
An Analysis of Contemporary Terrorist Acts from the Perspective of Social, Cultural, and Religious Factors that Prevent their Prevention

Submitted 23/05/25, 1st revision 05/06/25, 2nd revision 20/06/25, accepted 10/08/25

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Abstract:

Purpose: While much emphasis is placed on the operational readiness of counter-terrorism forces, intelligence services, and crisis management structures, this article focuses on identifying additional factors—structural, social, political, and psychological—that can either hinder or support the prevention of terrorist acts. Such a multifaceted approach is essential for developing more resilient and adaptive security systems.

Design/methodology/approach: This article adopts a qualitative research approach grounded in the triangulation of methods. Three primary methodologies were employed: source analysis, factor analysis, and comparative analysis. Source analysis was used to examine relevant academic literature, policy documents, and empirical research on the socio-cultural and religious determinants of terrorism and radicalization. Factor analysis was applied to identify and structure the key variables that hinder the effectiveness of counter-terrorism efforts, with particular emphasis on those contributing to community-level support for terrorist acts. Comparative analysis served to assess the relative influence and interaction of these determinants across different societal contexts, including migrant communities, stateless populations, and politically isolated states. The integrative analytical framework enabled the identification of patterns of correlation among social, cultural, and religious variables, thus allowing for the verification of the initial hypothesis regarding the multifactorial nature of support for terrorism and the structural conditions that undermine preventive counter-terrorism operations.

Findings: Terrorism, alongside conventional warfare, ranks among the most destructive and lethal forms of human activity, characterized by the intentional use of violence to achieve ideological, political, or religious objectives. Unlike warfare, which may follow established rules of engagement, terrorism often deliberately targets civilians and critical infrastructure to sow fear, destabilize societies, and influence decision-making processes.

Practical implications: The ultimate aim of every terrorist is the successful execution of an attack, which, when realized, often indicates a serious breakdown or shortcoming in the functioning of institutions tasked with ensuring national and public security. Therefore, understanding and addressing the conditions that either facilitate or prevent such acts is of

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fundamental importance.

Originality value: *This article offers an original and interdisciplinary perspective on the effectiveness of counter-terrorism efforts by shifting the analytical focus from operational and tactical readiness to the broader sociocultural and religious environment in which terrorism develops. While most existing research emphasizes institutional responses, intelligence capabilities, or crisis management protocols, this study identifies and analyzes the structural and psychosocial conditions that facilitate or hinder the prevention of terrorist attacks. By integrating insights from sociology, cultural studies, and religious anthropology, the article proposes a multifactorial model explaining how community-based attitudes and beliefs shape the operational space of terrorist actors. The value of the article lies in its comprehensive, system-level approach that highlights the cumulative impact of societal determinants—often overlooked in mainstream security discourse—on the vulnerability or resilience of communities to terrorist radicalization and activity. This novel framework contributes to both academic understanding and the practical formulation of more socially informed counter-terrorism strategies.*

Keywords: *Terrorist acts, social factors, cultural factors, religious factors, national security, public safety.*

JEL Code: *Z10, D74, H56.*

Paper type: *Research article.*

Declaration of Conflict of Interest: *We declare that there are no actual or potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.*

Funding: *This work was supported by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education under project No. RID/SP/0042/2024/01, Increasing Competences in identifying threats related to hazardous materials, from program Regional Excellence Initiative, 2024-2027.*

1. Introduction

When analyzing terrorism, and particularly the social perception of this phenomenon, the most prominent and attention-grabbing aspect is the terrorist attack itself—especially those that provoke the strongest public outcry due to the number of victims, their nature (e.g., children), the exceptional brutality and ruthlessness of the perpetrators, or the symbolic significance of the location targeted.

However, this is only one—albeit the most visible—element of the broader phenomenon outlined at the outset. When juxtaposing the highly negative consequences of terrorist attacks—especially for the victims and the societies in which these acts are committed—with the fact that they are often made possible by

the failure of preventive and protective efforts, the importance of identifying the key factors that weaken the effectiveness of counter-terrorism operations becomes evident.

Terrorism is a complex phenomenon with multifaceted determinants that create a fertile ground for its development. One of its elements is the activity of organized groups or individuals who, through terrorist attacks, seek to achieve specific objectives—usually of a political nature. Equally important are ideologies, religions, and other constructs that define behavioral patterns, which are often used—frequently in a distorted form—to mobilize and motivate individuals to engage in terrorist activities.

These elements may lead not only to the emergence and growth of new terrorist organizations—through, for example, the recruitment of members—or to the activity of so-called “lone wolves,” but also to the support or tacit acceptance of terrorism by the surrounding environment. Such societal or cultural perceptions may facilitate terrorist operations and simultaneously hinder the implementation of counter-terrorism efforts, especially those aimed at preventing attacks.

Analyses of terrorist acts—particularly the most shocking ones, such as the operations carried out by Al-Qaeda culminating in the tragic events of September 11, 2001, as well as the attacks in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005—lead to the conclusion that the effectiveness of counter-terrorism measures increases in direct proportion to how early such efforts are initiated during the planning phases of these criminal operations.

This suggests that a key factor is the operational quality and structure of terrorist networks long before an attack is executed, specifically during the preparatory stages. This factor is largely influenced by the environment in which such organizations operate: does the surrounding community express support—or even provide assistance—for these activities, or does it demonstrate disapproval and condemnation?

In light of the above, a key question arises: what factors most strongly induce support or sympathy for the execution of terrorist acts within the communities in which such criminal organizations operate? To address this question, it is helpful to examine the research hypothesis, which posits that there is no single dominant factor or narrow set of determinants that decisively influences the emergence of supportive attitudes toward terrorist attacks within society. Nor can one identify a single prevailing domain of influence in this regard.

Rather, it is the specific correlation of multiple factors—typically spanning two, and most often all three, spheres of influence, social, cultural, and religious—that plays a decisive role in generating support for terrorist activity within the communities in which these organizations function.

The research presented in this article employed the following methods: analysis of source materials, factor analysis, and comparative analysis. The first method was used to examine existing research findings related to the topic addressed in the article. The second method served to identify the factors that hinder efforts aimed at preventing terrorist acts and to assess the intensity of their impact. The comparative method was applied to evaluate the previously identified determinants in order to determine whether significant differences exist in their negative influence on the effectiveness of counter-terrorism activities.

2. Terrorist Acts and Social Determinants as a Factor Hindering Effective Counteraction Against this Phenomenon

Social conditions constitute one of the primary factors that may negatively affect the ability to prevent terrorist attacks. This stems from the fact that, beyond professional training and equipment, the effectiveness of institutions specializing in combating terrorist organizations—as well as individual perpetrators—depends largely on the degree of support and understanding that terrorists receive from the surrounding community, and on the potential for cooperation between counter-terrorism agencies and that community. The relationship between these two elements is antagonistic in nature.

Therefore, it is essential to identify which social determinants contribute to a perception of terrorism within the local environment that facilitates such activity, and thereby impedes cooperation with society in efforts to combat it.

Communities in which excluded groups—or those identifying as such—are present tend to foster a focus among their members on searching for the causes of their unfavorable situation and ways to change it. Social exclusion generates negative emotions—feelings of helplessness, injustice, and anger—which often escalate into hatred (Vertigans, 2009). Terrorist organizations offer seemingly simple explanations and courses of action in response. Exclusion may arise for various reasons. Representatives of groups that differ significantly from the majority of the surrounding population often struggle to function within the broader community. These difficulties may stem from the behavior of the dominant environment, which limits opportunities for self-fulfillment.

In many cases, the mechanism also operates in the opposite direction. Members of a community who do not accept some or most of its prevailing norms—perceiving them as alien to their own—engage in self-imposed social isolation. The outcome is similar to that described earlier. Often, both processes occur simultaneously, reinforcing one another. Self-isolation and rejection of commonly accepted societal norms frequently trigger fear and apprehension within the majority population, potentially leading to exclusionary behaviors.

In turn, these actions often provoke further self-isolation and a deepening sense of

alienation. This dynamic is frequently described as a self-perpetuating spiral of mutual distrust, which over time escalates into increasing hostility. The model described above is evident in the case of migrants, particularly those representing communities that differ significantly from the host societies. Paradoxically, this dynamic typically does not apply to the first generation of migrants, but rather emerges among their descendants—those born into the new environment.

Individuals migrating from the Middle East and North Africa prior to the so-called “Arab Spring” often expressed a sense of gratitude for the opportunity to live within a new society. They were aware of the differences in cultural norms and values, as well as the language barrier, which objectively made it difficult for them to achieve the same standard of living as the majority population. Nevertheless, the new circumstances represented a marked improvement over the conditions they had previously experienced.

As a result, these conditions did not generally foster negative emotions toward the broader society. First-generation migrants frequently carried with them value systems and behavioral norms from their native communities which, although different from those of the host society, provided a positive moral framework that allowed them to accept their new reality and coexist peacefully with the population they had joined. In contrast, subsequent generations—especially those born into the host society—do not have a basis for comparison with the circumstances in the countries of origin of their parents or grandparents.

Objective factors, such as the gradual disappearance of the language barrier and other limitations, allow these descendants to integrate more fully into broader society and to compare themselves more directly with its members. Such comparisons often yield unfavorable results.

These younger generations observe the behavioral patterns and values of the society they live in, along with the generally higher social status of the native population. Due to various reasons—often the result of the demanding work schedules of first-generation migrant parents—their children and grandchildren frequently did not receive the same value formation or behavioral modeling as their elders (Orav, 2015).

As a result, they are more vulnerable to frustration due to their increased ability to confront and contrast their situation with that of the majority population—unlike the first generation, which tended to live in more isolated, community-based environments resembling voluntary ghettos (Czapnik and Baranowski, 2016).

Without the positive moral framework and behavioral guidance carried by their predecessors, these younger individuals are particularly susceptible to negative emotions stemming from frustration and rebellion—a vulnerability further intensified by their youth. In many cases, the natural defense mechanism in response

to this situation is an attempt to internalize and identify with a broader group that differs from the society with which they feel little connection. The most natural point of reference becomes others with a similar social status (Embrey, 2017).

Unfortunately, due to the lack of authentic value transmission from the previous generation, these individuals often adopt simplified and distorted ideological frameworks—frequently shaped by individuals who hold hostile attitudes toward the values represented by the host society. These elements activate the aforementioned self-reinforcing spiral of mutual hostility, emerging between the community formed on such foundations and the broader society.

Such social conditions create a highly favorable environment for the development of terrorism, both in its organized forms and through so-called “lone wolf” attacks. While the majority of individuals within these communities do not engage directly in terrorism, the discussed social dynamics foster support—or at least understanding—for such acts. This sympathetic environment facilitates terrorist activity and, at the same time, undermines the effectiveness of institutions tasked with combating such threats.

Another social factor that induces support for terrorist activity—thus facilitating its development and impeding the prevention of attacks—is the condition in which entire societies experience a sense of enclosure or isolation. This is most often the result of political circumstances, such as when a population loses its former independence—especially if this is accompanied by a significant deterioration in economic conditions and the restriction of previously held rights (United Nations, 2018).

A typical example would be the loss of statehood or substantial autonomy. Such a situation can be observed, for instance, in the Palestinian territories. Feelings of exclusion may also arise within titular nations, particularly when their governments engage in actions deemed unacceptable by the international community, leading to external isolation (United Nations, 2018).

This sense of exclusion is even more pronounced when isolation is perceived as undeserved—resulting from hostile actions taken by external actors to advance their own strategic interests.

When analyzing the three types of social factors described above—all of which hinder efforts to counter terrorism, particularly the prevention of attacks—it becomes important to ask which of these scenarios presents the greatest obstacle to the effectiveness of counter-terrorism structures.

In cases where relatively distinct groups exist within a society—groups that do not identify with the broader population and may consequently support terrorism—counteracting the development of terrorist networks and, above all, preventing

attacks tends to be more feasible than in the other two scenarios. This is because counter-terrorism agencies and related structures operate within their own state and society.

This facilitates the infiltration of such isolated groups, especially given the paradox that individuals who feel alienated from the majority society often live in less insular communities than their ancestors—namely, the first generation of migrants. Some individuals who have not adopted patterns of alienation may even serve within counter-terrorism agencies, utilizing their knowledge of the group from which they originate, leveraging personal contacts, or carrying out operations within at-risk communities or even terrorist organizations—sometimes under a changed identity.

However, this same mechanism can function in reverse, weakening counter-terrorism efforts. Terrorist organizations may attempt to recruit individuals from these communities who are already working within counter-terrorism services. The advantages and disadvantages associated with the first of the discussed social factors are only marginally present in the second scenario and are virtually absent in the case of closed titular nations.

This significantly hampers the ability of counter-terrorism agents to penetrate such social structures—let alone the terrorist organizations operating within them. As a result, the capacity to effectively prevent attacks is substantially diminished. An additional obstacle in situations where an entire social group—concentrated in a defined geographic area—has lost its statehood or autonomy and experiences a sense of enclosure, is that, unlike in the first model, not just a segment but the entire society, along with its formal and informal structures and leadership, may support or at least view terrorist activity positively.

Moreover, these circumstances may cause individuals who are personally critical of terrorist activity to remain silent, fearing for their own safety. Consequently, even against their own convictions, they may express support for terrorism, making them all the less likely to cooperate with institutions responsible for combating such acts.

This further undermines the ability to prevent terrorist attacks. The greatest challenges, however, arise in the third scenario—where a state is isolated by part of the international community. In this case, unlike the previous situations, any attempt to infiltrate the terrorist-supporting society or organizations operating within it requires sending counter-terrorism agents into a foreign country whose population and administration are often hostile—or at best indifferent—to such efforts.

In some instances, they may even actively support or tolerate terrorist activity, particularly as the ultimate goal—i.e., the execution of attacks—typically occurs outside their territory.

Furthermore, the aforementioned factor of coercion and intimidation affects those

who disagree with terrorist methods even more intensely than in the previously discussed scenario. Such conditions constitute the most hostile environment for counter-terrorism efforts.

In summarizing the discussion on the three social factors that hinder the prevention of terrorist attacks, a noticeable shift can be observed regarding the first scenario, which occurred after the so-called “Arab Spring.” Since that period, the first generation of migrants has exhibited different characteristics compared to their predecessors.

This change stems from the fact that the rapid events collectively referred to as the Arab Spring—rather than leading to the collapse of authoritarian regimes and their replacement with democratic systems—resulted in chaos and civil wars in many regions, often severely weakening or even nearly dismantling essential state institutions. These conditions disrupted the transmission of authentic values and hindered the formation of a positive, albeit distinct from European, moral and behavioral framework.

A comparable effect—though resulting from different causes—can be observed in the weakening of internal value systems between first-generation Arab migrants arriving in Europe and their descendants. In both cases, a similar mechanism emerges to fill this void. In societies affected by civil war and pervasive violence, the younger generation often substitutes this moral deficit with simplified and distorted systems of values and behaviors, which are frequently geared toward promoting radical ideologies.

For this reason, from the second decade of the 21st century onward, even the first generation of migrants from North Africa and the Middle East began to exhibit characteristics previously identified mainly among their descendants.

Another social factor that affects the ability to prevent terrorist attacks is the strength of social bonds within a given community. In public discourse, there is a common belief that strong social ties—from family to clan or national affiliations—foster the development of terrorism and support for it. In reality, however, this factor tends to work in the opposite direction.

Genuine and robust relationships of the aforementioned kind encourage the transmission of traditional community values in a comprehensive and undistorted manner. This process unfolds naturally and over time, which enhances its depth and durability. Terrorist activity—and even the fascination with it that leads to public support—tends to grow in communities where social bonds are disrupted (Venhaus, 2010).

In such cases, the mental and moral formation process is incomplete, leaving a void that is often filled by simplified and distorted versions of cultural norms, particularly

with respect to issues such as the use of violence. Individuals who have been raised within strong familial and community structures are better equipped to recognize these distortions.

The situation differs when such distorted narratives are presented to individuals who lack such foundational knowledge. In these cases, there is a natural human tendency to quickly fill the informational and moral void. The inclination to choose the path of least resistance means that these simplified—but often erroneous—versions of norms, values, and ethics are more readily accepted when they are presented as authentic elements of one's cultural or religious identity. Due to their limited knowledge, these individuals are unable to detect the falsehoods.

Therefore, terrorists and terrorist-supporting communities often emerge from social environments where the essential bonds and the transmission of authentic knowledge have been eroded. Media reports frequently indicate that those who undergo radicalization are often young people with only superficial knowledge of the true cultural norms of the communities from which they originate. As a result, they are highly susceptible to internalizing distorted versions of those traditions.

3. Terrorist Acts and Cultural Determinants as a Factor Hindering Effective Counteraction Against this Phenomenon

An analysis of key cultural determinants reveals that cultures which shape their members to perceive their own identity as superior to others tend to foster the development of terrorism particularly when those who identify with such cultures occupy disadvantaged positions in the real world (Ziarko, 2015).

This factor contributes to the phenomenon whereby individuals from such environments—though not necessarily terrorists themselves—often support or at least sympathize with terrorist activities. Such conditions significantly hinder efforts to prevent terrorist attacks. Terrorist organizations and individual attackers, when embedded in a supportive environment, are better able to conceal their activities, including preparations for acts of terror.

As a result, counter-terrorism agencies find it more difficult to recruit collaborators or informants capable of identifying and infiltrating terrorist networks. In such cultural contexts—when paired with the marginalized status of their members—individuals often experience a deeply unsettling dissonance.

They conclude that if their own culture is inherently superior, yet its members are in a disadvantaged position compared to those of foreign cultures, then this situation must be unjust and caused by the actions of culturally external societies—rather than by any internal failure.

This perception fosters a sense of injustice, resentment, and a desire to restore the

“natural order” in which cultural superiority is reflected in social dominance over other cultural groups.

Because the disadvantaged position is not perceived as self-inflicted (a view rooted in the belief in cultural superiority), individuals conclude that action should be directed against other cultural communities—particularly those whose members occupy (in the group’s view, illegitimately) more favorable positions in local, regional, or global hierarchies. This reasoning often leads to the conclusion that culturally foreign groups have violated the natural hierarchy by attaining higher social positions, and must therefore be punished.

Many individuals who see themselves through this lens believe that the use of radical means is not only justified but necessary. They reason that since culturally foreign actors have violated fundamental rules, no norms need apply in dealing with them. As a result, among members of cultures exhibiting the described characteristics—and who find themselves in a disadvantaged position relative to other cultural groups—there often emerges at least tacit acceptance of terrorism, and frequently outright support or active assistance for terrorist organizations and so-called “lone wolves.”

These individuals often perceive such actions as the only viable or even obligatory solution—a kind of cultural imperative that must not be betrayed, as doing so would be tantamount to violating the same norms that, in their view, were already broken by outsiders. Perceived disloyalty among members of their own culture may thus be punished as harshly as disloyalty among outsiders.

This dynamic significantly complicates the work of counter-terrorism agencies, as it creates an extremely insular base of support and a protective environment for terrorist organizations—one that is difficult to penetrate and severely impairs the effectiveness of preventive counter-terrorism operations.

When analyzing cultural determinants, it is also important to consider another factor within this sphere. Research conducted over several decades across communities in dozens of countries has revealed certain patterns. It has been observed that cultures which shape their affiliated groups in ways that generate power structures distant from the general public—structures over which the broader society has little influence—are more conducive to the development of terrorism.

Such cultures also more frequently produce support for certain forms of terrorist activity compared to cultures that foster communities in which governing authorities are closely connected to the people they govern and are highly dependent on their approval. In the first case, societies tend to become withdrawn, discouraging the expression of individual opinions and functioning in direct contrast to civil society.

These conditions suppress personal reflection and instead promote the passive

acceptance of imposed rules, norms, and behavioral patterns. The inability to influence power structures through systemic mechanisms—and, by extension, the circumstances shaped by those in power—leads many members of such societies to believe that only radical, extra-systemic action can bring about meaningful change (Kluch and Vaux, 2017).

While actual terrorists make up only a small percentage of such populations, a much larger segment, for the reasons outlined above, tends to support or at least sympathize with terrorist activity. Additional correlations identified in the same body of research concern cultural tendencies toward either high or low tolerance for uncertainty. Communities with low tolerance for uncertainty are inclined toward the establishment of rigid rules and behavioral frameworks.

These societies are prone to dogmatization. Such cultural settings lead to an orderly understanding of the world—one in which unambiguous answers are provided to fundamental questions, thereby eliminating uncertainty from daily life (Kluch and Vaux, 2017). However, when members of such cultures begin to feel threatened by external forces, their sense of certainty begins to erode.

These societies then fear that the foundational rules governing their daily lives may be undermined. The fear of uncertainty becomes a powerful stimulus, often triggering public acceptance—or even support—for radical actions that would otherwise be deemed unacceptable. Such conditions create a fertile ground for the development of terrorism and significantly hinder efforts to prevent terrorist attacks.

Another aspect of cultural determinants that contributes to tolerance for—or even support of—terrorist activities is the tendency of certain cultures to foster isolationist attitudes among their members, which in turn leads to fear of culturally foreign groups. This fear often manifests as intolerance and, in many cases, cultural hatred (Kluch and Vaux, 2017). Such dynamics become especially pronounced through direct or indirect contact with another culture (Obaidi *et al.*, 2023).

Another cultural factor influencing the development of terrorism and societal support for it is the degree to which a given culture promotes either an individualistic or collectivist worldview. In the latter case, individuals are oriented toward group values and collective goals, often at the expense of personal plans and aspirations. In such culturally conditioned societies, behaviors motivated by collective interests and goals—including those requiring personal sacrifice—are more prevalent (Kluch and Vaux, 2017).

This environment facilitates recruitment into terrorist organizations, which often frame their actions as efforts to defend shared cultural values or ensure the survival of the group. At the same time, the collectivist mindset fosters broader societal support for such activities, especially when they are portrayed as being carried out for the common or communal good.

Concluding the analysis of cultural determinants that hinder efforts to prevent terrorist attacks, it is important to note that, according to researchers, terrorism—as well as support for extremist activity—is often generated within multicultural societies. These societies are composed of groups belonging to different cultural traditions.

However, the mere existence of cultural diversity is not the root cause of these phenomena. The real problem lies in how such societies function. In many multicultural contexts, culturally distinct groups live side by side without meaningful cultural exchange. Subsequent generations, originating from migrant communities, often become physically integrated with the majority population due to the erosion of language barriers and other distinctions, and participate in shared spaces through work and communication.

Nevertheless, these multicultural societies typically lack genuine efforts to understand or engage with the cultural frameworks of the host population. Such attitudes frequently lead to prejudice against minority groups. Meanwhile, members of these minority cultures, who fail to comprehend the cultural norms of the broader society in which they live, may experience frustration and unease. Misunderstandings may arise, breeding distrust, a sense of cultural threat, and eventually, hostility (Obaidi *et al.*, 2023; Karwan and Ratajczyk, 2019).

These conditions create fertile ground for terrorism and support for terrorist activities, undermining the effectiveness of counter-terrorism structures. The arguments presented above suggest that multicultural societies, in their current form, may not be conducive to preventing terrorist attacks. If a given society includes groups representing different cultures, efforts should focus on developing an intercultural society—one based on mutual exchange and understanding, where different cultures interact and learn from one another while preserving their distinct identities.

4. Terrorist Acts and Religious Determinants as a Factor Hindering Effective Counteraction Against this Phenomenon

From the perspective of religious determinants, the effectiveness of efforts to prevent terrorist acts may be reduced in communities characterized by religious diversity. Research indicates that when distinct religious groups within a given society engage in mutual interaction, their members often experience a sense of threat to their religious identity.

A similar effect can be observed in secularized societies that include religious minorities practicing one or more faiths (Chabasińska and Weremko, 2016). This is a natural psychological and social mechanism. Upon encountering the “other” in the sphere of religion, both individuals and groups tend to engage in comparison. Such comparisons are often superficial.

The average individual typically possesses a deeper understanding of their own religion, while their perception of other faiths is shaped by casual observations, popular opinions, and stereotypes. This frequently results in distorted views of other religions and their adherents, leading to conclusions that differ markedly from those that would emerge from a more thorough understanding.

This alone can generate a sense of confrontation—a feeling of being threatened by religious outsiders who may be perceived as a danger to the stability of one's own religious identity, which is often a core component of personal self-awareness for believers. As a result, the defensive mechanism that urges the protection of one's religious identity becomes further intensified.

This effect is particularly pronounced when asymmetry is present—i.e., when members of one religion constitute a distinct minority within a society dominated by another faith. Such circumstances create a favorable environment for the emergence and growth of terrorist organizations, particularly those that rely on religious rhetoric.

They also increase the likelihood of gaining support from the broader community of co-religionists within which such groups operate. These conditions make it more difficult for counter-terrorism agencies to recruit informants from the affected communities, thereby limiting their ability to gain internal insights and ultimately hindering efforts to detect and prevent planned attacks.

In communities with a uniform religious structure, the mechanism of perceived threat to religious identity can also be observed. However, the catalyst in such cases differs from the one previously discussed. This mechanism arises when a religious community—despite internal homogeneity—perceives itself as globally endangered, for instance due to its smaller population in comparison with followers of other religions, or due to socio-economic disadvantage in the broader context.

In order for this perception to emerge, the community must be convinced of the unfavorable global situation faced by adherents of its faith, a group to which it also belongs (Orav, 2015). Therefore, in communities with religious homogeneity, the mechanism of fearing a threat to religious identity does not emerge spontaneously, as it does in diverse societies. In this case, the religious determinant becomes significant only when it is correlated with external stimuli—such as the influence of religious authorities and/or state institutions, particularly in the context of theocratic regimes like Iran.

When such institutions disseminate carefully framed messages to the population—emphasizing perceived threats and instilling fear—they can activate defensive reactions. These reactions may manifest as the recruitment of individuals into terrorist organizations that use religion as a pretext for carrying out attacks, and more broadly, as societal support for such activities. Such a dynamic does not foster

cooperation between the population and counter-terrorism structures, and this lack of cooperation directly reduces the effectiveness of efforts to prevent terrorism.

Another religious factor that hinders counter-terrorism efforts—and influences the strength of the two previously discussed religious determinants—is the percentage of believers within a given society. It is also important whether these determinants are correlated with cultural conditions that place religion at the center of societal consciousness. An additional amplifying element is the social determinant associated with the role and status of religious leaders within the community.

When analyzing religious factors that negatively affect the fight against terrorism, it is crucial not to overlook a fundamental fact: nearly all religions—including the major monotheistic faiths—forbid the use of violence and advocate for the cultivation of positive attitudes toward both members of the same faith and those of other beliefs.

A central tenet in most religions is the pursuit of good in the broadest sense, which is rewarded differently depending on the specific tradition—whether through eternal life, reincarnation into better conditions, and so on. For this reason, religion cannot be regarded as inherently promoting violence—let alone terrorist attacks that often result in death and suffering for many, frequently innocent, individuals.

In their authentic form, religions have a highly positive influence on their adherents, restraining innate human tendencies toward violence and encouraging an ethical worldview that transcends self-interest. Thus, when referring to religious factors as a challenge in the fight against terrorism, one must not implicate faiths themselves in their genuine form.

The real issue lies in false interpretations—often deliberately distorted—that invert the core values of a given religion in order to justify actions that contradict its teachings (Orav, 2015; Maysun, 2023; Aliyev, 2002). In such cases, what emerges is not religion, but a form of ideology that exploits religious language and symbols to motivate followers—not toward authentic practice, but toward a modified version that frequently constitutes a direct contradiction of the original message.

Therefore, in the context of this discussion, the focus should be less on religion itself and more on the nature of its transmitters—namely, priests and individuals who serve similar functions.

This group may play a role in distorting religious teachings (Czapnik and Baranowski, 2016). Their influence is particularly evident in narratives promoting religiously motivated violence or justifying extremism under the guise of collective interest (Izak, 2015; OSCE, 2018).

Equally important is the correlation of religious factors with other determinants

previously addressed in this article—for example, cultural traits such as a collectivist orientation, the central or peripheral role of religion in a given culture, or the degree of social acceptance for violence.

Relevant social factors include the favorable or unfavorable position of a given religious group within local, regional, or global societal structures. In conclusion, unlike social and cultural determinants, which may independently hinder counter-terrorism efforts, religious factors tend to become significant primarily when they are correlated with other variables discussed earlier.

5. Conclusion

The analyses presented in this article, including research findings, confirm that despite the public opinion's focus on acts of terrorism—especially those marked by extreme brutality—countering such attacks requires a comprehensive understanding of terrorism as a phenomenon. This proves that effective preventive actions must begin at the earliest possible stages of preparation. At that point, effectiveness significantly increases.

Therefore, key importance must be attributed to those conditions which, at this initial phase, hinder or even prevent successful counter-terrorism operations. As evidenced by the facts discussed herein, one crucial element during the early stage of terrorist activity is the degree to which counter-terrorism agencies and structures can cooperate with the communities in which terrorist organizations or individual perpetrators operate. Positive perceptions of terrorism within the surrounding society facilitate the activities of such organizations by enhancing recruitment capabilities and allowing them to conceal their operations until the attack is executed.

These circumstances also improve the organizational efficiency of terrorist groups—preparatory actions for attacks can be executed more swiftly and effectively if the group does not need to devote significant effort to avoiding detection or denunciation by the surrounding population. In some cases, the community may even provide direct assistance, for instance by relaying false information to counter-terrorism units.

Therefore, identifying the main factors contributing to the failure of efforts to thwart terrorist attacks requires recognizing which conditions increase community support for such actions. The analysis shows that there are numerous contributing factors from the social, cultural, and religious spheres. A significant conclusion drawn from this article is that it is not possible to pinpoint a single dominant determinant—or even one category of determinants—that decisively influences the emergence or support of terrorism.

The induction of support for terrorist attacks within a given community—something not naturally occurring—results from the simultaneous influence of at least several

determinants, usually from two or more of the three aforementioned spheres. For instance, the mere presence of multiple religious groups within a society is not enough to generate this effect.

A correlation is needed with a social factor—such as one religious group occupying a clearly disadvantaged position relative to others within a local, regional, or global context. Additionally, a cultural factor must be present—for example, a culture that prioritizes collective over individual values or that fosters a governance model distant from, and minimally accountable to, the people it governs. This is only one example of a possible configuration of such determinants, which on their own may have little impact but, when combined, often produce communities that support terrorism.

For this reason, when analyzing modern acts of terrorism through the lens of factors that hinder—or even prevent—prevention efforts, primary attention should be paid to the human environment in which terrorist organizations operate. This includes studying the community through the social, cultural, and religious lenses presented in the article, with the understanding that no single factor is decisive; it is their accumulation that creates the conditions for communities to support, or even aid, terrorist activities.

These findings lead to the conclusion that the initial research hypothesis has been positively verified.

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