

Assessment of Ukraine's counterterrorism security based on the Global Terrorism Index

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Abstract

The article provides a detailed analysis of the Global Terrorism Index, which covers more than 163 countries around the world, representing a significant portion of the world's population. The paper illustrates and analyzes: the top 10 countries with the highest level of terrorist activity according to the Global Terrorism Index for 2025; countries with a high level of terrorism according to the Global Terrorism Index in 2025; countries with moderate levels of terrorism according to the Global Terrorism Index in 2025; countries with low levels of terrorism according to the Global Terrorism Index for 2025; the level of terrorist activity in African countries according to the Global Terrorism Index for 2025, etc. The Sahel region of Africa, south of the Sahara, is now the epicenter of terrorism, with the Sahel accounting for more terrorist deaths in 2022 than South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa combined. In 2022, the number of deaths in the Sahel accounted for 43 percent of the global total, compared to just one percent in 2007. Of particular concern are two countries, Burkina Faso and Mali, which accounted for 73 percent of terrorism deaths in the Sahel in 2022 and 52 percent of all terrorism deaths in sub-Saharan Africa. North America had the largest regional improvement in its score, while sub-Saharan Africa recorded the largest decline. North America consists of two countries, the United States and Canada, neither of which has a high score; however, it is the only region where no country has a zero GTI score. In the West, the number of attacks has continued to decline since 2017, decreasing every year. In 2022, there were 40 attacks, which is 27 percent less than the 55 attacks in 2021. However, the number of deaths has more than doubled, albeit from a low base, from nine deaths in 2021 to 19 in 2022, with 11 of those occurring in the US. This was the first increase in deaths from terrorist attacks in the West since 2019. In Europe, Islamist extremists carried out two attacks in 2022. Attacks in the US remain low, with only eight attacks recorded in 2022. None was attributed to any known terrorist group. This year, there have been only four attacks and no deaths in the UK, the first year since 2014 with no deaths recorded, while Germany has seen the lowest number of attacks since 2015. The state of Ukraine's counterterrorism security was assessed based on the Global Terrorism Index. The results of the study are of practical importance for shaping national policy in the law enforcement sphere, developing EU technical assistance programs, and improving the effectiveness of managing European integration processes in the post-war period.

Keywords: terrorism; global terrorism index; counterterrorism security.

1. Problem statement

The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) covers more than 163 countries, accounting for 99.7% of the world's population. The index measures the impact of terrorism on states based on four indicators: number of terrorist attacks; number of deaths; number of injuries; number of kidnappings as a result of terrorist attacks. Depending on the Global Terrorism Index indicator, countries are divided into the following categories according to their level of terrorism: countries with a high level of terrorist activity, countries with a moderate level of terrorism, and countries with a low or minimal level of terrorism.

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2. Analysis of the latest research and publications

The phenomenon of terrorism is multifaceted. Research on the concept of terrorism and counterterrorism has been conducted by such renowned scholars as Alessandro Orsini, Francesco Marone, Aldighieri M., Allievi S., Vidino L. and Vergani L. The concept of terrorism and counterterrorism has been studied by such well-known authors as: Alessandro Orsini; Francesco Marone; Aldighieri M.; Allievi S.; Vidino L.; Vergani M.; Vania Patanè; Laura Cervi, Santiago Tejedor, Monica Gracia; Alietti Alfredo, Dario Padovan; Beccaro Andrea, Stefano Bonino; Pasquale Cariello, Marco De Simoni, Stefano Iezzi, and others. However, despite the significant number of scientific works, there are still many unresolved issues in the theory of counterterrorism at the present stage, which require further research and systematization.

The purpose of this article is to study global risks to the national security system and analyze the state of terrorism in an international context. Countries with the highest, moderate, and low or minimal levels of terrorist activity are considered, and a continental distribution is made according to regional trends (Africa, Asia, Europe, America, and Oceania).

3. Presentation of the main material

This year's Global Terrorism Index highlights two key issues: first, 98% of all terrorist deaths occurred in conflict zones, and 2024 was recorded as the year with the highest number of conflicts since the end of World War II. Second, social tensions and discontent in the West fuel terrorism by lone individuals. Ninety-three percent of all deadly terrorist attacks were carried out by lone individuals. The best way to control terrorism is to stop or reduce the number of conflicts. In addition, the conflict in Gaza has been and remains a catalyst for anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

The following figure 1 shows the indicators of the leaders – countries with the highest level of terrorist activity according to the Global Terrorism Index for 2025.

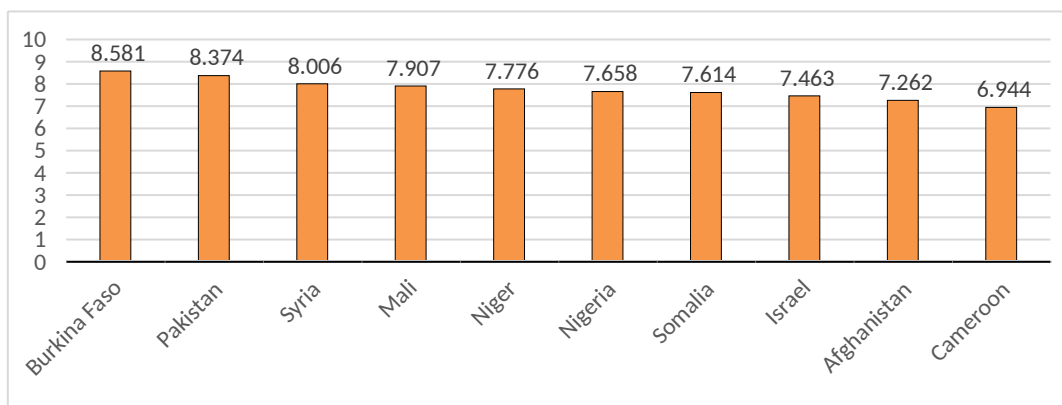


Fig. 1. Top 10 countries with the highest level of terrorist activity Global Terrorism Index for 2025 [2]

Burkina Faso remains the most affected country in the world by terrorism, with a terrorism index of 8.581. In 2024, more than 2,000 people were killed in attacks carried out primarily by Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimeen and Islamic State – Sahel Province.

Pakistan ranks second in the world in terms of terrorist threat, due to the intensification of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan movement, with a score of 8.374. In 2024, the country suffered a series of attacks on military facilities, schools, and public gathering places, particularly in the province of Balochistan.

For more than a decade, Syria has remained an area of chronic terrorism caused by prolonged internal conflict. After a formal decline in Islamic State activity in 2020–2022, there has been a new increase in attacks in the northeast, especially in the provinces of Deir ez-Zor and Homs, with a terrorism index of 8.006 in 2025.

Mali remains one of the main centers of terrorism in the Sahel, with a terrorism index of over 7.907 in 2024. The main perpetrators of armed attacks are JNIM and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara. Most attacks are directed against military formations, peacekeeping contingents, and civilians in the central regions of Mopti, Gao, and Timbuktu.

Niger has seen record growth in terrorist activity over the past five years, with the index reaching 7.776 in 2024. Armed groups IS-Sahel and al-Qaeda-affiliated JNIM regularly carry out attacks on border areas with Burkina Faso and Mali.

Nigeria is usually in the top ten for terrorism impact, with a score of over 7.658. In 2024, Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province will still be active, mostly in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states.

Additionally, Somalia continues to suffer systematic attacks from al-Shabaab, which is linked to the central government's lack of control over most of the country's territory. Despite international counterterrorism operations, the number of attacks remains consistently high, with the terrorism level in 2024 standing at 7.614.

Israel entered the top 10 due to the escalation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip in 2023–2024. In 2024, most terrorist incidents were related to the conflict between Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Israeli security forces. The situation is characterized by high-intensity attacks and a large number of civilian casualties, with an index of 7.463.

The level of terrorism in Afghanistan in 2024 was 7.262. After the Taliban came to power in 2021, the number of terrorist attacks decreased, but the activity of Islamic State Khorasan Province continues to pose a serious threat. The attacks are mostly directed against religious minorities and government targets.

Cameroon rounds out the top ten most affected countries in the world, with a score of 6.944 in 2024. Terrorist activity is concentrated mainly in the northern regions, where Boko Haram and ISWAP militants are active. Attacks target military posts, schools, and civilian facilities.

The following figure 2 shows the indicators for countries with high levels of terrorism according to the 2025 Global Terrorism Index.

According to the Global Terrorism Index 2025, the group of countries with a high level of terrorism (more than 6 points out of a possible 10) includes: Democratic Republic of Congo – 6.768, Iraq – 6.582, India – 6.411, Russia – 6.267, Mozambique – 6.251, and Iran – 6.056. These countries are characterized by a high frequency of terrorist incidents, a significant number of victims, and the stability of radical groups that have been operating for a long time.

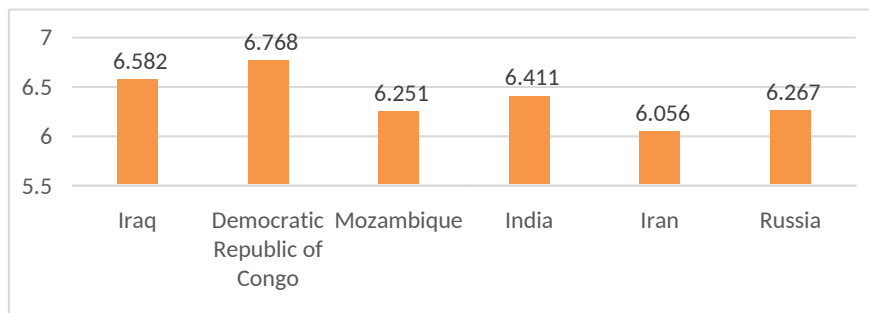


Fig. 2. Countries with high levels of terrorism according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025 [3]

The overall average score for countries in this group is 6.39 points, which corresponds to a «high impact of terrorism» on the Institute for Economics and Peace scale. This indicates that terrorist activities in these countries are systematic and protracted, rather than episodic or localized. They are characterized by a combination of religious, ethnic, and political motives for violence, as well as the use of terror as a tool for controlling territories or exerting political pressure.

Countries with high levels of terrorism are characterized by political instability, ethno-religious conflicts, and significant external influence. This group is dominated by two geographical axes: Sahel-African (DR Congo, Mozambique) – terrorism is mixed in nature and often intertwined with criminal processes; Middle East-Asia (Iraq, Iran, India, Russia) – ideological and religious motives prevail, but with different forms of organization. These states are characterized by high mortality rates from attacks, regionalization of conflicts, and complications in international cooperation in the field of counterterrorism. These factors keep them in the «high risk» zone of the global terrorism index.

Figure 3 below shows the indicators for countries with moderate levels of terrorism according to the 2025 Global Terrorism Index.

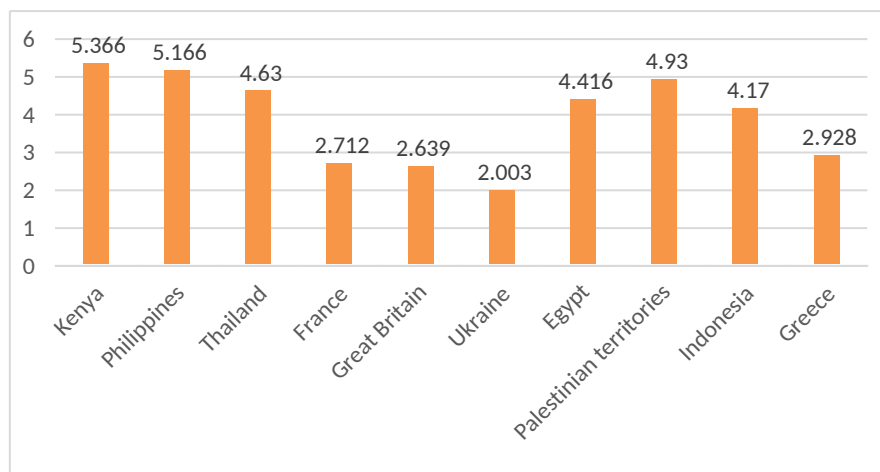


Fig. 3. Countries with moderate levels of terrorism according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025 [4]

Countries with moderate levels of terrorism include Kenya – 5.366, the Philippines – 5.166, Thailand – 4.63, Palestinian territories – 4.93, Egypt – 4.416, Indonesia – 4.17, France – 2.712, Great Britain – 2.639, Greece – 2.928, and Ukraine – 2.003.

The average score for the group is around 3.98 points, which indicates the presence of isolated areas of risk amid overall stability in state security systems. In these countries, terrorist attacks are typically localized, limited in scope, and do not pose a systemic threat to national security.

Thus, despite their moderate risk level, these states constitute an important «buffer zone» between the stable and unstable worlds, where timely measures to prevent radicalization can prevent the transition to higher levels of terrorist threat.

The following figure 4 shows the indicators for countries with low levels of terrorism according to the 2025 Global Terrorism Index.

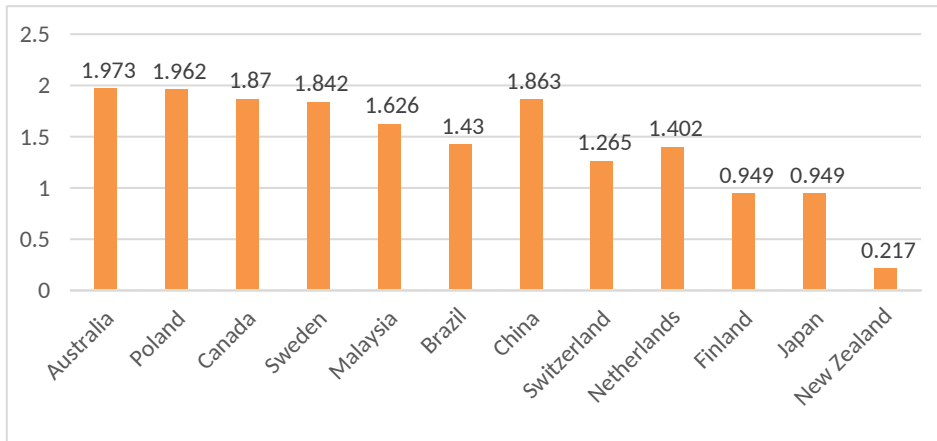


Fig. 4. Countries with low levels of terrorism according to the Global Terrorism Index for 2025 [4]

The group of countries with low levels of terrorism includes countries where the threat of terrorist attacks remains isolated, localized, or controlled by state security mechanisms. These countries are characterized by a high level of institutional capacity, a developed system of counterintelligence measures, and social cohesion, which minimizes the risk of radicalization.

The following countries are classified as having low levels of terrorism: Australia – 1.973, Poland – 1.962, Canada – 1.870, Sweden – 1.842, China – 1.863, Malaysia – 1.626, Brazil – 1.430, Switzerland – 1.265, the Netherlands – 1.402, Finland – 0.949, Japan – 0.949, and New Zealand – 0.217. These countries demonstrate highly effective national security systems, stable political regimes, and low social susceptibility to radicalization.

In general, these countries form a zone of stability in the global security system, where terrorism is losing its traditional characteristics as a military or political tool and is transforming into informational and ideological forms of threat.

More than 70 countries around the world have zero or minimal levels of terrorism, with no terrorist incidents recorded in 2024 or with incidents that did not result in casualties or significant social consequences. These countries form the core of global security and demonstrate effective governance, a high level of social trust, balanced foreign policy, and cultural tolerance.

The following figure 5 shows the levels of terrorist activity in African countries according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025.

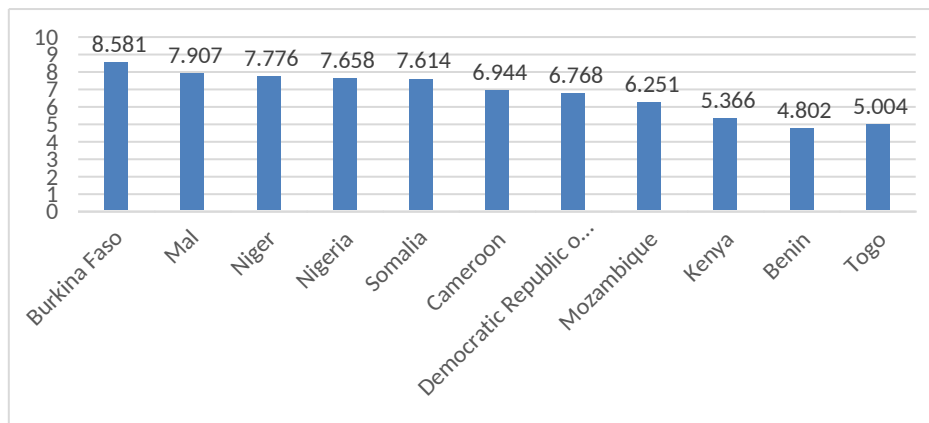


Fig. 5. Level of terrorist activity in African countries according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025 [5]

Africa is the most affected continent, accounting for more than 50% of all terrorism-related deaths worldwide in 2024. The highest rates are in the Sahel countries: Burkina Faso – 8,581, Mali – 7,907, Niger – 7,776, Nigeria – 7,658, Somalia – 7,614, Democratic Republic of Congo – 6,768, Mozambique – 6,251, Kenya – 5,366, Benin – 4.3, and Togo – 4.3.

The main factors contributing to the high level of terrorism in the African region are the weakness of state institutions and lack of control over border areas, the spread of jihadist groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and Islamic State, socio-economic marginalization, and inter-ethnic conflicts.

The Sahel region, especially the Burkina Faso-Mali-Niger triangle, has become a new global center of terrorism, where more than 7 out of 10 attacks are accompanied by high lethality. In East Africa – Somalia and Kenya – al-Shabaab activity remains consistently high, while South Africa and the island states of Botswana and Mauritius demonstrate complete security, confirming the continental polarization between areas of risk and stability.

The following figure 6 shows the level of terrorist activity in Asian countries according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025.

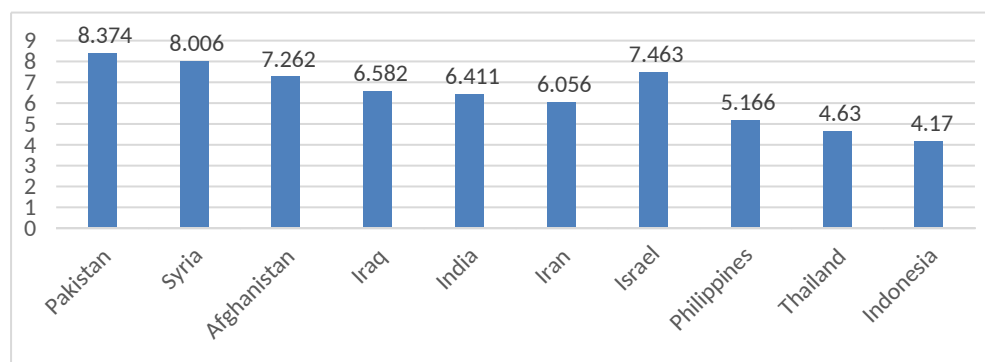


Fig. 6. Terrorist activity in Asian countries according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025 [6]

Asia remains the second largest region in terms of terrorist activity. Pakistan became the leader in terms of terrorism intensity with a score of 8.374, which indicates a significant increase in the influence of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, as well as the spread of Islamic State – Khorasan Province network cells. Syria (8.006) and Afghanistan (7.262) also remain high on the list, where terrorist attacks continue to be used as a tool of political and religious violence.

Slightly lower, but consistently high scores are shown by Iraq – 6.582, India – 6.411, and Iran – 6.056. These countries are dominated by regional conflicts, interethnic and sectarian clashes, which show signs of chronic tension. Israel deserves special attention, with a score of 7.463, which in 2024 experienced a sharp increase in the index due to the escalation of armed conflict with Hamas and an increase in the number of attacks on civilian targets.

Among Southeast Asian countries, the indicators are lower: the Philippines – 5.166, Thailand – 4.63, and Indonesia – 4.17. However, it is in these countries that there is a tendency toward stabilization of the situation thanks to the intensification of counterterrorism measures, increased control over border areas, and the implementation of state programs to counter radicalization of the population.

In general, the Asian continent is characterized by a concentration of terrorist incidents in areas of political instability and interstate conflicts, as well as a high level of recurrence of violence in countries with fragile institutions of power. Despite a partial decline in the total number of attacks, the average level of terrorism in Asia remains consistently high, confirming its role as one of the key epicenters of the global terrorist threat.

The following figure 7 shows the terrorism levels in European countries according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025.

Europe has a relatively low level of terrorist activity, but some countries have seen an increase in politically motivated violence and radicalization among certain groups of the population.

Among European countries, Germany has the highest score (4.748 points), where in 2024 there was an increase in the number of incidents involving right-wing extremists and xenophobia-motivated violence.

Next in the ranking are France (2.712) and the United Kingdom (2.639), where periodic attacks continue, linked to both Islamist cells and left-wing and right-wing radical movements. Greece (2.928) and the Czech Republic (2.906) have recorded isolated attacks on political or government targets, which, however, are not widespread.

The indicators for Poland (1.962), Sweden (1.842), and the Netherlands (1.402) show a relatively low level of terrorism, although isolated acts targeting representatives of religious or ethnic minorities have been observed in these countries. In Switzerland (1.265), Finland (0.949), and Denmark (0.72), the level of terrorist threat remains minimal, and the recorded cases are mainly ideological and symbolic in nature.

Thus, in 2024, Europe will see a shift in focus from international to domestic terrorism, linked to the spread of radical political movements, anti-immigration sentiment, and xenophobia. Although the overall level of terrorist threats on the continent remains low, trends toward political polarization create potential risks of increased violence in the medium term.

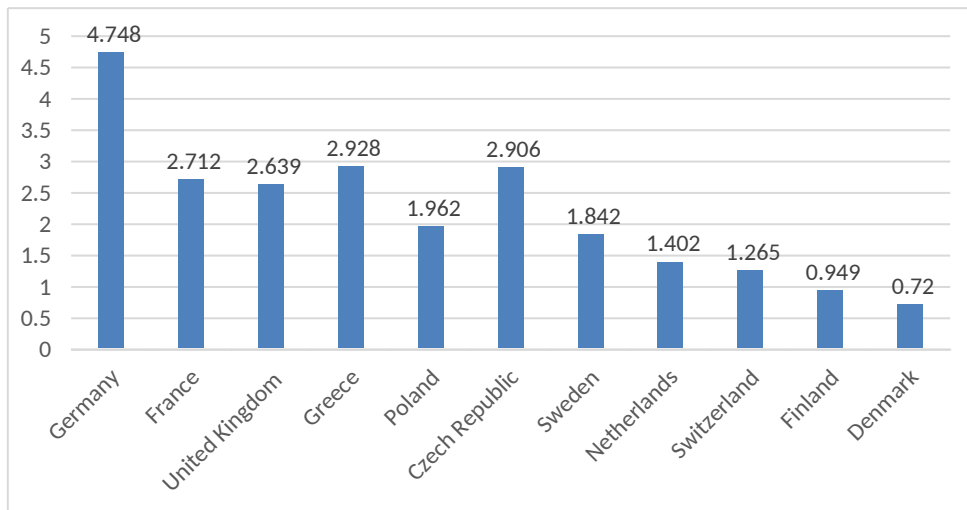


Fig. 7. Level of terrorism in European countries according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025 [7]

The following figure 8 shows the level of terrorist activity on the American continent according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025.

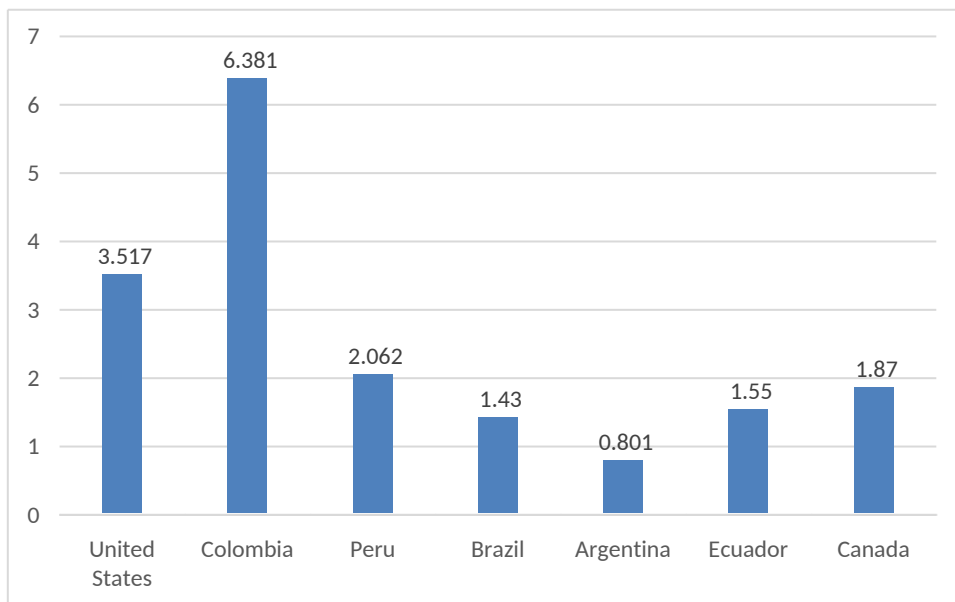


Fig. 8. Level of terrorist activity on the American continent according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025 [8]

The level of terrorist activity on the American continent remains low, with isolated pockets of heightened threat in South America.

The highest score was recorded in Colombia – 6.381 points, which is due to the continued activity of armed groups and violent acts related to illegal drug trafficking. Significantly lower values are shown by the United States – 3.517, Peru – 2.062, Canada – 1.870, Ecuador – 1.550, and Brazil – 1.430, reflecting mainly local and isolated incidents.

Argentina scored 0.801 points on the terrorism level scale and belongs to the group of countries with minimal terrorist activity. Overall, the average score for the region does not exceed 2–3 points, which indicates a stable security situation in North and South America, where terrorism is mainly episodic and local in nature.

The following figure 3.9 shows the levels of terrorist activity in Oceania countries according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025.

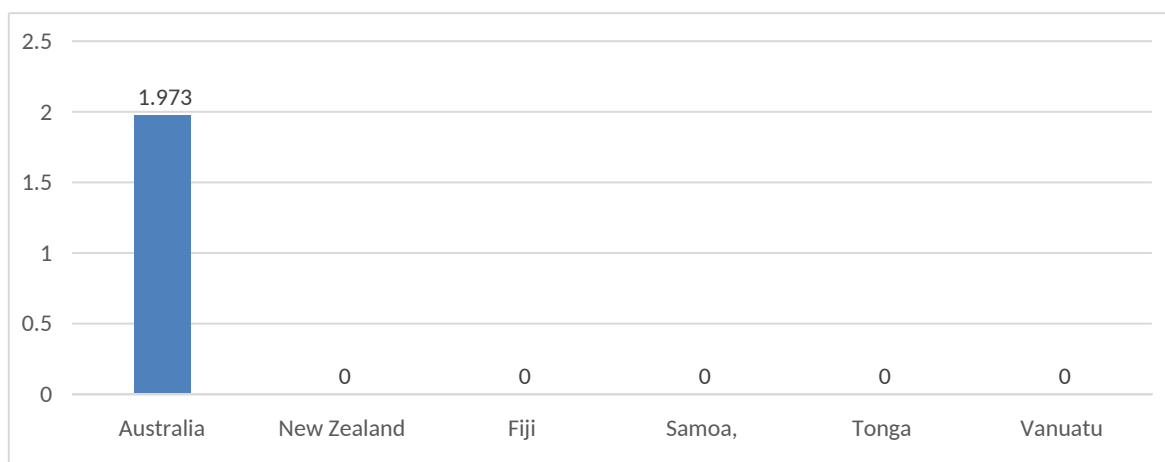


Fig. 9. Level of terrorist activity in Oceania countries according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025 [9]

Oceania continues to be the region with the lowest level of terrorism in the world. Countries such as New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu have a zero GTI index, while Australia has only isolated cases of radicalized violence. The region is characterized by a high level of social cohesion, trust in the state, and a preventive security culture focused on education, communication, and tolerance.

The following figure 10 shows Ukraine's Global Terrorism Index scores for 2019-2025.

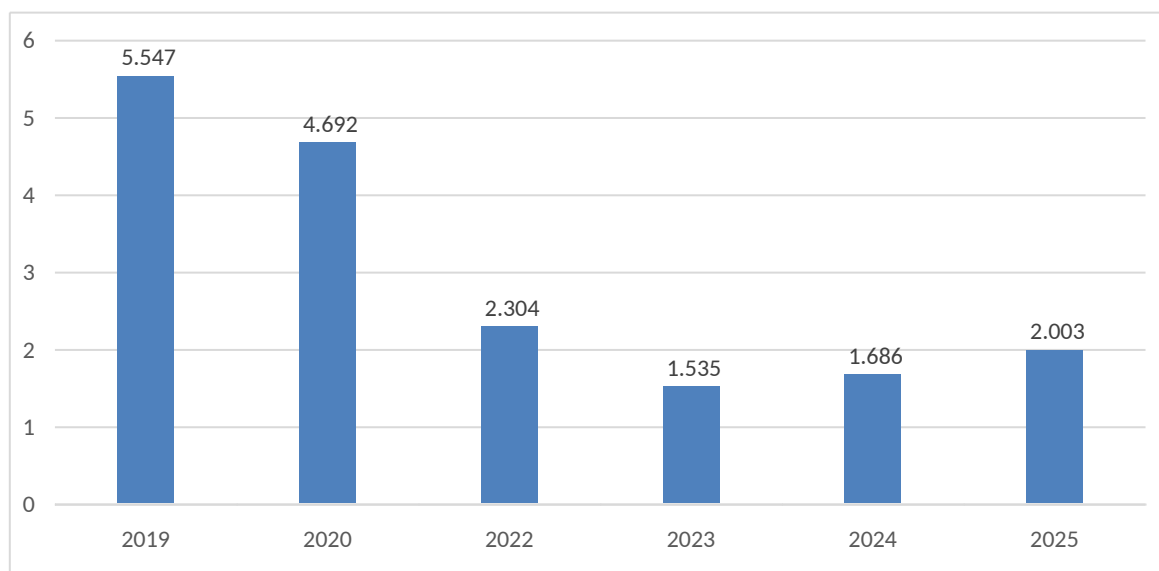


Fig. 10. Dynamics of Ukraine's Global Terrorism Index indicators, 2019–2025 [10], [11]

According to the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), which compiles the Global Terrorism Index, Ukraine ranked 45th in the world in 2025 with a score of 2.003, which corresponds to a moderate level of terrorism impact.

In 2019, Ukraine had one of the highest terrorist risk scores in decades – 5.547 points, which corresponded to the average level of terrorism. In 2020, the index fell to 4.692 points, but remained quite high. These indicators are due to the escalation of the security situation in Donbas, the activity of sabotage and reconnaissance groups, and political pressures, which international analysts interpreted as forms of «local terrorism» in the conflict zone. After 2022, there was a transformation in the nature of terrorism:

- Most incidents have become hybrid in nature (sabotage at critical infrastructure facilities, cyberattacks, information influence).

- The lines between military actions and terrorist acts are becoming blurred, making it difficult to classify incidents according to the traditional criteria of the Global Terrorism Index.

- The role of internal security and counterintelligence mechanisms as part of crisis management has increased.

Most recorded or potential terrorist incidents are concentrated in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine (Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson). They differ from classic terrorism in that they:

- carried out by foreign sabotage groups or pro-Russian agent networks;

- have a targeted political and informational effect;

- aimed at undermining trust in the state and provoking panic among the civilian population.

In the western and central regions of Ukraine (Kyiv, Lviv, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk), terrorist incidents are mainly informational and psychological in nature and boil down to attempts at cyber influence or the spread of disinformation.

Thus, in the structure of Ukrainian terrorism, the military component dominates over the socio-ideological one, which distinguishes it from the classic models characteristic of the Middle East or South Asia.

At the same time, the 0.317 point increase in the Global Terrorism Index in 2024 indicates that international analytical structures recognize the shift in the classification boundaries between war and terrorism, where a number of actions by the aggressor (drone attacks on civilian targets, shelling of energy infrastructure, intimidation).

4. Conclusions from this study and prospects for further research

Thus, the results of a global analysis of terrorism levels worldwide according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025 indicate a significant reformatting of the geography, nature, and intensity of terrorist activity. There is a gradual transition from centralized international networks, characteristic of the first half of the 2010s, to decentralized, localized, and hybrid forms of terrorism that combine political, ethnic, religious, and criminal factors.

In recent years, Africa has become the main epicenter of terrorism, with the Sahel region, including Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Somalia, accounting for more than half of global losses from terrorist attacks. The main driving forces are the weakness of state institutions, inter-ethnic conflicts, and the activities of groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. Africa is becoming a new strategic front for international terrorism, while the Middle East is gradually losing its position as a global center of threats.

Asia is characterized by polarized terrorism. In South and West Asia (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Iran, India), the Global Terrorism Index remains high, while in East and Southeast Asia (Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Japan), the level of terrorist activity is minimal. This shows that terrorism is gradually taking on a local, ethno-religious, and political dimension, losing its signs of global coordination.

Europe is showing a steady trend toward stabilization, made possible by effective early warning systems, cyber monitoring, and social integration of migrants. The terrorist threat has transformed from organized Islamist terror into a form of self-radicalized individual violence, which is predominantly ideological or protest-based. The lowest rates are recorded in Central and Eastern Europe, which form a stable environment.

The American continent is characterized by minimal terrorist activity. Internal ideological extremism is spreading in the United States, but the scale of the threat is insignificant compared to previous decades. In Latin America and the Caribbean, terrorism is virtually absent, replaced by criminal or socially protest forms of violence. This confirms the stability of democratic institutions and the success of social integration models.

Oceania remains the safest region in the world, with most countries (New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga) having a zero GTI score. Australia has only recorded isolated cases of radicalism of an ideological nature. The region demonstrates the effectiveness of a humanitarian model of terrorism prevention focused on education, communication, and social trust.

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2022 had a paradoxical effect on Ukraine's position in the Global Terrorism Index: despite the unprecedented scale of violence, the index fell sharply due to the reclassification of events from the «terrorism» category to the «armed conflict» category. This confirms the methodological distinction between military aggression and terrorist acts, which is key to interpreting GTI analytical indicators in the context of Ukraine.

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