

Domestic Terrorism

In the last five years, far-right terrorism has been on the rise. While other forms of terrorism remain predominant internationally, on the domestic level the surge of far-right political violence represents a worrying trend. Political instability as well as the polarisation of society produced a fertile ground for domestic terrorism in the West. Nevertheless, 96% of deaths from terrorism in 2019 occurred in countries at war, highlighting the strong connection between terrorism and ongoing conflict.

(Definitions sorted by alphabetical order)

Black Supremacy: the belief that Black people are superior to people of other ethnicities.ⁱ

Domestic Terrorism: violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that occur primarily within U.S. territory.ⁱⁱ

Far-left Terrorism: terrorism that involves the use or threat of violence by sub-national or non-state entities opposing capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism; pursue environmental or animal rights issues; espouse pro-communist or pro-socialist beliefs; or support a decentralized social and political system such as anarchism.ⁱⁱⁱ

Far-right Terrorism: defined as a specific ideology characterized by ‘anti-democratic opposition towards equality’. Right-wing extremism is often associated with antisemitism, racism, xenophobia, exclusionary nationalism, authoritarianism, and conspiracy theories. These features produce a set of “enemies”, which are seen as a threat against the survival of the nation, the culture, or the race. The most common enemies and targets of violence are immigrants, ethnic and religious minorities, anti-racists, anti-fascists, and left-wing politicians.^{iv}

Ideological Mysogyny: terrorist activity driven by the belief that men should be able to restrict the behavior of women.^v

International Terrorism: terrorism that goes beyond national boundaries in terms of the methods used, the people that are targeted or the places from which the terrorists operate.^{vi}

Islamic Extremism: Islamic thought that states that all ideologies other than Islam, whether associated with the West (capitalism) or the East (communism or socialism) have failed and have demonstrated their bankruptcy.^{vii} **Islamic Deviant:** preferred definition by Muslims.^{viii}

Terrorism: premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents.^{ix}

White Supremacy: the belief that White people are superior to people of other ethnicities.^x





Domestic Terrorism in the United States: Statistics



- ❖ In 2020, the number of domestic terrorist attacks and plots increased to its highest level since 1994. Across all perpetrator ideologies, there were **110 domestic terrorist attacks and plots in 2020** — an increase of 45 incidents since 2019.^{xi}
- ❖ In its Homeland Threat Assessment released in October 2020, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security concluded that “racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists — specifically white supremacist extremists (WSEs) — will remain the most persistent and lethal threat in the Homeland.”^{xii}
- ❖ White supremacists and other like-minded extremists conducted **67% of terrorist plots and attacks** in the United States in 2020.^{xiii}
- ❖ Right Wing extremists are far better armed than Islamist Deviants: Second Amendment grants them access to guns, and gun culture.^{xiv}
- ❖ In the first half of 2020, far-right terrorists committed 67% of domestic terrorist attacks, far-left terrorists committed 20%, and extremists with other motivations and Salafi-jihadists each committed 7%.^{xv}
- ❖ The United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) found a **320% rise in terrorist attacks by groups or individuals affiliated with far-right extremism over the last five years**.^{xvi}
- ❖ In 2019, North America had the largest regional percentage increase in economic impact of terrorism, **increasing by 44.9% from the previous year**, owing largely to an increase in domestic terrorism.^{xvii}
- ❖ In 2019, there were **53 terrorist attacks** recorded in the United States, resulting in 39 deaths from terrorism. Of those 39 deaths, **34 were attributed to far-right extremists**, reflecting the growing prominence of politically motivated terrorism in the US, and far-right terrorism specifically. By contrast, religiously motivated terrorism continued to fall, with four deaths attributed to Islamic extremists in 2019.^{xviii}
- ❖ In the West, there has been a recent increase in the frequency and intensity of far-right terrorism. In 2019, multiple mass casualty far-right attacks were recorded, including the Christchurch Mosque shootings in New Zealand, which killed 51 people.^{xix}
- ❖ Far-right terrorist incidents **have increased 250 % over the past five years**.^{xx}
- ❖ While the U. S. department of state has defined terrorism as “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience”, there is no federal criminal offense designated as domestic terrorism.^{xxi}



Visualizing the Data: U. S. Domestic Terrorism Graphs

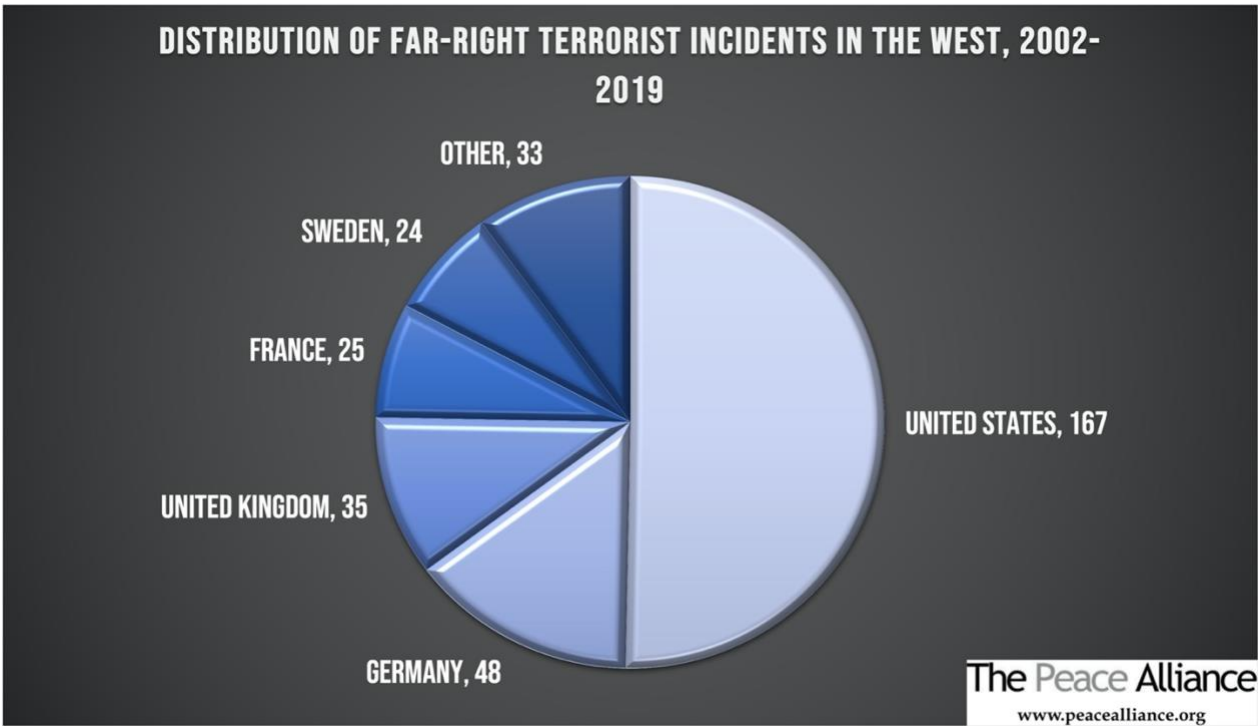


TABLE 1: compiled by author with data accessed at: <https://visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf>

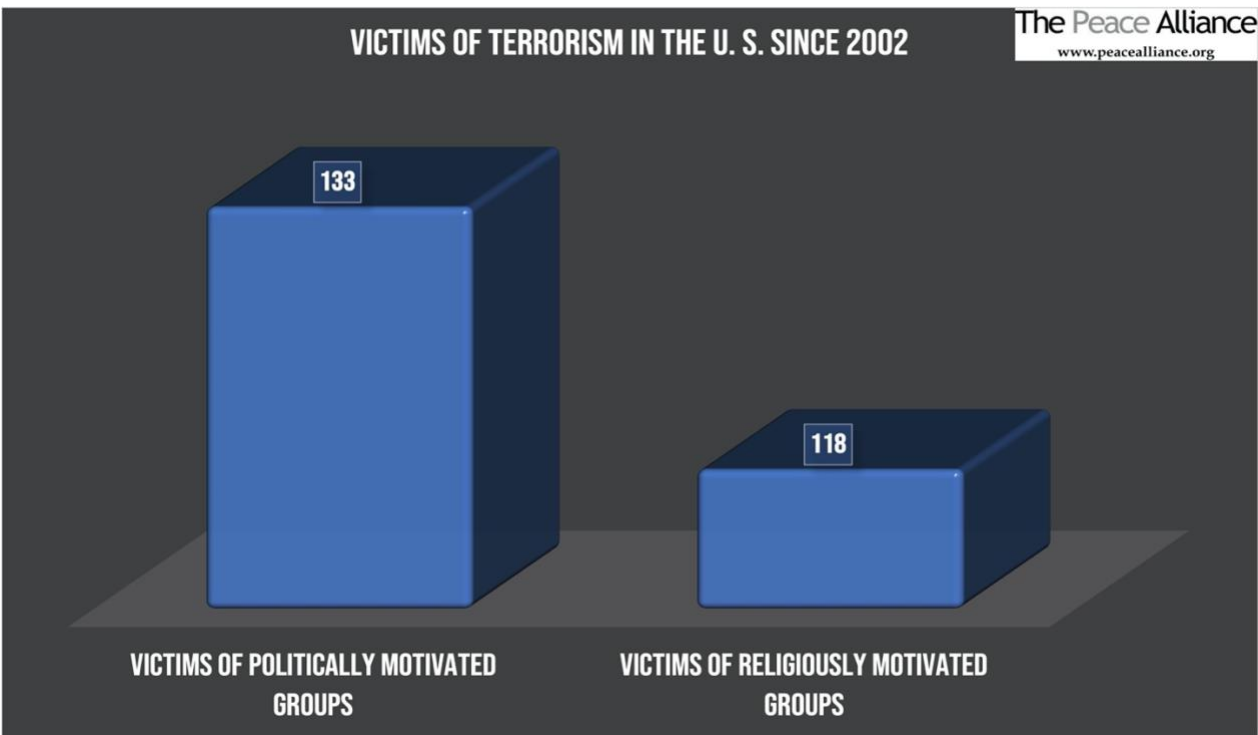


TABLE 2: compiled by author with data accessed at: <https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/terrorism-america-18-years-after-911/what-is-the-threat-to-the-united-states/> / <https://www.start.umd.edu/research-projects/terrorism-and-extremist-violence-united-states-tevus-databa>

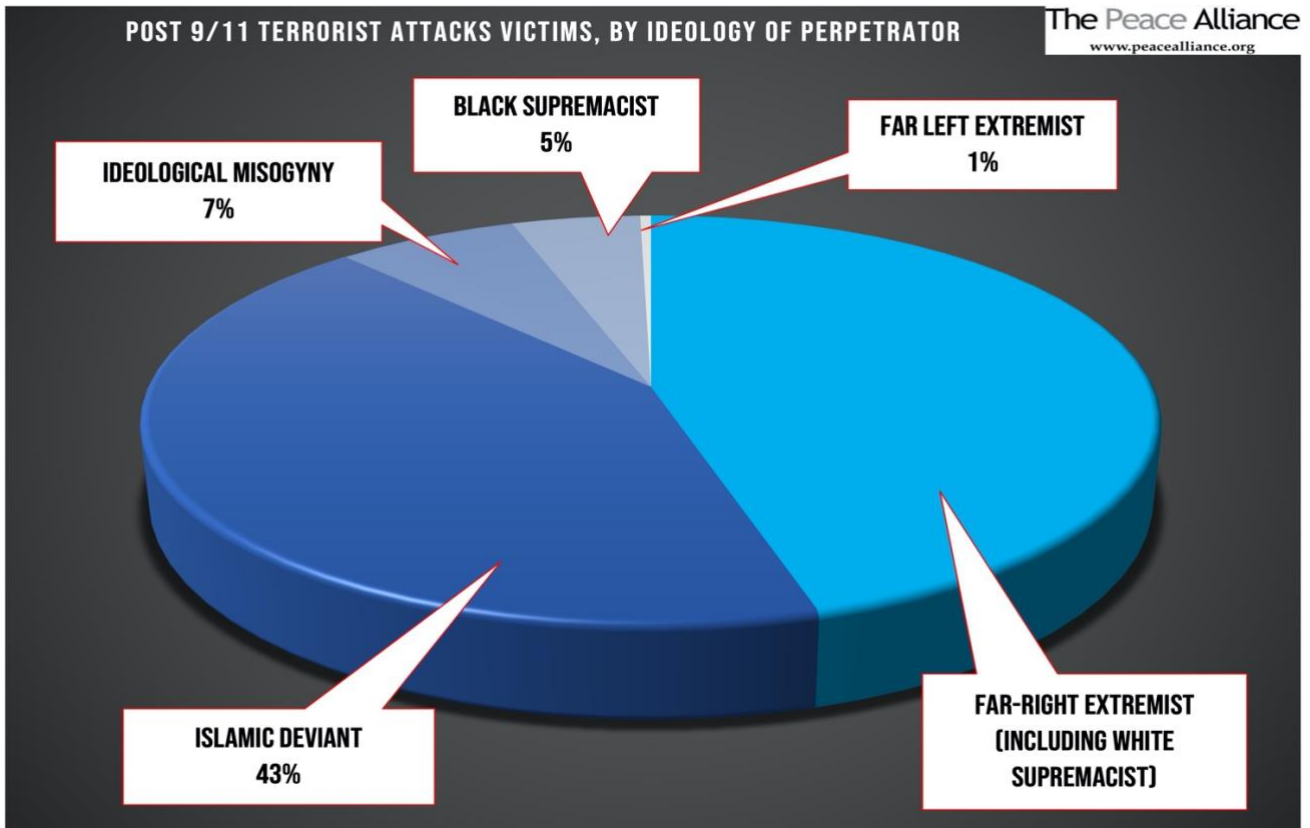


TABLE 3: compiled by author with data accessed at: <https://www.start.umd.edu/research-projects/terrorism-and-extremist-violence-united-states-tevus-database>

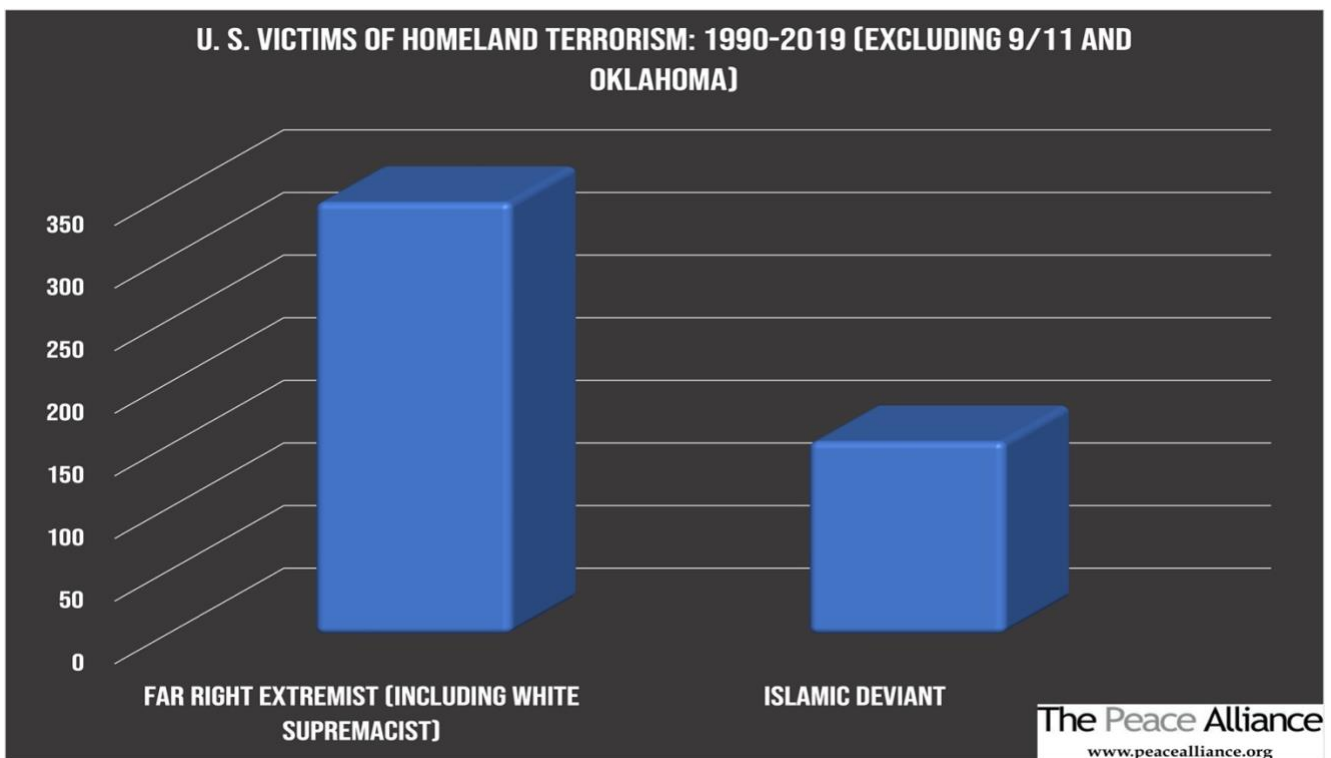


TABLE 4: compiled by author based on data accessed at: <https://www.start.umd.edu/research-projects/terrorism-and-extremist-violence-united-states-tevus-database>

NUMBER OF KILLED IN TERRORIST ATTACKS IN THE U.S., POST 9/11 ERA

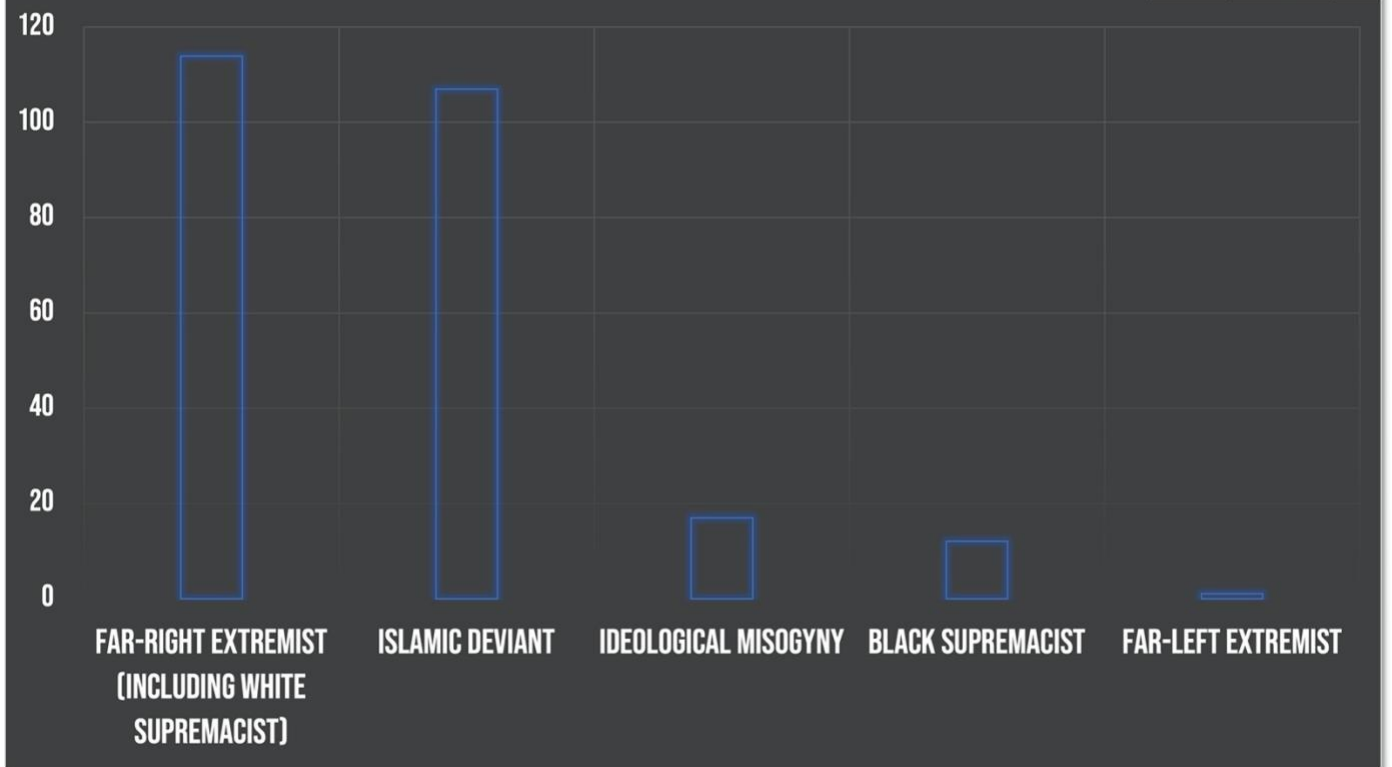


TABLE 5: compiled by author based on data accessed at: <https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/terrorism-america-18-years-after-911/what-is-the-threat-to-the-united-states/> / <https://www.start.umd.edu/research-projects/terrorism-and-extremist-violence-united-states-tevus-database>

- ❖ Because of the fall in the intensity of conflict in the Middle East, the total number of deaths from terrorism declined for the fifth consecutive year since 2014.^{xxii}
- ❖ Terrorism in the West makes up a small fraction of total terrorism in the world. Between 2002 and 2019 there were **236,422 deaths from terrorism globally**. Of these, **1,215 occurred in the West, or just 0.51% of the total**.^{xxiii}
- ❖ **99% of all deaths resulted from terrorism took place in countries in conflict** or with significantly high levels of political terror (such as extrajudicial killings, torture, and imprisonment without trial). In 2018, more than half of all deaths resulting terrorism occurred in Afghanistan and Nigeria.^{xxiv}
- ❖ Nine of the ten countries with the highest economic impact of terrorism suffer from ongoing conflict.
- ❖ The global economic impact of terrorism was estimated to be **US\$26.4 billion** in 2019.^{xxv}
- ❖ COVID-19 appears to have exacerbated the negative trajectory of terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa, which was on a concerning path towards becoming an increasingly central locus of global terrorism in the wake of the decline of ISIS' territorial 'Caliphate' in the Levant. The 2020 Global terrorism Index points to 7 of the 10 countries with the largest increase in terrorism being in this region, with concerns raised about the Sahel.^{xxvi}

Visualizing the Data: Worldwide Terrorism Stats

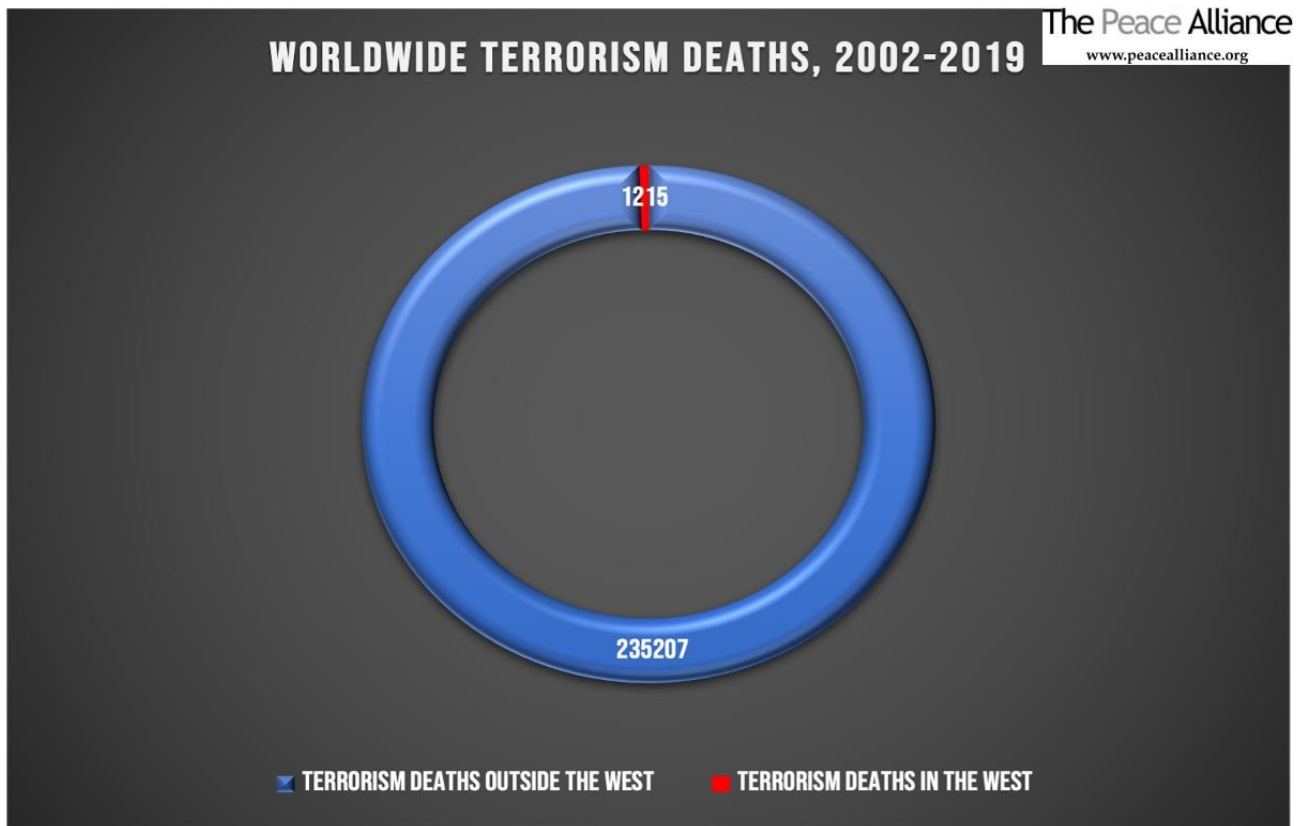


TABLE 6: compiled by author based on data accessed at: <https://visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf>

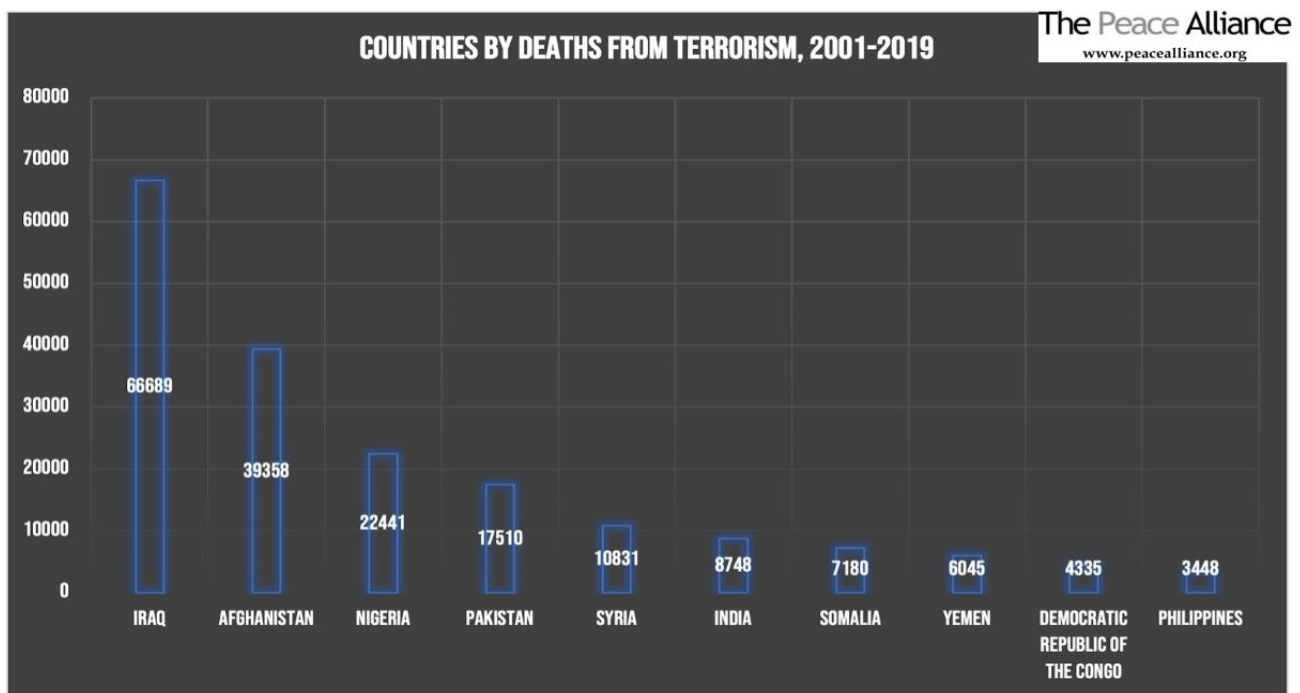


TABLE 7: compiled by author based on data accessed at: <https://visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf>

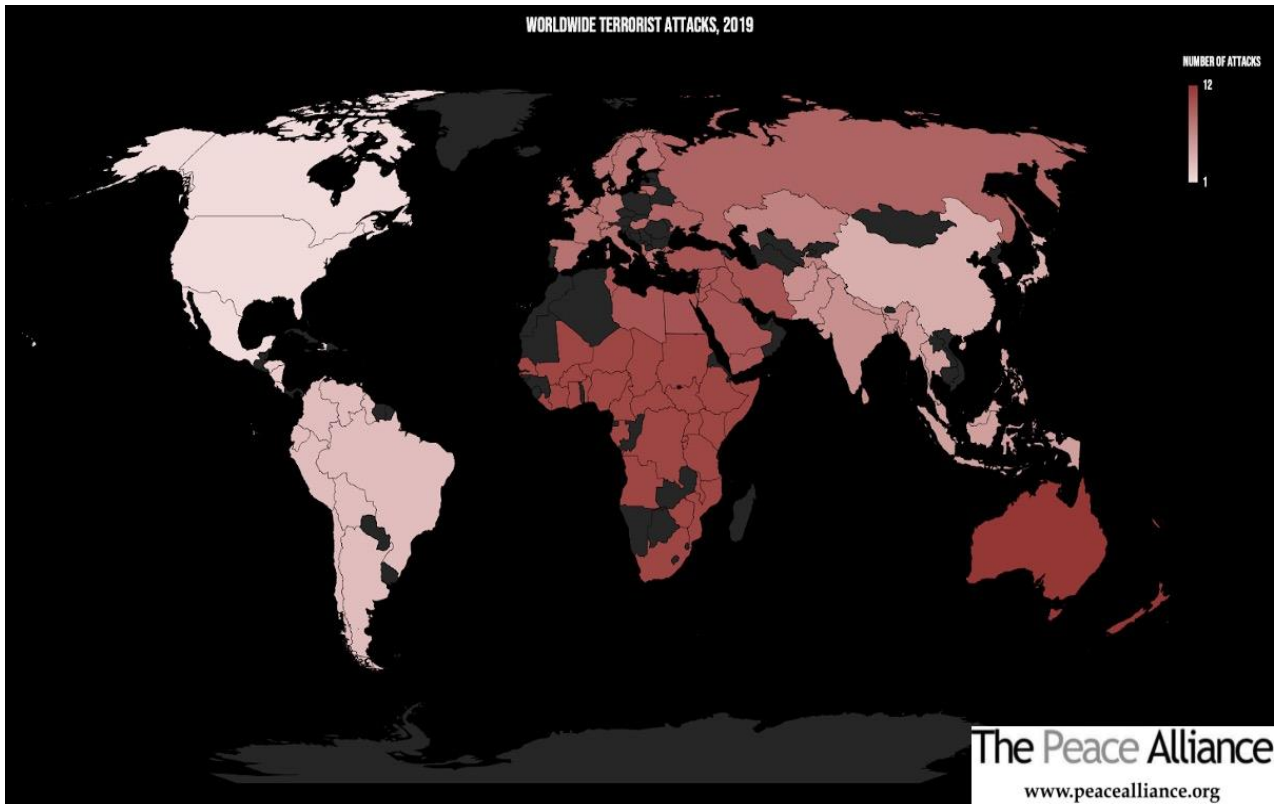


TABLE 8: compiled by author based on data accessed at: <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/access/>

Endnotes

- ⁱ Sellers, Allison Paige (2015). "The 'Black Man's Bible': The Holy Piby, Garveyism, and Black Supremacy in the Interwar Years". *Journal of Africana Religions*. 3 (3)
- ⁱⁱ 18 U.S. Code § 2331
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/escalating-terrorism-problem-united-states>
- ^{iv} <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/explainer-far-right-terrorism-in-the-west/>
- ^v petterson, A. and sutton, r. M. (2017) "Sexist Ideology and Endorsement of Men's Control Over Women's Decisions in Reproductive Health". *Psychology of women quarterly*, vol. 42, issue 2
- ^{vi} <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/international-terrorism>
- ^{vii} Cook, David (2015). *Understanding Jihad*. University of California Press. p. 103
- ^{viii} <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30411519>
- ^{ix} U.S. Code Title 22, Ch.38, Para. 2656f(d)
- ^x [Brody, Richard](#) (April 9, 2021). [""Exterminate All the Brutes," Reviewed: A Vast, Agonizing History of White Supremacy". *The New Yorker*](#).
- ^{xi} Jones, S. G., Doxsee, C., Hwang, G. and Thompson, J. "The Military, Police, and the Rise of Terrorism in the United States". CSIS Briefs, April 12 2021. Accessed at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/military-police-and-rise-terrorism-united-states>
- ^{xii} U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Threat Assessment (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, October 2020), 18, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2020_10_06_homeland-threat-assessment.pdf. Emphasis added
- ^{xiii} Jones, S. G., Doxsee, Harrington, N., C., Hwang, G. and Suber, J. "The War Comes Home. The Evolution of Domestic Terrorism in the United States". CSIS Briefs, October 22 2020. Accessed at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/war-comes-home-evolution-domestic-terrorism-united-states>
- ^{xiv} <https://www.rand.org/blog/2021/02/domestic-violent-extremists-will-be-harder-to-combat.html>
- ^{xv} Jones, S. G., Doxsee, Harrington, N., C., Hwang, G. and Suber, J. "The War Comes Home. The Evolution of Domestic Terrorism in the United States". CSIS Briefs, October 22 2020. Accessed at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/war-comes-home-evolution-domestic-terrorism-united-states>
- ^{xvi} CTED Trends Alert, "Member States Concerned By The Growing and Increasingly Transnational Threat of Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism." April 2020, accessed at: https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CTED_Trends_Alert_Extreme_Right-Wing_Terrorism.pdf
- ^{xvii} GTI 2020
- ^{xviii} Global Terrorism Index 2020, <https://visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf>
- ^{xix} Ibid.
- ^{xx} Ibid.
- ^{xxi} Gary M. Jackson, *Predicting Malicious Behavior: Tools and Techniques for Ensuring Global Security* (John Wiley & Sons, 2012)
- ^{xxii} GTI 2020
- ^{xxiii} Ibid.
- ^{xxiv} <https://www.un.org/en/un75/new-era-conflict-and-violence>
- ^{xxv} GTI 2020
- ^{xxvi} Milo Comerford, "How have terrorist organisations responded to COVID-19?" *Expert Contributions to GTI 2020*.