations with Latin American Countries: Unlocking Potentials
 - Civil-Military Relations in Democracy: An Effective Framework
 - Recent Extremist Violence in Bangladesh: Response Options
 - 25 March – Gonohottya Dibosh (Genocide Day)
 - Reconciling Divided Societies, Building Democracy and Good Governance: Lessons from Sri Lanka
 - Promoting Cultural Diversity of Small Ethnic Groups in Bangladesh
 - Upcoming 45th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC, Dhaka: Revisiting A Shared Journey
- **BIISS Country Lecture Series**
 - BIISS Country Lecture Series: Part- 1
 - BIISS Country Lecture Series: Part- 2

● **Books**

South Asian Regional Cooperation: A Socio-economic Approach to Peace and Stability

Nation Building in Bangladesh: Retrospect and Prospect

The Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace

The Security of Small States

ASEAN Experiences of Regional and Inter-regional Cooperation: Relevance for SAARC

Development, Politics and Security: Third World Context

Bangladesh and SAARC: Issues, Perspectives and Outlook

Bangladesh: Society, Polity and Economy

South Asia's Security: Primacy of Internal Dimension

Chandabaji Versus Entrepreneurship: Youth Force in Bangladesh

Development Cooperation at the Dawn of the Twenty First Century: Bangladesh-German Partnership in Perspective

Conflict Management and Sub-regional Co-operation in ASEAN: Relevance of SAARC

National Security of Bangladesh in the 21st Century

Civil Society and Democracy in Bangladesh

Regional Co-operation in South Asia: New Dimensions and Perspectives

Confidence Building Measures and Security Cooperation in South Asia: Challenges in the New Century

Bangladesh-Southeast Asia Relations: Some Insights

Security in the Twenty First Century: A Bangladesh Perspective

25 Years of BIISS: An Anthology

Politics and Security in South Asia: Salience of Religion and Culture

Small States and Regional Stability in South Asia

Religious Militancy and Security in South Asia

Global War on Terror: Bangladesh Perspective

Towards BIMSTEC-Japan Comprehensive Economic Cooperation: Bangladesh Perspective

Democracy, Governance and Security Reforms: Bangladesh Context

Whither National Security Bangladesh 2007

National Security Bangladesh 2008

Human Security Approach to Counter Extremism in South Asia: Relevance of Japanese Culture

National Security Bangladesh 2009

Energy Security in South Asia Plus: Relevance of Japanese Experience

South Asia Human Security Series:

Nepali State, Society and Human Security: An Infinite Discourse

Evolving Security Discourse in Sri Lanka: From National Security to Human Security

Violence, Terrorism and Human Security in South Asia

Women and Human Security in South Asia: The Cases of Bangladesh and Pakistan

Human Security in India: Health, Shelter and Marginalisation

Pakistan: Haunting Shadows of Human Security

Human Security in India: Discourse, Practices and Policy Implications

Human Security Index for South Asia: Exploring Relevant Issues

Ethnicity and Human Security in Bangladesh and Pakistan