

GLOBAL HAZARD

KOSOVO'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN FIGHTING TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM

By KADRI ARIFI, lecturer, University AAB, Kosovo, and
MAJ. FATOS MAKOLLI, director, Counter Terrorism Directorate, Kosovo Police

Security threats are a continuous concern for societies, governments and international institutions. And war is no longer the only security threat that states face.¹ The end of the 20th century and the beginning of 21st have been characterized by the complexity of national and transnational security threats. Transnational terrorism has unquestionably become one of greatest threats to national and international security, along with armed conflicts, organized crime, financial crises, environmental degradation, pandemics, poverty and migration.

Terrorism is an old phenomenon, but it has evolved over time depending on economic, social and political development, globalization and rapid technological development. From a historical viewpoint – despite changes in modus operandi, form and appearance – terrorism has had extensive negative consequences around the world. However, the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, the Madrid train bombing in 2004, the London metro bombings in 2005 and other attacks around the world, with their excessive casualties and material damage, sowed widespread fear and indicated a new complex dimension to terrorism with the potential to threaten global peace and security.

These terrorist acts have much in common: the use of sophisticated technological equipment by a small group of individuals, substantial casualties and material damage, unlimited publicity, widespread fear and feelings of insecurity, and the involvement of radical groups with religious motivations. Therefore, it is easy to focus on terrorism with religious motives and on some of the most well-known terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaida and its affiliates.

A CONTINUING CHALLENGE

Although al-Qaida and its offshoots have suffered considerable losses, especially the killing of Osama bin Laden, the threat from them remains high, as do the threats emanating from the extremist ideology of

radical political Islam itself. Based on this ideology, new groups are not only being established but are increasing their membership as a result of indoctrination by radical clerics and members of extremist groups, and from self-indoctrination through literature, websites or social networks. “The Internet remains ‘an essential communication platform for terrorist organizations and their sympathizers,’ enabling increasingly widespread access, anonymity and connection to a global audience that can be addressed in targeted way.”²

The possibility of terrorist groups obtaining and using weapons of mass destruction and the consequences that such an act would have makes terrorism a serious threat for all countries, regardless of economic, political or military power, or geostrategic position, religion, ideology or state system.

Trends in transnational terrorism, viewed in their complexity, lead us to the conclusion that the threat will inevitably continue. Terrorist groups will use internal conflicts and other economic, societal or political grievances to recruit young members. Extreme poverty, high levels of unemployment and deficient education in some parts of the world, especially in Asia and Africa, create favorable recruitment and indoctrination climates for terrorist groups with radical Islamist ideologies. As United Nations security expert Paul Medhurst noted in reference to longtime insurgencies in northern India: “It can be concluded from the statistics shown that the most common profile of a fully-trained guerrilla/terrorist in the Jammu and Kashmir conflict is that of a 21 to 25 year old, of high school education, a labourer by occupation, who became a guerrilla-terrorist as a result of being unemployed.”³

The large number of failed states, where state structures lack the capacities or political will to perform basic functions required for development, reduction of poverty, and protection of human rights and its citizenry is another factor contributing to transnational terrorism. These countries are characterized by internal

conflicts, extreme religious or ethnic violence, the spread of radical ideologies, disease and humanitarian crisis. These states can serve as terrorist safe havens for recruitment, training and operations, financial supporters, weapons procurement, and transit.

In Syria, the conflict between the Bashar al-Assad regime and opposition groups has attracted large numbers of foreign volunteers, mainly aligned with extremist groups. While the Syrian opposition is fighting for a free and democratic Syria, these extremists seek to create the Islamic state of Syria based on al-Qaida's ideology of "global jihad."

The participation of volunteers from Europe in this conflict poses a threat not only to the states of origin but also to the rest of Europe. These volunteers gain military experience, undergo deep indoctrination, establish contacts within international terrorist groups and, on returning to Europe, pose a multitude of security threats. They can spread extremist ideology, undertake violent or terrorist acts or serve as terrorist sleeper cells.

Globalization, with its rapid technological development in industry, science and transport, and its free movement of people, services and goods, has given terrorists more opportunities and terrorism a more serious dimension. These negative opportunities are present mainly in developed democracies, including those in North America and Europe. Therefore, countries with high levels of employment and education and efficient law enforcement institutions and security services face high level threats. The book *Fighting Chance: Global Trends and Shocks in the National Security Environment*, published by the U.S. National Defense University, concluded: "Many analysts believe that Western Europe is nowadays more exposed to the new forms of terrorism than the United States, including super terrorism using weapons of mass destruction. The next very large attack on the scale of 9/11 or larger — could take place in a European city."⁷⁴

The high terrorism threat-level requires changes in the global security management approach. States and international organizations have increased political and diplomatic efforts to strengthen international cooperation in combating terrorism. As a result of these efforts, a great number of interstate and international cooperation agreements have been signed in the fields of economics, politics, diplomacy, defense, and justice and law enforcement, all

with the intention of preventing terrorism and prosecuting terrorists and their supporters.

At the national level, most states are focused on capacity building to prevent and fight terrorism by building new mechanisms, strengthening existing mechanisms, updating legal infrastructures and policies, assigning bilateral and multilateral agreements, sharing knowledge and experiences and coordinating counterterror activities while preparing and building capacities to manage the consequences of any terrorist act.

The nexus between terrorism and organized crime makes transnational terrorism a very complex phenomenon. Drug trafficking, cyber crime, kidnapping, fraud and extortion, money laundering, trafficking of human beings, and smuggling of weapons and goods are mainly law enforcement tasks, but the involvement of terrorist groups in these activities indicates an important role

for law enforcement agencies in prevention and prosecution of terrorism. Only a well-prepared, equipped and trained law enforcement organization, with high ethical standards and integrity, motivated personnel, and well-defined counterterrorism policy, may successfully cope with the security challenges of fighting terrorism.

The risk from terrorism is very real, and no country, small or large, strong or weak, is immune to the threat. It is necessary to approach the threat seriously and, parallel with efforts to prevent terrorist acts, focus on the strategic level, minimizing the factors and root causes that lead to violent extremism and radicalization.

Avoiding or minimizing factors and causes leading to extremism and radicalization is a complex task. Nonetheless, it is considered to be the most effective way to increase citizens' awareness and protect them from falling prey to influences from individuals or groups that promote extremism. In addition to good governance, political and social inclusion, human rights, law enforcement and access to education, governments and institutions should be focused on addressing economic, social and political grievances, which are considered key and direct factors affecting the spread of violent extremism and radicalization.

Transnational terrorism is a global network that has no borders. Al-Qaida continues to search for safe-shelter countries to take advantage of democratic development and regional and global integration processes. Success in combating transnational terrorism is conditioned by



Muslim women in Pristina protest the Kosovo government's ban on pupils wearing headscarves in public schools. Religious tensions can serve as sources of extremism.

the success of a holistic approach and international cooperation.

Despite achievements, international cooperation against terrorism is challenged by differing national interests. There are differences in the perception and definition of terrorism, differences in national legislation, and disagreements over which counterterrorism measures are appropriate and when they should be applied, especially regarding sanctions or use of force.

THE CASE OF KOSOVO

Kosovo was established as a state during a time of complex global security challenges. As a relatively small state, Kosovo faced many challenges in state building — building institutions and legal infrastructure and addressing economic, social and political problems — while it also was confronted with major threats to internal security and threats from crime and transnational terrorism.

Kosovo is committed to providing security to its citizens and has become an active contributor to peace, stability and security in its region, cooperating with neighbors and fulfilling international obligations in the fight against terrorism. Kosovo has a pro-Western orientation with a constitutional, secular state and clear, strategic objectives for integration into the European Union and NATO.

Most of Kosovo's population practices traditional and moderate Islam and sets a good example of inter-religious tolerance in the region. However, Kosovo's institutions should remain vigilant because indoctrination with radical Islamic ideology has not spared the country, and there are clear signs of Islamist extremism and radicalization, mainly among the most vulnerable people. A considerable number of young people have been recruited into Islamic extremist groups fighting in Syria with the perception that they are participating in a "holy war" and answering the call for "jihad," though some are likely motivated by material benefits or a sense of personal adventure.

Kosovo has not faced direct threats of terrorism, but it is still vulnerable. Geopolitical position, relatively new institutions, poverty and high levels of corruption and organized crime⁵ increase the terrorism threat

level, as does the fact that military and police forces from Western countries remain in Kosovo. Therefore, the nation's institutions have undergone a series of legal measures, strengthening capacities and drafting strategic counterterrorism documents. Some argue that Kosovo has, through all these new measures, improved its effectiveness in counterterrorism.⁶

The Kosovo Assembly, assisted by international mechanisms present in Kosovo, approved a package of legislation — harmonized with the EU laws — to prevent and combat terrorism: In article 135 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo, the act of terrorism is considered to be the commission of one or more crimes⁷ "with an intent to seriously intimidate a population, to unduly

compel a public entity, government or international organization to do or abstain from doing any act, or to seriously destabilize or destroy the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of the Republic of Kosovo, another state or an international organization." The criminal code specifically sanctions related acts such as committing terrorist acts (Article 136), assist-



Hundreds of Serbian youths riot in July 2011, setting fire to a border crossing between Serbia and Kosovo after Kosovo police took control of the border crossings.

ing in committing terrorism (Article 137), facilitating terrorism (Article 138), recruiting for terrorism (Article 139), training in terrorism (Article 140), inducement to commit terrorist acts (Article 141), concealing or not informing on terrorists or terrorist groups (Article 142), and organization of and participation in a terrorist group (Article 143).

The law on prevention of money laundering and financing of terrorism, the law on special prosecution, the law on controlling and supervising state borders and the law on foreigners were also approved to directly or indirectly fight terrorism. In addition, the government has drafted a law prohibiting citizens from engaging in armed conflicts outside the country. This law makes criminal the act of joining or participating in a foreign army or police, foreign paramilitary or para-police formation, in a group or individually, in any form of armed conflict outside the territory of the republic.

There has also been notable progress in strengthening security and law enforcement agencies to better fight terrorism by building operational capacities within

the Kosovo Security Forces, Kosovo Intelligence Agency, Financial Intelligence Unit, Kosovo Customs and especially the Kosovo Police, which has established professional counterterrorism capacities and trained and equipped special intervention units.

The National Security Strategy, National Counter Terrorism Strategy, Strategy for Integrated Border Management, Strategy for Prevention of Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism, Integrated Emergency Management System and Reaction Plan define the responsibilities and obligations of all institutions in Kosovo, with implementation coordinated by the Counter Terrorism National Coordinator. The structure and content of these strategic documents indicate that Kosovo considers terrorism and the spread of extremism as a complex multidimensional phenomenon. Therefore, combating terrorism is not limited to police or military activities — a multi-dimensional, holistic approach of all institutions, nongovernmental organizations, civil society and religious and ethnic communities is necessary.

Despite its achievements, Kosovo faces challenges requiring regional and global cooperation. Exchanging experiences, best practices and information, and joint counterterrorism training and operations are invaluable to improving Kosovo's security and counterterrorism capacities. One important challenge is changing the perception of stakeholders that only law enforcement agencies are in charge of fighting terrorism, when a whole-of-government approach is necessary.

Another of Kosovo's challenges is Southeast Europe's ongoing economic and social transition. The people of Kosovo lack sufficient prospects, with high unemployment and insufficient sources of legal vocations. According to recent Kosovo government statistics, the country's unemployment rate has reached nearly 31 percent, and the rate among people younger than 25 is 55 percent.⁸ Furthermore, Kosovo has been identified as a transit country for trafficking human beings, weapons and drugs.

Finally, Kosovo is not a member of important international institutions and organizations because of political obstacles hindering the country's institutions from playing a more active role in international counterterrorism efforts. According to the U.S. State Department: "Kosovo's membership in many regional and international organizations has been blocked because many countries do not recognize its independence, which impedes cooperation on many issues, including counterterrorism."⁹

CONCLUSION

Trends in transnational terrorism show an increasing complexity and probability that a high threat level will continue and impose the need for states and international institutions to alter their approach

for preventing and combating this phenomenon. Changes, such as legal reforms, enhanced state capacities, interagency cooperation, interstate agreements and joint operations, and the exchange of information and practical experiences on interagency, regional and international levels have resulted in significant counterterrorism achievements. However, there is no doubt that transnational terrorism remains a serious security challenge.

The government of Kosovo has made countering extremism and terrorism a priority and has taken positive steps in drafting new legislation and strategies. A comprehensive counterterrorism strategy requires the engagement of all state structures and citizens who are well-informed about the consequences of extremism and terrorism. Despite this progress, obvious signs of extremism are present. A number of young people from Kosovo have joined extremist groups in Syria, influenced by radical ideologies and internal factors such as poverty and unemployment. This reality calls for a greater commitment from Kosovo's institutions in addressing economic, social and political concerns that directly impact radicalization and the spread of violent extremism.

Kosovo's institutions should intensify efforts to strengthen law enforcement, fully implement the National Counter Terrorism Strategy, increase citizen and stakeholder awareness and strengthen regional cooperation and international partnerships to more effectively prevent and combat violent extremism and terrorism. □

1. Dan Caldwell and Robert E. Williams, Jr., *Seeking Security in an Insecure World*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2006, pg.1.

2. "EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report," Europol, 2013, pg. 12.

3. Paul Medhurst, "Global Terrorism," UN Institute for Training and Research, New York, 2002, pg. 162.

4. Edited by Neyla Arnas, *Fighting Chance: Global Trends and Shocks in The National Security Environment*, Center for Technology and National Security Policy, National Defense University Press, Potomac Books, Washington, D.C., 2009, pg. 203.

5. "Kosovo 2013 Progress Report," European Commission, Chapter 4.3 - Justice, Freedom and Security.

6. "Country Reports on Terrorism 2013," U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism, April 2014, pg.102.

7. Murder or aggravated murder; inciting or assisting suicide; assault, assault with light bodily injury and assault with grievous bodily injury; sexual offenses; hostage-taking, kidnapping or unlawful deprivation of liberty; pollution of drinking water or food products; pollution or destruction of the environment; causing general danger; arson or reckless burning or exploding; destroying, damaging or removing public installations or endangering public traffic; unauthorized supply, transport, production, exchange or sale of weapons, explosives or nuclear, biological or chemical weapons; unauthorized acquisition, ownership, control, possession or use of weapons, explosives, or nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, or research into or development of biological or chemical weapons; endangering internationally protected persons; endangering United Nations and associated personnel; hijacking aircraft or unlawful seizure of aircraft, or hijacking other means of public or goods transportation; endangering civil aviation safety; hijacking ships or endangering maritime navigation safety; endangering the safety of fixed platforms located on the continental shelf, unauthorized appropriation, use, transfer or disposal of nuclear materials; threats to use or to commit theft or robbery of nuclear materials; threatening to commit any of the acts listed in sub-paragraphs). Found in Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo, pgs. 64-65.

8. Kosovo Agency of Statistics, available at: [www.http://ask.rks-gov.net/eng/](http://ask.rks-gov.net/eng/)

9. "Country Reports on Terrorism 2013," U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism, April 2014, pg. 104.