

## **The Linkages of Terrorism, Politics, and Social Dynamics: A Comprehensive Analysis Across Borders and Contexts**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

This research attempts to explore the complexity of the interactions between terrorism, politics, and social dynamics in an increasingly interconnected world. In a global context filled with the threat of terrorism, there is an urgent need to understand the varying definitions of terrorism that are shaped by different political and ideological perspectives. The methodological approach used in this study is a qualitative descriptive analysis. This research highlights that terrorism is not only an act of violence but also a social construct influenced by historical, cultural, and power factors. Through an analysis of the politicization of terrorism, this study demonstrates how terrorism is closely related to political leadership, thereby emphasizing that the relationship between politics and terrorism is a mutually influencing cyclical interaction. This study also discusses the challenges faced in countering terrorism related to existing policies and emphasizes the need for a multifaceted approach and a deeper contextual understanding. The conclusion of this analysis emphasizes that a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between terrorism and political dynamics is crucial for formulating adaptive and effective counter-terrorism policies.

Keywords: Terrorism, Politics, Counter-terrorism, Political Leadership, Social Dynamics

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In an increasingly interconnected world, the phenomenon of terrorism is one of the most pressing challenges for national and global security. In several articles in online media, authorities in a number of countries have stated the increasing dangers related to terrorism, which has had an impact on raising the level of terror threats in their respective countries (Zorlu, 2024; Ayad, 2024; Haghani & Spaaij, 2024).

However, defining terrorism is not simple because the term contains many connotations shaped by various perspectives, including cultural, ideological, and political viewpoints. As a result, individuals, organizations, and governments may adopt different definitions that reflect their interests and life experiences. This underscores the importance of exploring the concept of terrorism and its broad implications, as it can be seen through several contexts such as a tactic used by marginalized groups, a tool employed by state actors to advance their agendas, or a manifestation of deeper *sosial-politik* tensions.

The inherent complexity in defining terrorism makes it clear that the term is *dibangun secara politik* (politically constructed), influenced by various ideological conflicts and interpretations that

reflect disputes within a wider society, rather than being limited to a single ideology (Yahya, t.t.). In addition, this exploration of the diverse field of terrorism is further complicated by the lack of consensus among experts on its definition, highlighting the need to understand terrorism not only as a phenomenon but as a construct closely intertwined with historical contexts, cultural narratives, and power dynamics. As a result, discussions about the nexus between politics and terrorism are often complex and controversial, revealing just how intricate this important global issue is.

The discourse around terrorism and its definition includes a series of ideological perspectives that change according to different political and cultural contexts, one of which is portrayed through the contrasting viewpoints of members of al-Qaeda and the American Sons of Liberty (Yahya, t.t.). This nuanced understanding reinforces the idea that terrorism is not an inherent component of any ideology or religion. Instead, terrorism emerges as a politically constructed phenomenon shaped by the complex interaction between ideological, economic, and geopolitical conflicts.

Political leaders often use the term "terrorism" to classify conflicts based on their interests, impacting perceptions and treatment of certain groups. One example is the action taken by the Indonesian government in 2021 to categorize the National Army for the Liberation of Papua-Free Papua Organization (TNPP-OPM) as a terrorist organization, which was previously considered a separatist group and then categorized as a criminal group. According to Yunanto and Damayanti (2024), this labeling can create an often confusing subjective influence and indicate the government's plans to shift from military action to law enforcement. By changing the designation of TNPP-OPM from criminal or separatist to *kelompok teroris*, the government seeks to fulfill both international and national security and political goals. This politicization of terrorism complicates international cooperation and responses, as the designation of a terrorist organization can reflect a country's subjective interpretation of legitimacy and justice within the global order.

In addition, political narratives and state policies have a great influence on shaping public perception. For example, there is evidence that framing terrorism narratives often leads to the marginalization of Muslim communities, reinforcing stereotypes that associate Islam with violence (Yuspin et al., 2020).

This paradigm highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive analysis of the *struktur sosial-politik* that contribute to the rise of terrorism. This research aims to explore the relationship between terrorism and political dynamics, with a focus on social impact and community responses. First, it seeks a better understanding of how political structures and decisions affect the emergence and escalation of extremist ideologies. Then, policymakers, academics, and the general public must realize that terrorism does not thrive in isolation but is closely linked to local, national, and international political contexts, which also present challenges to counter-terrorism measures. Furthermore, how the tensions between politics, societal reactions, and terrorism interact in the present day constitutes the main questions of this study.

By conducting this exploration, we seek not only to understand terrorism as a complex phenomenon but also as a social construct that develops amidst interconnected historical, economic, and political dynamics. This understanding is important for designing and implementing policies with a more adaptive and effective approach in addressing the growing challenges of terrorism.

The globalization of terrorism also adds a transnational dimension that increases the complexity of political responses and social dynamics. There is an urgent need to conduct an in-depth analysis of how transnational issues such as economic disparities and technological advances affect forms of terrorism and the associated political landscape. This is because current literature

often does not address the extent to which this global interconnectedness affects terrorist movements as well as the political frameworks used by states to deal with them.

The relationship between terrorism, politics, and societal dynamics is an area that has been underexplored in academic discourse, particularly related to local responses to terrorism that align with the broader political framework. Although research has been conducted to understand terrorism from various perspectives, there are still significant gaps in studies that link community responses to political complexity both at local and cross-border levels. This gap hinders our understanding of how local communities adapt to and respond to the threat of terrorism, which often results in policies that are neither integrated nor effective in addressing root causes. By building these connections, we can develop a deeper understanding of community resilience and identify the diverse political implications of terrorism, which can ultimately contribute to better counterterrorism strategies.

Previous studies have provided valuable insights into the relationship between politics and the definition of terrorism, but from limited perspectives. Musa (2022) analyzed how Middle Eastern states use the narrative of "terrorism" to suppress political opposition, revealing that terrorist labeling is often influenced by ideological and power factors rather than objective criminal actions. However, this study lacks exploration of how civil society responds to such narratives in everyday life. Meanwhile, Idris and Setiawan (2023) examined the impact of media framing on the stigma toward Muslim communities following terror incidents, finding that negative framing reinforces stereotypes and social isolation. Nevertheless, this study did not deeply address the political mechanisms behind labeling policies and their implications for the formulation of effective counter-terrorism strategies.

The purpose of this research is to explore how political labeling and media framing shape local community perceptions of terrorism and their responses to counter-terrorism strategies. Its benefits include supporting evidence-based policymaking that is more inclusive and effective in conflict areas, as well as contributing theoretically to the literature on terrorism as a socio-political construct.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

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In this analysis, a comprehensive conceptual framework was created to explore the intricate interactions between terrorism, politics, and societal dynamics. The framework integrates three important concepts: political opportunity structures, transnational networks, and counterterrorism measures.

### **Political Opportunity Structure**

This framework of thought serves to understand how terrorism can develop in certain contexts. As expressed by Kapetanovic et al. (2024), the dynamics in the structure of situations and opportunities suggest that vulnerabilities in governance can be exploited by organized crime groups, including in the context of terrorism. Therefore, the lack of institutional control in a region is an important factor that affects the capacity of terrorist organizations to expand their influence.

Kapetanovic et al. (2024) cite Schoenmakers who highlight that emergent positions emphasize situational structures and opportunities, where organized crime groups strategically exploit vulnerabilities in governance. This framework states that certain regions may have inherent weaknesses such as a lack of government authority or a large number of criminal opportunities that would facilitate the expansion of organized crime, which is also true of terrorism.

The criminal environment in which these groups operate often makes them central to the strategic actions they undertake. Thus, in the context of terrorism, the presence or absence of

institutional control and social ties significantly affects the capacity of terrorist organizations to establish themselves in new territories.

### **Transnational Network**

Transnational networks refer to the linkages between radical movements in different countries and their impact on acts of terror at the local level. The concept of transnational networks further explains the dynamics of terrorism where, according to Syauqillah & Faton (2019), it shows that transnational terror networks not only motivate acts of terror, but also strengthen the capabilities of local groups by taking advantage of global crises. This linkage makes the understanding of terrorism inseparable from the international context. This interconnectedness underscores the urgency of considering how radical movements respond to international crises, which shows a clear link between global dynamics and local terrorism.

### **Counter-Terrorism Measures**

As the threat of terrorism changes over time, especially since the September 11 attacks, many countries, including Indonesia, have implemented measures to counter it. After 9/11, there was a major shift in international policy where the US led the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and built a coalition to fight terrorism (Yahya, t.t.; Setiadi, 2005). This global trend is one of the reasons Indonesia passed an anti-terrorism law and established the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) and special forces such as Densus 88 as part of national efforts to counter terrorism (Lavinia, 2021).

These conceptual frameworks place analysis in a complex network of interactions between political opportunity structures, transnational networks, and counterterrorism measures. This makes it possible to see how terrorism is changing in various geopolitical settings. Looking at it from this point of view, it can be seen in various ways how these ideas are interconnected to understand terrorism at the local and global levels.

### **Theory**

The preparation of this paper uses a number of theories that are expected to make the analysis stronger. The first is the use of attribution theory and politically motivated reasoning discussed by Haner et al. (2022) to explore how individuals and groups interpret an event through biased viewpoints formed by their political beliefs. Then, this paper also combines rational choice theory and routine activity theory to analyze the decision-making process and the conditions under which individuals take certain actions based on opportunities and incentives.

These two key concepts are fundamental to understanding criminal behavior where according to Prasetya & Syauqillah (2020), the essence of rational choice theory lies in the premise that individuals engage in criminal activities with a clear purpose, showing a form of rationality in their decision-making process. Criminals are not solely driven by impulse and instead they assess the potential costs and benefits associated with their actions. This calculated approach suggests that they consider the risk of arrest and punishment against the expected rewards of their criminal acts. This helps them achieve their goals.

Another complementary perspective is the theory of routine activities, which states that the opportunity to commit crimes is intrinsically intertwined in daily life (Prasetya & Syauqillah, 2020). Both motivated perpetrators and opportunities to commit crimes are uniformly distributed across time and space. This perspective highlights that certain crimes are closely related to specific target locations and individual habitual travel patterns. The likelihood of a criminal act being

committed is influenced by a variety of factors, including the timing, characteristics of the potential target, and the situational context surrounding the target. As a result, understanding criminal behavior requires an understanding of how routine activities and environmental contexts meet to create opportunities for crime. It underscores the dynamic interplay between the perpetrator's motivation and situational factors.

Furthermore, the use of strategic intelligence theory reviewed by Costazolanitova et al. (2023) is needed in providing an important perspective to examine how law enforcement agencies use intelligence to address complex crime problems, particularly those related to the interaction of terrorism, political factors, and societal change. highlighting the need for law enforcement to understand the unique criminal landscape and the obstacles they face when dealing with complex issues such as terrorism. When there is a gap between intelligence evaluation and real-world crime situations, it can hamper efforts to combat terrorism. Adopting a strategic intelligence framework allows relevant agencies to better analyze and anticipate criminal activity. By incorporating a deeper understanding of context into their intelligence work, law enforcement can strengthen their proactive approach to countering threats such as international organized crime.

Then, the application of securitization theory is used to further contextualize the findings in this study through understanding how an issue is framed as a security threat and the implications of that framing on policy responses (Subandi dkk., 2024a ;Yunanto & Damayanti, 2024).

Finally, by inserting a theoretical perspective related to transnationalism and social movements. Transnationalism in the context of social movements shows how global networks, ideologies, and conflicts can change local situations (Syauqillah & Faton, 2019).

The methodological approach used in this study is a qualitative descriptive analysis to capture and understand perspectives to then summarize and provide an overview of the data obtained from online media and the study of a number of literatures. The data analysis was also complemented by comparative analysis related to research in a number of regions, especially those that focused on the contrasting dynamics that occurred between the Asian and American regions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

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### **Global Dynamics related to Terrorism and Politics**

Terrorism, politics, and social issues affect each other in complex and very different ways in different places and situations so understanding these dynamics is very important because it shows how terrorism is changing and spreading in different places. This complex phenomenon related to terrorism, particularly in relation to politics, often shapes definitions and responses to it. In this case, a comprehensive understanding of terrorism must strive to be free from political biases even though as the definition develops, it inherently invites political actors into this discourse (Pabyantara S.M. et al., 2020).

This intersection between politics and terrorism is important, as these actors seek to frame the narrative around terrorism in a way that gains support or legitimizes their agenda. As stated by Schmidt and Jongman (1988) in Pabyantara S.M. et al. (2020), there are at least 109 definitions of terrorism, which often emphasize elements such as violence, fear, and political agendas. Or Costazolanitova et al. (2023) who in their research show that terrorism is based on spreading fear, threatening basic human values, and disturbing the peace of society.

Academics have varying opinions on how to approach the issue, with some proposing a universal, value-free definition of terrorism, which can transcend political motivations, while others emphasize the importance of considering the political context in which terrorism occurs,

given that terrorism is often the result of conflicting ideological, economic, or political systems (Yahya, t.t.).

Thus, acts of terror that have no political purpose will be difficult to accept as part of the definition of terrorism itself and are more likely to be considered criminal crimes. The ongoing debate over this term demonstrates the complexity of understanding terrorism influenced by a variety of historical perspectives and contexts, which ultimately makes it a highly political phenomenon.

In understanding the phenomenon of terrorism, it is also important to raise the broader theme of extremist violence where Alam et al. (2020) stated that, as with the term terrorism, there are various formulations related to violent extremism. In this regard, various examples are put forward such as UNODC which has compiled definitions of violent extremism used by governments in various countries and international organizations which broadly have similarities with the definition of the FBI in the United States which states that violent extremism is defined as "support or justification for violent acts to achieve political, ideological, religious, social goals, or economy".

From these definitions, it can be concluded that violent extremism encompasses a broader phenomenon than terrorism itself. This suggests that violent acts include not only physical violence, but also include activities that support the use of violence, such as hate speech aimed at encouraging violent action. Academics refer to the process that leads to violent extremism as radicalization, which is a complex, multi-faceted, and dynamic process that can span multiple paths to extremism.

Alam et al. (2020) said that there are three main factors that have a role in giving rise to extreme violence, including structural, accelerator, and trigger. According to him, structural factors are related to basic parts of people's lives. Accelerator factors are specific events or changes that can increase the beliefs, resources, and actions of violent extremists while trigger factors refer to events that make violence more likely. If a table is created, here are some examples of each factor:

**Table 1. Factors Leading to Extreme Violence**

<b>Structural</b>	<b>Accelerators</b>	<b>Triggers</b>
Poverty	Increasing resources of extremist violent groups	Terrorist attacks and violent events occurring in other countries
Inequality	Easy access to weaponry	Arrest of terrorists
Marginalization	Advancements in communication and information technology	Regularly occurring acts of violence
Corruption	Existence of safe spaces that support and protect violent extremist groups	Political events such as elections and protests
Weak law enforcement	Spread of hate speech based on religious teachings	N/A
Discrimination	Formation of narratives that justify violence to bring about social and political change	N/A
Declining trust in state institutions	N/A	N/A
Prolonged conflict	N/A	N/A
Low literacy rate	N/A	N/A
Fundamental social and demographic changes	N/A	N/A

The fact that political violence is often linked to terrorism reflects the depth of understanding of this problem in the political sphere. Fadhillah & Muhiddin (2020) revealed that terrorism arises due to the interaction of a number of factors, especially economic, political, and ideological. This refers to Shmuel Bar who highlights the three main causes of terrorism which include protracted conflicts such as those on the Israeli-Arab issue, resistance to the cultural colonization of the West that dominates local cultures, and socio-economic factors, including poverty and social injustice. These three factors underscore the complexity of terrorism as a phenomenon that is closely related to global political dynamics. In this context, Fadly & Jenuri (2022) analyze a Jack Ryan television series, which depicts.

The conditions of the Eastern world are plagued by conflict and increasing terrorist activities with one scene showing the attempted assassination of the president by a character in the film motivated by anger against the Western world which is considered cruel related to the war that caused many innocent victims among Muslims. Then, Fadly and Jenuri also emphasized the current public perception that often associates terrorism with the Eastern world and political tensions with the West.

In Indonesia, the emergence of a number of radical Islamic movements today in Indonesia illustrates how societal transformation and the search for identity can push individuals towards extremist ideologies (Ritaudin, 2012). Dissatisfaction with social and political situations such as oppression and exclusion can trigger anger and make society more radical which leads to violence. This also happens in places such as in an authoritarian government (Mattulada, 2014), as happened in Indonesia under the Suharto New Order government, which is considered to discriminate and intimidate Muslims (Ritaudin, 2012; Farchan, 2022).

Suryohadioprojo (1997) in his book has actually highlighted the important role of Islamic-based political movements in the struggle of the Indonesian nation even since the independence period where there was an Islamic Union that had been formed before the national political organization. This is considered not a strange thing because the majority of Indonesian people are Muslims and according to him, the contribution of Muslims themselves is very much from the emergence of the national movement, the proclamation of independence, to the drafting of the 1945 Constitution.

However, along with that, there were also leaders who had a vision to establish an Islamic state, such as Sekarmadji Kartosuwiryo who proclaimed the establishment of the Islamic State of Indonesia (NII) or Darul Islam (DI) on August 7, 1949 (Kristianto, 2018). This movement was initially born as a reaction to the injustice felt by the community during Soekarno's reign and gained support in a number of regions. The erosion of social cohesion, triggered by economic challenges and a lack of political representation, can trigger radical movements that seek to overthrow the established order (Kristianto, 2018).

In this case, these situations make it easier for terrorist groups to recruit new members, thus making individuals and groups vulnerable to extremist propaganda that undermines social stability. As globalization removes geographical boundaries, it is increasingly easier for terrorist groups to gain access to more potential members, thus making terrorism an increasingly transnational threat (Yahya, t.t.). The simplified recruitment process and the widespread spread of radical ideas today are undeniably the central role of internet technology where people, especially young people, can easily connect and join extremist groups around the world through online platforms (Nasrullah, 2012). This digital environment allows for the formation of social networks that can preserve radical beliefs and facilitate recruitment.

Science and technology, which are developing rapidly, are also used by terrorist groups to carry out their other actions, including communication, fundraising, and information collection to determine the target of terrorist attacks, which have the potential to increasingly lead to cyberattacks (Sukoco et al., 2021). These cyberattacks can target vital facilities directly related to public services, the impact of which can be much broader and disrupt a country's systems.

These weaknesses in society can be exacerbated by components in a country's political system, especially the government, whose ineffectiveness is often exploited by terrorist groups (Kapetanovic et al., 2024; Woźnica, 2021). Corruption, for example, creates loopholes in law enforcement so that crimes, including acts of terrorism, can develop more freely. There is empirical evidence that shows that corruption functions as a tool for organized crime to carry out its illicit activities, including through criminal networks connected to political elites and to achieve certain political goals. Badillo & Mijares (2021) said that the politicization of these groups took advantage of this situation by politicizing to rally public support (including in defending and expanding their territory), so that their actions could be seen as legitimate and make the state authority appear weak. This is also true of terrorist groups, often finding safe havens in places with weak governance and support from protection and conflict resolution services that the government cannot provide, then catalyzing the recruitment of new members. The connection between organized crime and terrorism is also evident, where both take advantage of the opportunities that exist in the context of political and economic uncertainty (Varese, 2011).

Under these conditions, terror groups can then seek to establish a form of their own government so that it can be said that their actions are to achieve certain political goals. This kind of relationship is very detrimental and makes people less likely to distrust state institutions and turn to support terrorist activities.

Then, based on the findings of Subandi et al. (2024a), the government's ineffectiveness will also weaken the response to terrorism incidents that may occur in vulnerable areas, thereby creating opportunities for the expansion of organized crime and terrorism. With the ever-changing global political situation uncertain, these groups seek to adapt and develop their strategies, using civil society as a tool to achieve their goals.

Thus, to understand the interaction between political violence, terrorism, and social issues, a comprehensive definition and a deep understanding of the political processes that shape social reality are needed.

### **Political Leadership and Its Role in Terrorism**

The interaction between political violence, terrorism, and social issues creates a complex dynamic in the political process that shapes social reality. As our understanding of political violence evolves, it is important to explore the role of political leadership in strengthening or minimizing terrorism and how political agendas can influence the rise and response to terrorism.

Political leadership often uses terrorism narratives to justify strict security policies, which in many cases stigmatize certain communities (Yuspin et al., 2020), for example, showing how political narratives and state policies can reinforce stereotypes that associate Islam with violence, which in turn leads to the marginalization of Muslim communities.

The context of terrorism in Indonesia itself shows how political ideology can exacerbate extremism where Sinaga et al. (2018), for example, emphasize that political opportunism can be used by certain political entities to exploit nationalist sentiments, which then strengthens extremist groups in challenging the state's narrative of terrorism.



The cognitive processes that occur in terrorism are also worth observing. Attribution theory emphasizes the cognitive processes that people use to infer the causes of behaviors and events, such as attributing internal qualities, such as hatred and crime, to specific groups classified as terrorists, while attributing external factors to other groups, such as socioeconomic conditions. This selective interpretation is evident, for example, in the United States regarding the striking differences between the perception of terrorism associated with groups such as Antifa and the far-right Proud Boys (Haner et al., 2022). Then, the politically motivated reasoning shown by public figures, such as former President Donald Trump, further strengthens this divide along with its contrasting labels, in this case related to Black Lives Matter protesters and the insurrection of the attack on Capitol Hill in 2021, thus underscoring how political partiality can distort interpretations of terrorism. Haner also reviewed the results of a survey that illustrates a different perception of 93% of Democrats viewing the Capitol Hill raid as a threat to democracy, while only 27% of Republicans feel the same. This, can be used as an example of how pre-existing political beliefs shape the perception of terrorism.

In this context, the media has a crucial role in shaping the public's perception of terrorism. Media not only affects our perception of the world, but also conveys various important values and standards (Serdouk, 2021). Gadarian (2010) shows how the media can create a greater atmosphere of fear through the presentation of dramatic and emotional news, which can reinforce the policies taken by political leaders. When citizens feel threatened and seek understanding of disturbing events, they often turn to political leaders and the media for answers, which can then result in significant political influence on a particular policy. Thus, there needs to be a comparative narrative from the opposition that can at least balance the "scary" narrative of political leaders published in the media.

Public perceptions related to terrorism are influenced by the context of the state and the interaction between its actors, whether it includes ideology or political interests, which can then result in differences in the assessment of actions that are considered threatening or not. One example is public perception that is judged with different points of view in some events, such as Israel's invasion and attacks on Palestine or the actions of Al-Qaeda that basically meet the criteria of terrorism materially. In this case, one of them is considered terrorism by some international communities while the other is not, thus indicating the application of double standards. This confirms that the understanding of terrorism is more rooted at the level of ideas and ideas than just on the actions themselves (Kusuma et al., 2019).

In Indonesia, in recent years, for example, El Shidqi & Andriyani (2022) underlined that religious and racial sentiments can be a driving factor for bad behavior, including terrorist acts. This happens through identity politics that show a profound impact on individual behavior. This was especially the case during the 2017 Jakarta Governor election involving Basuki Tjahaja Purnama and Anies Baswedan as Governor candidates and the 2019 Presidential Election involving Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto as presidential candidates. Conditions such as these create challenges in formulating effective counter-terrorism strategies, where identity politics can contribute to divisions in diverse societies such as in Indonesia and the need to implement identity politics in more appropriate places.

Then, the results of the researcher's analysis also show that terrorist groups often take advantage of the political climate to expand their influence. Counterterrorism efforts often have to face the challenges of broader social dynamics. Mukhtar (2024) analyzes how political motivation shapes the government's response to terrorism in Indonesia, showing that terrorist acts such as the

Bali bombings force the state to impose strict anti-terrorism measures, but still have to pay attention to fundamental social issues.

Overall, this review confirms that the relationship between politics and terrorism is a cyclical interaction in which politicians often use the narrative of terrorism to gain support for a particular (often hard) policy, which can then contribute to stigma and alienation of certain communities. Therefore, in order to formulate an effective counter-terrorism strategy, it is important to understand these interconnectedness, so as not to sacrifice democratic values and social cohesion (Bubandt & Molnar, 2014; Badillo & Mijares, 2021).

### **Counter-terrorism Efforts**

In the context of counterterrorism efforts, it is important to understand how to integrate securitization theory in responding to the threat of terrorism. Lavinia (2021) said that there was a difference between the significant steps taken by Indonesia before the September 11, 2001 terror attack and after the attack. In this case, the Indonesian government's view of terrorism has undergone a transformation from understanding acts of terror as a national threat to seeing them as issues related to international networks. Taking this view into account, the government leverages the designation of terrorist groups as a key tool in counterterrorism efforts, which makes it easier for law enforcement officials to process related legal cases (Keenan, 2019). Therefore, if referring to the framework of securitization theory, the issue of terrorism is framed as a threat that requires a special policy response and reflects the way the government interprets the threat according to the evolving social and ideological context. The government seeks to not only address terrorism as a threat, but also understand the socio-political dynamics behind it. For example, the designation and labeling of certain groups as terrorists by the government is intended to influence the domestic and international public and create a stigma that affects public perception of the group (Yunanto & Damayanti, 2024). Given that the issue of terrorism today tends to cross national borders (borderless), the government also recognizes the importance of international cooperation to deal with this threat (Agustin et al., 2023).

The importance of using strategic intelligence theory also arises in the context of counterterrorism, where law enforcement agencies need to leverage intelligence to deal with the complexity of these crimes. From a strategic intelligence perspective, the collection and analysis of information about perpetrators and terror networks is a crucial key element to prevent acts of terror and understand the often diverse backgrounds of perpetrators (Keenan, 2019; Agustin et al., 2023).

Transnational crime poses a significant threat to state sovereignty, requiring a coordinated approach that goes beyond rigid legal frameworks (Subandi et al., 2024a). The connection to politics is that the effectiveness of law enforcement in dealing with these crimes will largely be influenced by the political will and policies of the state, which must adapt to the unique challenges posed by such criminal activities. To achieve a more integrated and effective response, coordination between law enforcement and political policy is critical, particularly in contexts where cognitive attribution to various threats can influence policies taken (Haner et al., 2022). Haner for example mentions that while U.S. right-wing groups are designated as terrorist organizations by the governments of Canada and New Zealand, similar designations in the U.S. are still controversial, revealing the cognitive and motivational biases at play. Another example is related to the designation of a number of Mexican cartels as international terrorist organizations by the President of the United States, Donald Trump (The White House, 2025). This then received a firm response from Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum who emphasized that Mexico rejects

foreign interference and emphasized that the war on drugs must be carried out collaboratively without outside intervention (De León, 2025).

Such different attributions lead to different policy preferences, as do the likelihood of individuals leaning toward restrictive counterterrorism measures when they see certain groups as inherently evil, while advocating for social reforms when they see a threat stemming from perceived injustice. The interaction between external and internal attribution not only highlights the biases formed by political ideology but also reveals broader implications for how terrorism is contextualized, particularly in the American political landscape, emphasizing the urgent need to recognize these influences in addressing national security issues. And in the context of dealing with armed groups in Papua, for example, it is important for law enforcement and political policies to be more coordinated so that the steps taken are more effective and proportionate. Differences of opinion regarding the identification of the KKB as terrorism or separatism must be further emphasized so as not to cause a narrow interpretation (Abdurrahman, 2024; Pangestu, 2021; Rahmawaty, 2021; Ulya & Ramadhan, 2025). Consistency and synchronization between law enforcement and political policies are key to managing conflicts sustainably and reducing tensions in Papua.

Finally, this study briefly analyzes the findings into a simple matrix that explains how terrorism intersects with political governance and social factors that involve the categorization of various elements and their interactions. The main categories include government, social factors with cultural, economic, and social dimensions. Interactions can be seen in positive, negative, or neutral impacts.

**Table 2. The Relationship of Terrorism to Political Governance and Social Factors**

<b>Governance</b>	<b>Economic Factors</b>	<b>Social Factors</b>	<b>Cultural Factors</b>	<b>References</b>
<b>Authoritarian</b>	Rising grievances due to economic inequality can lead to resistance and recruitment by terrorist organizations	Social cohesion may weaken, leading to radicalization, especially among marginalized communities	Cultural repression can trigger identity-based terrorism and extremist groups seeking to restore cultural heritage	Alam et al. (2020); Yunanto & Damayanti (2024); Prasetya & Syauquillah (2020); Bruce (2001); El Shidqi & Andriyani (2022); Sinaga et al. (2018)
<b>Democratic</b>	Economic inequality may still create dissatisfaction, but democratic processes allow non-violent political solutions	Democracy may face social fragmentation, increasing vulnerability to terrorist recruitment in marginalized groups	Freedom of expression can reduce cultural tensions but may also allow extremist ideologies to gain traction in pluralistic societies	Keenan (2019); Gadarian (2010); Bruce (2001); El Shidqi & Andriyani (2022); Sinaga et al. (2018)
<b>Transitional (Unstable)</b>	Economic instability often fosters extremism due to lack of opportunities, creating fertile ground for terrorism	Transitional governments may struggle to promote social cohesion, increasing risks of ethnic or sectarian violence	Cultural divisions become more pronounced during instability, often exploited by terrorist groups	Alam et al. (2020); El Shidqi & Andriyani (2022); Sinaga et al. (2018)

<b>Failed State</b>	Economic collapse creates a vacuum where terrorist organizations can thrive by providing jobs or better services	The absence of functional governance leads to social fragmentation, increasing terrorist group recruitment	Cultural identities may clash in the governance vacuum, fueling identity-driven terrorism	Subandi et al. (2024b); Prasetya & Syauqillah (2020); El Shidqi & Andriyani (2022); Sinaga et al. (2018)
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Regarding the explanation of this intersection, it can be said as follows:

- 1) **Authoritarian Rule:** It often suppresses dissent, but economic injustice and social oppression can push disenfranchised groups toward terrorism. Cultural oppression can also lead to an increase in identity-based extremism.
- 2) **Democratic Governance:** Democracy can reduce some of the risks of terrorism through representation and opportunities for dialogue. However, social fragmentation or marginalized communities can still lead to radicalization events.
- 3) **Transitional Governments:** These governments often face pressures that can exacerbate societal divisions and economic uncertainty, making them more vulnerable to violence and terrorism as groups compete for control.
- 4) **Failed Countries:** The collapse of governance creates chaos that encourages the emergence of terrorist organizations. The absence of authority allows the exploitation of economic needs and cultural grievances, leading to widespread instability.

This matrix illustrates the complex ways in which terrorism interacts with political governance and various societal factors. Each combination can lead to different types of terrorist activity, so it is important for policymakers to consider these intersections when designing strategies to combat terrorism. Understanding these dynamics also helps in developing a comprehensive approach that addresses the root cause rather than simply responding to the symptoms.

## Conclusion

This study examines the intricate relationship between terrorism and political power, revealing that terrorism is often rooted in political, economic, and identity issues, with its definition varying significantly across academic perspectives, underscoring the critical role of political context. It highlights how political entities strategically regulate and shape public perceptions of terrorism, including the labeling of groups, to support specific policies, which can unfortunately stigmatize certain populations. The study emphasizes the significant influence of global dynamics, media, and socio-political circumstances on perceptions and responses to terrorism, asserting that differing definitions and categorizations profoundly impact threat assessment and counter-terrorism measures. Future research should delve into case studies in areas with unique terrorism-political dynamics to understand the influence of social context, explore the extent of global political dynamics' social influence on local radicalization, and integrate diverse disciplinary perspectives to formulate effective and sustainable counter-terrorism strategies, including a thorough evaluation of existing policies.

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