

Research on Contemporary Global Terrorism

Shuo Bai

School of Law, Shandong University of Technology, Zibo, 255000, China

Abstract. Economic globalization and the information technology revolution have for the first time linked the destinies of mankind, and analyzing the complex practices of today, terrorism is growing in the process of globalization. This means that terrorism is no longer a governance problem for individual actors, so the construction of a community of human destiny to achieve cooperation and common governance among nations is particularly important under this topic. This paper will be based on the profound reality of contemporary global terrorism, a deeper understanding of its concepts, a study of existing governance theories, an analysis of visualized reality information from the GTD database, a retrospective study of contemporary global terrorism, and an exploration of effective ways of global governance based on the value principle of actively building a community of human destiny.

Keywords: Terrorism; GTD data; Typologies; Causes; Global governance.

1. Introduction

In August 2021, the US-backed "Islamic Republic of Afghanistan" collapsed when the Taliban captured the capital Kabul, and in September of the same year, the Taliban announced the formation of an interim government; the year 2021 also marks the twentieth anniversary of the September 11 attacks. International opinion is divided on the nature of the Afghan Taliban, with one side arguing that it is a terrorist organization and the other classifying it as a politico-military organization due to its political and diplomatic stance. In a sense, the two decades of turmoil in Afghanistan can be seen as a struggle between the "comprador government" and the "religious fanatics". And with the "religious fanatics" in power in Afghanistan, whether the international community will recognize its legitimacy and change the characterization of its terrorist organizations in the previous two decades will depend on the contribution of the Taliban regime to the people and construction of the Afghan region.

Against this backdrop, the concept of terrorism seems to have blurred boundaries, with the resurgence of mass terrorist attacks after a twenty-year hiatus. Therefore, this paper will explore the connotation of terrorism in the era of globalization based on a new historical point, while using documentary and data analysis to summarize the current situation of terrorist incidents, combine theoretical research to find the causes of contemporary global terrorism, and discuss effective countermeasures for global governance of terrorism from the standpoint of building a community of human destiny.

2. Overview of contemporary theories related to global terrorism

The concept of terrorism has been difficult to define for domestic and international research scholars for quite some time. In order to deepen the understanding of the problem, this section will combine the wisdom of renowned scholars and organizations to collate and summaries the basic characteristics of terrorism and effective governance mechanisms by linking theory to practice.

2.1 Consensus on the definition of contemporary global terrorism

For Alex Schmid, a leading scholar in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism studies, there are four reasons why the concept of terrorism is difficult to reach a consensus on: (1) different fields often disagree on its popular conception, and terrorism has strong emotional and moral undertones that make it difficult to apply to particular events or groups; (2) the problem of defining terrorism is related to (de)legitimation and criminalisation; (3) terrorism has complex and diverse manifestations;

(4) the semantics of the term terrorism has changed many times over the centuries. [1] For these four reasons, there are different voices in the academic community on the subject.

In the 1980s, Alex Schmid distilled 22 components of the definition of terrorism from various mainstream views and summarised them as "[t]errorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby, in contrast to assassination, the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat-and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organisation), (imperilled) victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main targets (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought". [2] The nature of terrorism was articulated in 1975 when Brine Jenkins argued that "terrorists want a lot of people to watch, not a lot of people to die" and that achieving political ends is the ultimate goal of terrorism. [3]

2.2 Overview of contemporary theories on global terrorism governance

Terrorism governance, as an important branch of global governance, is similar to global governance in that it also requires the implementation of the concept of multi-party cooperation in governance, implying a protracted battle between multiple interests and a process of value recognition that gradually reaches consensus.

2.2.1 Multi-centre collaborative governance

In today's governance actions, more emphasis is placed on efficient and synergistic interaction among multiple subjects, fields and technologies, focusing on the unification of rules and the convergence of ideas based on the establishment of mutual links, thus creating a governance synergy to achieve the goal of terrorism governance. Such a theoretical model combines multilateral governance theory and network governance theory, and is now actively adopted by some countries in Europe and Asia.

The constructivist and neo-liberal schools of thought propose respectively 'knowledge-based theories of regime' and 'interest-based theories of regime'. The knowledge-based theories of regime refer more to the multi-directional interaction between different actors. Weak cognitivists argue that decision-makers seek 'reliable knowledge' to reduce uncertainty, while strong cognitivists further emphasise that actors are the actors in action, while regimes are the rules and norms that guide them. While some of the cognitivists' assumptions are controversial, there is undeniably a strong case to be made for the important role of actors outside the regime. At the same time, the 'interest-based governance mechanism' proposes four major institutional theories: Robert O. Keohane's contractualism, Situation-structuralism, Problem-structuralism and Oran R. Young's institutional bargaining. All four share a common focus on the benefits and costs of actors, which are abstracted through logic and mathematics to summarise the benefits and costs and to judge actors' decisions on the basis of these results. [4]

Single-actor governance is not effective in managing differences, nor is the lack of cooperation mechanisms to address global issues. In modern international society, terrorism is often committed in a way that involves a wide range of expertise, and such criminal activity requires the cooperation of multiple actors to cut off all sources. At the same time, it is difficult to organize the various actors and fields of technology in a synergistic manner until there are sound rules and a reasonable blend of ideas in the governance system, which can lead to inevitable conflicts of ideas and actions between different actors and involve the question of the boundaries of power. Therefore, in order to synergies governance subjects and fields it is necessary to establish consensus rules to constrain behaviour and subject desires, and to have a unified value philosophy according to which the effect of synergistic action can be achieved and governance objectives can be reached.

2.2.2 Unilateral hegemonic governance

The concrete behaviour of the concept of unilateralism in the global governance of today's countries is more harmful than beneficial, and is frequently found mainly in US policy, which combines unilateral governance with a power-centred philosophy, following the principle of maximizing self-interest above all else.

Terrorism governance as a transnational activity must respect international law and human rights, and acting in self-interest alone is bound to undermine the existing international system. But there are times when it can be used as a game strategy to force other actors to compromise and thus extend multilateral interests,[5] and can also be used to address ills from its own perspective, in which case certain internal logics are not infrequently the more effective way to act.

Hegemonic governance follows the realist school of 'power-based theories of regime' and the realist camp consists of three different approaches: the Hegemonic stability theory, the Stephen Krasner's approach and Joe Grieco's realism. All three share an emphasis on the absolute power of power, arguing that power largely determines benefits and costs, advocating a focus on the selection of Pareto optimal objects, and similarly articulating that absolute gain enthusiasm is curbed by relative gain aspirations, with relative gains forming orthogonal changes to the regime. [6]The most obvious feature of hegemonic governance is the domination of the system of multilateral relations by a major power to carry out counter-terrorism operations, in the process displaying a repressive posture to the detriment of other partners, in essence an unequal self-centred interaction.

3. The Current Situation of Contemporary Global Terrorism

In order to achieve a visual and holistic analysis of contemporary global terrorism, the following data from the GTD (Global Terrorism Database) will be cited to provide a comprehensive analysis of the current situation, while different types of manifestations will be outlined in relation to the socio-historical characteristics of the region, providing new ideas for later governance studies.

3.1 Comprehensive analysis of the GTD database

3.1.1 Overall analysis based on GTD data

The GTD database collects data on a wide range of information on terrorist incidents of different types and patterns of attack in all regions of the world since 1970. From a macro perspective and in conjunction with available database data, this section will provide an overall characterisation of terrorist incidents that have occurred over a half century.

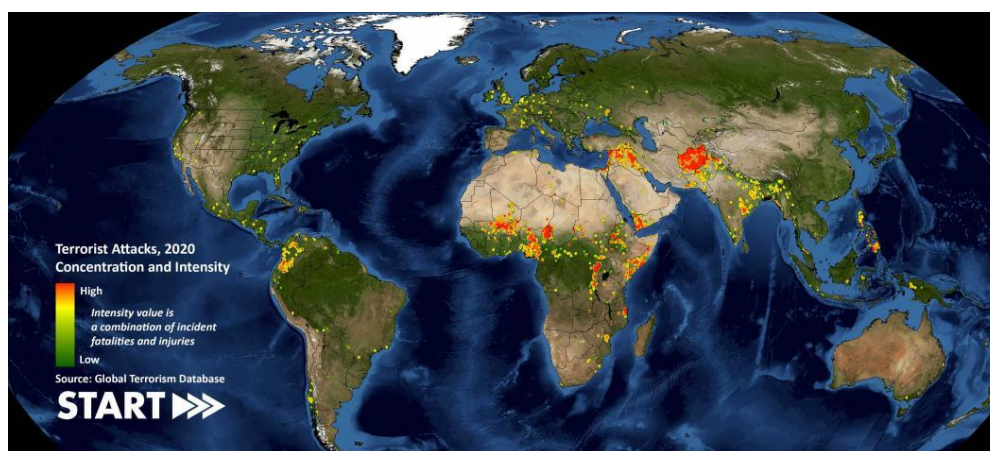


Figure 1. Map of the concentration and intensity of terrorist attacks in the GTD, 1970-2020

Figure 1 shows the overall regional distribution of terrorist attacks from 1970 to 2020. Based on the shades of colour, it is clear that the main concentration of terrorist incidents over half a century has been in South Asia, the Middle East, the Mediterranean coast, Africa and Central America. It is noteworthy that terrorism is present in almost all populated areas of the world. It can therefore be

inferred that terrorism is becoming a global extremist activity with a tendency to spread outwards from multiple centres, a phenomenon that must be taken very seriously.

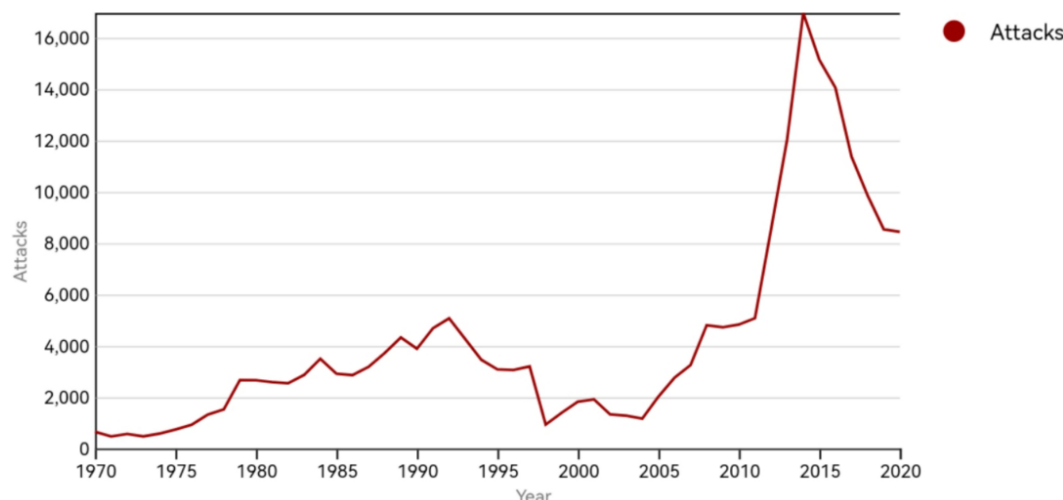


Figure 2. Statistical chart of the number of terrorist attacks in GTD, 1970-2020

Figure 2 shows the trend in the number of terrorist incidents over half a century in the form of a line statistical chart. Beginning in the 1970s, terrorism showed an increase until the 1990s when it began to decline, but then rebounded for the first decade into the 21st century, but by 2010 there was a sudden and dramatic burst of growth until it increased to a peak of over 16,000 cases a year, and this high rate of growth continued for about five years before it began to decline, however it has not yet returned to the average level of the mid to late 20th century data.

The expansion of terrorism in the new century challenges the interests and security of all sovereign states. The expansion of terrorism in the new century challenges the interests and security of all sovereign states. The ability of the new generation of leaders to govern will be tested by a series of questions such as how to curb the growth of terrorism and how to minimise the impact of the crisis.

3.1.2 Cross-sectional inter-regional comparative analysis

For half a century now, terrorism has been a situation of localised concentration and global dispersion, with certain differences in the characteristics of the situation between different regions, which will then be analysed cross-sectionally in relation to the data for each region.

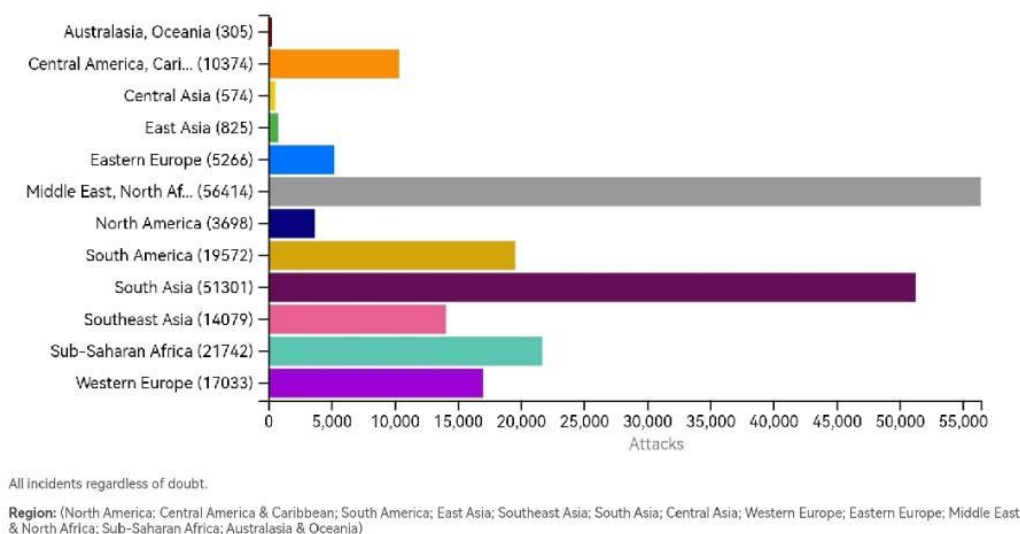


Figure 3. Cross-sectional comparison between regions of terrorist incidents in GTD

In Figure 3, we can clearly see that two regions, West Asia and North Africa and South Asia, have far more relevant data than other regions and are the places where terrorist incidents are concentrated and frequent. Terrorist forces are particularly rampant in such areas, where the current situation is no

longer motivated by the individual terrorists or organisations, but also by the intentions of various domestic and foreign interests.

Turning to the situation in the regions to which the second tranche of data points, the regions of Central America and the Caribbean, South America, South Asia, South East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Western Europe all have some amount of terrorist activity. Combined with Figure 1, each of these regions, with the exception of South East Asia and the South Asian island regions, do not show a high concentration or intensity of terrorist activity overall, but sporadic terrorist attacks have occurred over the years, a status quo characterised by fragmentation and small scale.

If we focus on the regions in the third bracket, we find that terrorist attacks are relatively rare, because on the one hand some of the regions have only small populated areas, and on the other hand the probability of terrorism is low compared to other regions due to the low clash of civilisations, the high degree of cultural convergence in the region, the high degree of authority and centralisation of the regime, and the people's comfort with the domestic status quo.

3.2 Types of contemporary global terrorism

3.2.1 Nationalistic terrorism

This type, which is mainly manifested in the anti-colonial wave and the struggle for national independence, began in the 1920s and is described by David Rapport as "a struggle for self-determination or the liberation of parts of the world". This type of terrorism was mainly active in the colonies, where they described themselves as "liberators" or "independence fighters". One of the most famous organisations of this type is the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and in more recent times there have also been terrorist incidents such as the bombings by Russian Chechen separatists who took hostages, and the violent attacks on the authorities by Sri Lankan Tamil groups. Nationalist terrorist organisations are present in almost every part of the world, and sovereign states are under threat of violence provoked by ultra-nationalists.

3.2.2 Religious extremist terrorism

It stems mainly from the irreconcilable clash of civilisations within multi-ethnic states, and in modern times it has erupted mainly in Islamic countries. They follow an extreme Islamic fundamentalism and see all reform-minded people as "betrayers of their teachings" and launch violent attacks against them. Such a type of terrorism is no longer confined to Islamic countries, but has a global expansion and is the most important type of contemporary global terrorism, mainly in Islamic countries, first in the Middle East and North Africa and later in Japan, the Philippines, Lebanon, China and other regions.

3.2.3 Far left-wing terrorism

In the 1960s, extreme left-wing terrorism began to break out in Western societies, when the post-war economies of the West were in desperate need of reconstruction and the capitalist system was oppressing ordinary people's livelihoods, and a large number of unemployed young people took to the streets to riot and complain strongly about their discontent with society, and the wave of this ideology then rose wildly and has continued to this day. This type advocated anarchist ideas and extreme violence against the capitalist regime. The most famous of these were the "Red Army Faction" in Germany and the "Red Army Brigades" in Italy, two organisations which declared their intention to "physically eradicate capitalism", and with this aim in mind, in 1978 they held hostage and murdered a number of people. In 1978 they held hostage and murdered the former Italian Prime Minister Moreau. [7]Such terrorist activities have mainly taken place in Japan, Latin America and other developed capitalist countries.

3.2.4 Far right-wing terrorism

This type of terrorism, originally organised by the post-war remnants of Nazi reactionary forces active in Europe and the United States, has caused riots and bombings and serious social disruptions in European regions. In the last few years there has been a resurgence, with Germany in the 1990s

officially believing that there were over 10,000 cases of residual fascists in the country; members of the Azov concentration camp in Ukraine from the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian war are considered to be a modern-day Nazi organisation with distinctive fascist symbols, and have unleashed inhumane acts of slaughter against innocent civilians in the eastern part of the country for the last five years. This type of terrorist activity is mainly found in Western Europe and the Americas.

4. The Reasons for Contemporary Global Terrorism

Terrorism is a confrontational act between the perpetrator and the victim, a form of conflict that deviates significantly from the moral and legal rules customary in human society. Such manifestations of conflict are inevitably a warning of the accumulating ills of a more macroscopic type of conflict leading to its collapse, and so the reasons for terrorism will be analysed in the light of the current apparent contradictions in global society.

4.1 Contemporary global terrorism has its roots in international conflicts

Although terrorism occurs as a direct result of the will of an individual or an organisation, the root causes of terrorist conflicts are embedded in the social structure of a particular society; the factors in society are dynamic and changeable, and overall stability is the mainstay of development and change, and there is a need to pay attention to the inverse of development and change; terrorism in international conflicts is often triggered by internal factors that can be effectively regulated. Terrorism is an inseparable negative product of historical development and cannot be completely eradicated by mankind; there is inequality, there is conflict, and in such a social environment, terrorism will not disappear, and it is only by creating a relatively equal environment together as far as possible that terrorism can be contained.[8]

4.2 Contemporary global terrorism stems from the clash of civilizations

The perception of a clash of civilisations comes from the famous American liberal political theorist Samuel Huntington, who suggested that the main reason for the differences and conflicts in the post-war world was the difference in civilisations, most visibly in the form of religious conflicts.[9]

The confrontation between the different forces is obvious, and a bloody violence is inevitable when the various religious civilisations, each claiming to be a universal value, try to encroach on the other's civilised territory. Similarly, the clash of religions is even more pronounced in the internal sphere, where extremist religionists inflict violence on any group that attempts to desecrate the so-called "purity" of their doctrine, using religion as a tool to spread negative and evil ideas of persecution. Such a religious climate is particularly evident in the Middle East, from Islamic "jihad" to the Taliban in Afghanistan, and it is from such acts that we can discern the hegemonic and power politics influence of certain powers.

4.3 Contemporary global terrorism has its roots in modern conflicts

The factors associated with modernisation are multi-layered and diverse, and the complexity of economic and political change has weakened the stability of order and increased the feasibility of committing terrorist acts.

One of the first developments in modernity is the change in information technology. The advances in information technology have provided unprecedented facilities for terrorist operations, and terrorism in the new century has taken on an informational dimension, naturally incorporating a distinctive contemporary character in the global game.

Urbanisation is one of the key signs of modernisation and an important factor in the creation of terrorism. Urbanisation means the expansion of urban areas, the density of high-rise buildings and the rapid movement and concentration of people, giving terrorist organisations a huge target and a favourable terrain in which to operate. At the same time, terrorist organisations have found large

'recruitment points', abetting their own ideas in order to stir up resentment against society among citizens in distress, to include more 'potential terrorists' and to expand their organisations.[10]

5. Contemporary governance of global terrorism

Although the reality does not allow for the total elimination of terrorism, the global community must be determined and determined to use all means to sanction and control terrorism in order to minimise its damage to society.

5.1 International cooperation for shared governance

In 2019, President Xi Jinping mentioned at the fifth summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA) that countries should adhere to dialogue without confrontation and partnership without alliance, and properly address various traditional and non-traditional security issues, in particular, they should adhere to the fight against all forms of terrorism.

1). Accelerate the study of the definition of the concept of terrorism in order to reach a consensus among countries and establish a cross-regional institutional organization for cooperation in counter-terrorism. First of all, the concept of terrorism must be clearly defined in an academic and legal sense, and inter-regional cooperation should be sought on the basis of consensus. The major powers should assume international responsibility, adhere to the basic principles of the UN Charter and the concept advocated by the community of human destiny, reach agreements on common governance, form a network of regional cooperation to effectively combat criminal acts of terrorism, and strive to build a new normal for counter-terrorism.

2). Countries demonstrate a firm position of no compromise and no concessions, resolutely fight against the criminal forces of terrorist organisations and maintain world peace and security. The great powers must stand firm in the cause of counter-terrorism, resolutely set out their positions, adopt a zero-tolerance attitude towards terrorist crimes, and not let go of any moment that breeds terrorist crimes; there is no compromise or concession in the cause of counter-terrorism, only a more determined effort to maintain world peace and security.

3). International actors should provide timely humanitarian relief and support the organization of post-disaster reconstruction in areas oriented by the values of the community of human destiny. As terrorist attacks are most common in backward countries and regions that do not have sufficient capacity to combat and prevent terrorist attacks, and as regimes lose their ability to govern, they are unable to guarantee the basic survival of their people. Intergovernmental organisations such as the United Nations and various non-governmental organisations should support post-disaster reconstruction efforts in the region, and provide humanitarian relief based on the principles of the Community of Human Destiny initiative, in order to restore confidence in building post-disaster regions.

5.2 National governance reform

Terrorism arises to a large extent from internal contradictions within the social structure. Only by constantly improving its own social governance capacity, building a society based on the rule of law and reforming and innovating to adapt to development in line with current practice can the budding birth of terrorism be effectively controlled, creating a deterrent effect on terrorism and preventing management at its roots.

1). Strengthen the social economy and the rule of law to reduce social ills. At a time when the world is facing an epidemic and an economic downturn, and when people in many countries are discontented, this is a crucial time to test the leadership's ability to govern, to keep the economy running smoothly in the face of adversity, to implement the concept of a law-based society in the face of adversity, to boost people's confidence, and to truly unite social forces against the forces of stubborn evil.

2). Strengthen social and cultural construction, respect the cultural differences among ethnic groups, and properly guide the creation of an open and inclusive cultural environment. Most countries are multi-ethnic assemblages, and friction between different cultures within the country is inevitable. Society needs to promote intercultural respect and tolerance, disseminate policy ideas, strengthen exchanges and mutual appreciation between civilisations, and create a harmonious cultural atmosphere from top to bottom and from the inside out, which in turn will fill people of all nationalities with a sense of well-being and access.

3). Strengthen the construction of anti-terrorist forces, improve anti-terrorist institutions and enhance the combat capability of the army. The state should enhance its own awareness of crisis prevention, continuously improve the anti-terrorism capabilities of its forces, make anti-terrorism one of the tasks of social governance, set up institutions to combat terrorist crimes in accordance with the law, and protect people's lives and property with professional, combat-ready anti-terrorism forces.

4). Strengthen public facilities and focus on the daily management of transport hubs. As the direct target of terrorist crimes is often a crowd of people, the government should pay attention to urban construction, consider emergency evacuation situations, add emergency safety lanes in high-traffic areas and focus on daily street management. Strict security inspection norms should also be implemented for transport hub areas, and emergency management departments should be established to deal with emergencies and minimise threats to the safety of people.

5.3 Modern field integration

Alongside the emphasis on hard power in counter-terrorism, the tide of history demands that we look at the prominent role of soft power. The new century has given birth to a variety of modern novelties, with the intersection of information, data, media and technology, which also reminds counter-terrorism cooperation of the integration of more modern technologies in the field.

1). Strengthen information sharing and exchange networks among countries to promote coordinated action and rational use of new information technology tools. Modern warfare is no longer confined to weapons confrontation, but is also a contest of information technology. As countries master advanced information technology means, they should exchange experiences with each other in combating terrorist crimes, coordinate actions, establish counter-terrorism information databases, take the initiative to intercept the criminal intentions of terrorist organizations and reasonably formulate combating strategies.

2). Strengthen the management of the news and communication media, and cooperate economically to impose severe sanctions on terrorist organizations. Countries should take into account the characteristics of the crime, combat the grey industry and cut off the sources of support for terrorist organisations; international use of the news media and online information to further strengthen the general public's awareness of terrorism prevention and anti-terrorist ideology, play a role in ideological guidance and warning, control the wind of the news media discourse and enhance the public's trust in the ability of the governance to effectively combat terrorism.

3). Actively develop new types of combat weapons and information application tools, and strengthen the combat capability of joint counter-terrorism forces. All countries should actively invest in building a modern, professional and militarised counter-terrorism force, constructing a solid and complete wall of facilities for the cause of counter-terrorism, implementing a sense of combat and discipline in the daily training of the force, and cultivating military personnel with strategic thinking, global awareness and competence to effectively combat terrorist acts.

6. Conclusion

Contemporary global terrorism has shown different characteristics and development trends from those of the past, and is one of the most important issues in global governance. With the re-emergence of the power of terrorist organisations, new practical features require an in-depth understanding of contemporary global terrorism, the establishment of a data-based analysis system, the tracing of roots,

a firm grasp of the conceptual principles of the community of human destiny, the search for new forms of efficient governance, and a firm stance to maintain world peace and development.

References

- [1] Schmid, A.P. (2004), Terrorism - The Definitional Problem, Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law, 36, No. 2-3, p375-419.
- [2] Alex P. Schmid & Albert J. Jongman, Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature, 2nd revised edition, North-Holland Publishing Company, 1988, p. 1-2.
- [3] Jenkins, B. (1975). Will Terrorists go Nuclear? In Rand Corporation, RAND report P-5541. Santa Monica: RAND corporation.
- [4] Andreas Hasenclever; Peter Mayer; Volker Rittberger, Theories of International Regimes. Cambridge University Press, 1997. p23-83, p136-210.
- [5] Wang Yijun. A study on UN governance of terrorism in the contemporary Middle East [D]. Northwestern University, 2019.
- [6] Andreas Hasenclever; Peter Mayer; Volker Rittberger, Theories of International Regimes. Cambridge University Press, 1997. p83-135.
- [7] Li Zhanjun, Terrorism and International Governance, China Media Press, 2002 edition, p. 82.
- [8] Li Zhanjun, Terrorism and International Governance, China Media Press, 2002 edition, p. 202.
- [9] Samuel Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Reconstruction of World Order, translated by Zhou Qi, Liu Him, Zhang Liping and Wang Yuan, Xinhua Publishing House, 2010 edition.
- [10] Crenshaw, Martha, The Causes of Terrorism, Comparative Politics, vol. 13. no. 4, 1981, p382.