



How Have Radical Islamists Capitalized on the Pandemic?



Narratives Circulated on COVID-19 in the Radical Islamist Propaganda

As COVID-19 was moving from the phase of an epidemic to a pandemic, there were early signs that the global threat of terrorism was beginning to decline. With the global economy and social life coming to a standstill, most threat groups embarked on a phase of reflection and strategic rebuilding. However, Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaeda (AQ) urged their affiliates to exploit the COVID-19 situation and called for and mounted attacks—mostly in conflict zones. Although these threats were to be carried out worldwide, they were focused on specific parts of Asia, such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and the Maldives (SITE Intelligence Group 2020).

Radical Islamist propaganda encouraged followers to use the COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity for violence. A 19 March 2020 editorial in the Al-Naba newsletter drew the attention of jihadists to one of the obligations of Muslims today, namely “to inflict damage on [the enemy]” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). This was echoed by an Indonesian-language Telegram post on 26 March, claiming “if COVID-19 could talk, maybe it would say: ‘We have surrounded the Vatican, what are you waiting for, attack them’ . . . COVID-19 has opened the path for us, let’s join together in attacking them” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). Parallel to this, IS Maldivians called on supporters to take advantage of the coronavirus pandemic and mount attacks. The Muslim Brotherhood urged people to use COVID-19 in attacks in Egypt. Another English-language post on an IS-aligned Telegram channel on 18 March 2020 highlighted that the panic caused by the pandemic was distracting governments, which supporters should exploit for carrying out operations: “So . . . take advantage of how they are now misdirected and forced to let loose the strong grip they had against us and to exhaust their finances and their resources upon this newly risen matter” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). An Indonesian Islamic State-aligned

Facebook account also urged its followers to prepare for and commit acts of terrorism amidst the chaos. In the editorial of *Al-Naba* 226 published on 19 March 2020, the Islamic State incited lone wolf jihadists to capitalize on the paralysis and fear overtaking “Crusader” countries during the pandemic. “It would be their worst nightmare” if “fighters launched operations” while people are facing a “bleak economic future and overcrowded hospitals.” They also reported “fear of this contagion has affected them more than the contagion itself” (International Crisis Group 2020). The author reminded readers that the “enemy did not show mercy on Muslims in Baghouz, Mosul or Sirte, and bombed houses of young and old, and women and children alike in multiple countries” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020).

Among the threat groups that embarked on a phase of reflection and rebuilding their capabilities during the pandemic was the Afghan Taliban. The Taliban signed an agreement with the United States, aimed at peace, and took advantage of the pandemic to proselytize Afghans by stating that COVID-19 should make them realize their weakness, mortality, and subservience to Allah. Describing the pandemic as “God’s might,” the Taliban called on people to turn to God (Jackson 2020).

COVID-19, a global threat of seismic proportions, piqued the interest of Islamic State and al-Qaeda. Their narratives ranged from COVID-19 being a “Soldier of God” (Meek 2020) to rhetoric about fighting unbelievers—a “Shia Iran” and the “anti-Islamic” West (*ibid.*). The very first coronavirus-related post by a terrorist group was by the supporters of the Islamic State monitoring the developments in Xinjiang, China (Johnson 2020).

With hundreds of Uighur fighters in Syria and Afghanistan, Islamic State and their supporters regularly expressed their views with regard to the developments in Xinjiang. On 27 January 2020, a poster designed and distributed by Quraysh Media depicted a person in a gas mask at the forefront and a city in the background. The English text read: “China Corona virus . . . a promise is a debt that we must not forget” (Azani, Barak, and Atiyas-Lvovsky 2020). Although the pro-Islamic State media did not identify the “promise”, supporters exposed to Islamic State propaganda saw it as revenge for China’s persecution of Uighur Muslims.

In the northwest Xinjiang province, the Chinese response to terrorism was to integrate the indigenous Uighurs with Han settlers, re-educate them (mainstream through rehabilitation), and enforce strict measures to restore local and traditional Islam by regulating the Islamic space (Millward and Peterson 2020). The narrative of Wuhan coronavirus and its outbreak in China as a punishment for the country was repeated as it evolved from an endemic to an epidemic and spread to other countries.

When the virus afflicted Iran, the Islamic State supporters said Iranian Shia are being punished for their “idolatry.” When the virus spread to Europe and the US, IS supporters said Europeans and Americans are being punished for being “polytheist nations” (Hanna 2020). Stating that the virus mostly attacked unbelievers, these threat groups highlighted that China suffered because of its mistreatment of Uighurs, Iran because of the role of its Shia, and the West (Italy and the United States) because of their interventions, especially in Iraq and Syria. Islamic State supporters said COVID-19 is divine revenge for Muslim lives lost in Baghouz, the last territorial stronghold of the Islamic State in Syria, which was bombed by coalition airstrikes: “It is the prayer of the people of Baghouz whom you burnt alive. It has killed you. So reap the results of your actions” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). They also described COVID-19 as an act of divine retribution for Western nations’ support for Kurdish forces, who helped dismantle its caliphate.

The Islamist thinking that pandemics are God’s dictate will continue. In the eyes of the Muslim threat groups, the virus did not infect believers. Portraying the coronavirus as divine retribution, Al-Azm Media Foundation published on 18 May 2020 the 15-minute 38-second video titled “And None Can Know the Hosts of Your Lord but He” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). In its production, Al-Azm features clips from past IS videos that show fighters in Baghouz, Syria, bombs falling on IS-held territories, an English-speaking fighter celebrating the disasters from Hurricanes Irma and Harvey in the United States, and footage from news media concerning people who died from COVID-19, all to argue that the virus was sent by God to punish Western states and their allies and other foes for what befell Muslims. It then displays infographics on infections and deaths in the United States, Spain, Russia, Britain, Italy, France, Germany, Iran, China, Belgium, and Israel. Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and supporting groups compared the impact of COVID-19 on its enemies. Stating that America is not all-powerful and invincible, the Islamic State pointed out that in one week more Americans died of COVID-19 infection than the nearly 3,000 killed on 9/11 (Meek 2020). “It is a falsehood to worship America and to fear it instead of Allah the Almighty” (ibid.). Al-Qaeda propaganda arm As-Sahab said: “Allah, the Creator, has revealed the brittleness and vulnerability of your material strength. It is now clear for all to see that it was but a deception that could not stand the test of the smallest soldier of God on the face of the earth” (Meek 2020).

In Asia, an Indonesian-language Telegram post highlighted that “the virus has transferred the fear which was experienced by Muslims [in IS-controlled territories under Western bombardment] so that it is also

felt by the infidel nations oppressing them” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). Islamic State propaganda expressed joy on the spread of the virus and shared detailed charts of the growing number of deaths in the West. One post claimed that “Corona virus is doing the works of the mujahideen [, and] Muslims should enjoy how Allah is punishing kufar for their support against Muslims” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). On Friday 20 March 2020, a day before two coronavirus infections were confirmed in the Gaza strip, Imam Jamil Al-Mutawa declared in a sermon at the White Mosque in Gaza that COVID-19 is a “soldier of Allah” (Memri 2020). He referred to the empty streets of the United States, Italy, China, and Iran and contrasted it with the crowd in that mosque. He claimed that it is “the greatness of Allah” (ibid.) that “protected them and harmed” the others.

Users on a pro-IS messaging platform discussed the pandemic and its impact on those they deem the enemy. In English posts, on 12 March 2020, one jihadist wrote, “Corona virus is healing the hearts of the believers. Alhamdulillah [Praise be to Allah] Corona is divine punishment. Look who has been hit the worst, China (Arrogant atheists), Iran (Arrogant shia), and Italy (Arrogant Christians)” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). On 9 March another user had posted photos of West Africa Province fighters as they executed Christians and stated: “This will be your streets Europe and the US. When the Corona virus weakens your infrastructure and economy. May you fall from virus or from jihad . . . Notice how Corona virus only affects the kufar, rafdah, and mur-tadeen” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). Additionally, an IS supporter behind the online group called “Greenbirds” posted an image of coronavirus with the label “a soldier of Allah” and Qur’anic verse: “And none knows the soldiers of your Lord except Him” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). The Islamic State-aligned Bunat Alamjad distributed a poster on 2 March with Chinese President Xi Jinping and North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un on it. The text referred to the coronavirus as a “nightmare for disbelieving countries” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). The author questioned whether “those despotic and oppressive countries that deny the existence of Allah” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020) could “benefit from their scientific, medical and technological advancements when confronting with a virus, the size of which does not exceed an atom” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). The message stated that Allah sent them the virus to “vex their lives and destroy their conditions and situations” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020).

The pro-al-Qaeda Thabaat News Agency on 19 March 2020 published Khalid al-Saba’i’s paper, in which he regarded COVID-19 as a “soldier [unleashed by Allah on the] sects of disbelief” (SITE Intelli-

gence Group 2020). The author incited Sunnis to “prepare to capitalize on the perceived devastation to hammer the final nail in the coffin of falsehood” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020) and to maintain assaults through jihad to establish Shariah-based governance. In contrast to the Islamic State narratives on COVID-19, al-Qaeda proclaimed that “The Way out of the Belly of the Whale [lies in] Commandments and Disclosures about Corona virus pandemic” (Joscelyn 2020).

There are, however, other confusing statements in the radical Islamist propaganda. Islamist terrorists themselves feared the spread of the virus. Their narratives highlighted that the pandemic was a physical threat to radical Islamists when considering the heightened level of infection risk for extremists in Indonesian prisons and Syrian refugee camps. It is also noteworthy that while previously the Islamic State was urging its followers to attack major European cities, terrorists were asked to stay clear from these areas because of the pandemic. In the case of radical Islamists already staying in Europe, they are told not to return to their homeland but aim to sicken infidels in accordance with a Shariah directive printed in an Al-Naba newsletter. Describing the virus as “Army of Allah” and “the smallest army of Allah” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020), “Balik I.,” a radical convert in the Philippines, posted a Facebook message on 19 May 2020 and another one on 21 May 2020, claiming that Muslims in Mindanao are not doing anything to stop the abuses of the “kuffar” (infidels) and mocked them for not taking action (SITE Intelligence Group 2020).

Islamic State newsletter Al-Naba presented an infographic on Shariah directives on dealing with the coronavirus pandemic. In accordance with this, everything that happens is decreed by God, even infection by disease (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). The infographic counseled supporters on safety measures they should take at this time. Interestingly, all of Al-Naba’s information cited Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad¹ from the seventh century. Suggestions included covering one’s mouth when sneezing, washing hands before placing them in a communal pot, and for healthy individuals not to enter areas affected by an epidemic, and those afflicted not to leave those areas. As the Islamic State declared:

Islam is a hygiene-oriented Religion. It lays great stress on principles of prevention so as to protect one from all forms of the disease. This is implemented through a system of personal hygiene that takes the form of a regular routine that is repeated several times throughout the day. The laws on preventative measures include the necessity of using only the right hand for eating, drinking and all decent activities, and the left hand for cleaning the body. Our Prophet (pbuh) ordered the Muslims to abide by certain

norms and etiquettes such as covering one's face with a cloth or any protective cover when sneezing or coughing. The Prophet (pbuh) taught us that he would recognize his sincere followers on the Day of Judgement by marks on their bodies that indicate repeated daily practice of cleaning and purification of one's body and soul. (SITE Intelligence Group 2020)

The importance of hygiene and cleanliness for preventing disease and warding off viruses manifests itself in several facets of Islam. A simple illustration of this is that for fourteen centuries, Muslims have unanimously included chapters on laws regarding cleanliness and hygiene in the first section of their books on Fiqh or Islamic law. Laws of Fiqh regulate all aspects of Muslim life, from the personal to matters of economy, society, and the state, and it is instructive that the introduction to these books begins with rules on hygiene. Western societies must study how Islam, more than fourteen centuries back, came with a preventive cure to tackle the spread of viral diseases. The Prophet (peace be upon him) issued strict orders that anyone who finds himself in an area infected by a viral disease must not leave that area or travel to any other region, town, or village lest the infection spreads to new localities. The Prophet (pbuh) taught us that the one who patiently remains in his locality when a viral disease spreads, his reward equals that of a martyr because of his choice to preserve and protect human life and prosperity in other localities. (SITE Intelligence Group 2020)

As a follow-up to the infographic published by IS in Al-Naba 225 on Shariah directives for dealing with epidemics, the prominent IS-aligned Al-Battar Media Foundation created a video presentation of the information (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). The video, published on 15 March 2020, used the original Arabic infographic that came in the digital newspaper on 12 March 2020.

Most terrorist groups and their followers defied quarantine restrictions, mosque closures, and lockdown measures and incited attacks during the COVID-19 pandemic, neglecting the safety precautions required to prevent infection. A post from Balik I.'s account asserted that, unlike shopping malls, mosques are being kept closed because no one is fighting for them. Balik I. then urged followers to engage in violence, stating: "Being patient in the abuses of the kuffar? Brother and sisters, that is not the right kind of patience for you. Instead, be patient with the orders of Allah, that is, fight to protect Islam" (SITE Intelligence Group 2020).

In a related vein, the COVID-19 pandemic provided radical Islamists with opportunities to consolidate their internal support. Radical Islamists liked to mount public criticism of the government, stirring up supporters and thus contributing to the risk of potential upheaval. Some radical Islamists believed that the crisis could trigger major political instability and that it offered them the opportunity to overthrow secular

rulers. An al-Qaeda-linked Indonesian website highlighted that “secular leaders, who have ruled from a strong position with the support of the infidel superpowers, are being tested. Can they control this situation amidst the pandemic outbreak without the strong support they usually receive from their foreign bosses?” (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). Regardless of the significant differences and competition between violent extremists, IS, al-Qaeda, and nonviolent Islamists all highlighted the government’s failings, together constituting an increasingly loud chorus of destabilizing voices in society.

Similar to the radical Islamist statements, the Afghan Taliban used the pandemic to make Muslims and non-Muslims alike recognize their weaknesses, mortality, and subservience to God. An English article published on the Taliban website asserted that COVID-19 “as a microscopic organism . . . has instilled fear in mankind and brought the global economy and social life to a standstill. [It is] an instance of [God’s] might that forced the staunchest atheist to take refuge in religion as a last resort. [This makes people realize] that humanity is not everlasting and not all-powerful, but God is. . . . Humans distant from Islam must consider this tribulation as a time of reflection and change while the Muslims, in general, must also return back to Allah . . . by seeking forgiveness for their sins and renewing their commitment to religious principles” (Kruglanski et al. 2020).

Presently, grave concerns exist with regard to the potential threat of the next wave of the virus coming from Islamic State fighters in Syrian displaced person camps (Alexander 2020). Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are holding around 10,000 Islamic State fighters in prisons across northeast Syria. At least 11,000 of these prisoners are IS women and children at Al-Hawl camp and other nearby displaced person camps (International Crisis Group 2020). These facilities are of great epidemiological concern because they are so densely populated and practice poor hygiene. Because of these fears, very few people are allowed to visit the camp. Information on the spread of the virus is circulated among the detainees by social media apps, texts, and phone calls. Authorities say that among the thousands of Islamic State families being held there some women are defying the orders, saying the virus is part of God’s threat against infidels (Kruglanski et al. 2020).

Discussion

This chapter continues with an introductory section that aims to briefly set the radical Islamist threat landscape between 11 March and 31 July

2020. This is then contrasted with attacks that happened in the same period during 2018, for which information from the Global Terrorism Database (University of Maryland) has been used. For the 2020 discussion, incident reports from the SITE Intelligence Group and The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center provided the information. The comparison is based on four perspectives: the number of attacks, their targets together with their modus operandi, and the active radical Islamist terrorist groups in the respective geographic regions. By quantitatively assessing a number of terrorist incidents, this section endeavors to provide a better understanding of novel trends and dynamics in Islamist terrorism since the virus outbreak in both conflict and nonconflict zones. To ensure a consistent analysis, the same geographic regions are examined for both periods. Accordingly, incidents occurring in nonconflict zones such as Europe, Southeast Asia, and the United States as well as attacks in conflict zones such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Africa provide the basis for this analysis. In this case, a terrorist attack is defined as “physical violence or threat thereof employed by terrorist actors involving single-phase acts of lethal violence (such as bombings and armed assaults), dual-phased life-threatening incidents (like kidnapping, hijacking and other forms of hostage-taking for coercive bargaining) as well as multi-phased sequences of actions (such as in disappearances involving kidnapping, secret detention, torture, and murder)” (Schmid 2012). The date 11 March is when the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus a pandemic.

Conflict Zones

Syria

In the middle of March 2020, Islamic State operatives attacked Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and their vehicles in nine simultaneous operations (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). Between 13 and 18 March, IEDs were activated against SDF vehicles and personnel twenty-six times. On 22 March 2020, SDF fighters were targeted by machine gun fire. Between 25 and 29 March, IS operatives abducted SDF militants in three operations (European Asylum Support Office 2020).

In April 2020, Islamic State continued its highly intensive activities against SDF positions in the region. Improvised explosive devices were planted in eight plots, and targeted killings were carried out in another eight incidents (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). On 7 April, the secretary of the Ba’ath Party was killed by machine gun fire in the city of Nawa

(*ibid.*). Later in the month, Syrian soldiers and two commanders of the Syrian army were shot in three attacks (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). In the last days of the month, eight IS attacks occurred: there were ambushes, IED activations, and targeted killings against SDF forces (Al-Khateb 2020).

Between 28 April and 3 May 2020, Islamic State operatives struck Syrian soldiers and SDF personnel in nine operations (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). On 10 May 2020, the al-Qaeda-affiliated “Awaken the Believers” attacked positions of the forces supporting the Syrian army in the northern Al-Ghab Plain. In May, a further five IS attacks targeted SDF fighters. IEDs against SDF vehicles and targeted killings characterized fifteen IS activities in the region between 20–23 May. In the last week of May, the intensity of IS activities decreased, with SDF fighters and vehicles struck nine times (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020).

On 9 June 2020, an IED was activated against a tanker carrying oil for the Syrian regime, and in four other incidents SDF vehicles and a checkpoint were targeted (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). In the middle of June, SDF vehicles were struck in four IS operations, and Syrian soldiers in three (Knights and Almeida 2020). In the following week, nine attacks were committed against SDF vehicles, oil tankers, and Syrian soldiers. In the last days of June, SDF checkpoints, their intelligence operatives, and oil tankers were targeted in eleven IS operations (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020).

In the first week of July 2020, Syrian soldiers, SDF militants, and their vehicles were struck by IEDs and machine gun fire in ten operations. In the middle of July, SDF fighters and Syrian soldiers were attacked in four operations. In the same period, SDF fighters and their vehicles were the targets of five more IS attacks. On 17 July 2020, an “agent” of the Turkish-sponsored rebel organization was targeted by gunfire. On 18 July, IS operatives ambushed a convoy of Iranian-affiliated militias and operatives of the Lebanese Hezbollah. Between 23 and 28 July, SDF militants and their vehicles together with Syrian soldiers were struck in thirteen IS operations in Syria. Additionally, IS claimed responsibility for a suicide attack among Syrian Military Security soldiers on 21 July (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020).

How Has the Radical Islamist Threat Evolved in Syria?

The significant difference in the number of Islamic State-claimed incidents between the two periods is obvious from the graph below, with an almost tenfold increase from 2018 to 2020.

Islamic State claimed terrorist incidents in Syria A comparison 11 March - 31 July 2018 and 2020

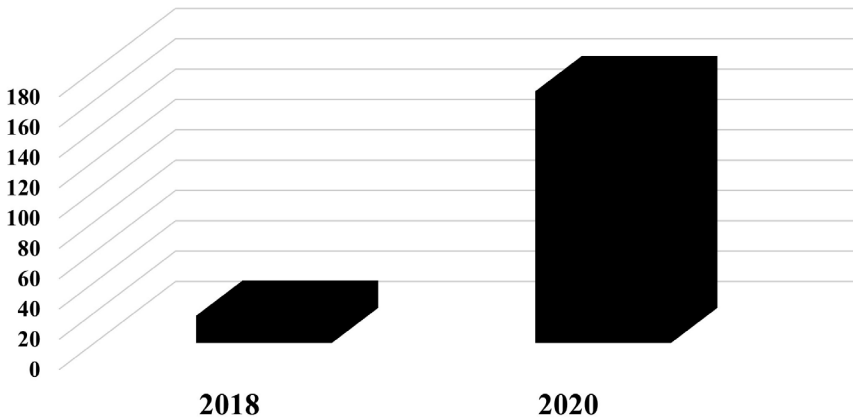
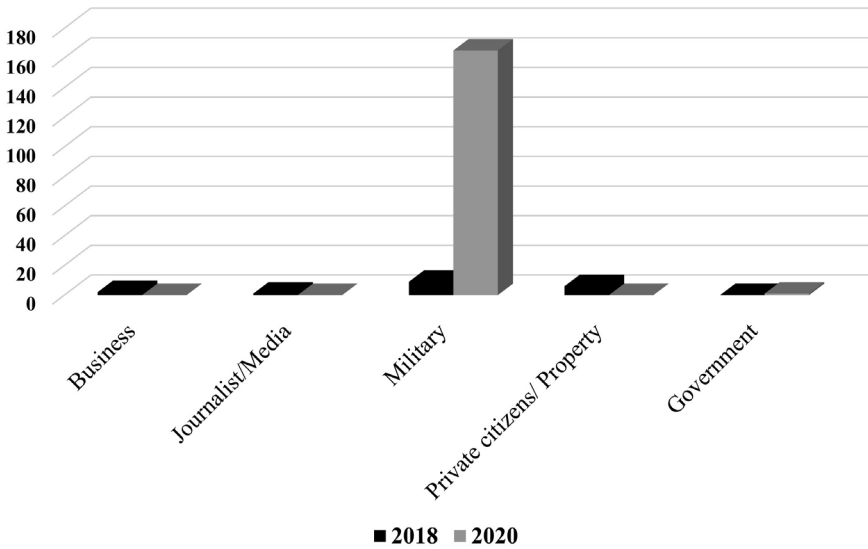


Figure 2.1. Islamic State-claimed terrorist incidents in Syria.
© Katalin Pethő-Kiss.

Military compounds and personnel remained the main IS targets, but apparently at an elevated scale. It is also significant that private citizens/property, businesses, and journalists were not attacked in 2020, although a new type of target emerged when the secretary of the Ba’ath Party was killed by machine gun fire in April 2020.

There is also a substantial change in Islamic State’s modus operandi. In 2018, bombings were their most frequent means of attack, but in 2020 armed assault was at an extremely heightened scale and featured more frequently in their attacks. As Figure 2.2. shows, hostage-taking occurred roughly the same number of times in both 2018 and 2020.

**Islamic State targets in Syria
A comparison 11 March - 31 July 2018 and 2020**



**Islamic State modus operandi in Syria
A comparison 11 March - 31 July 2018 and 2020**

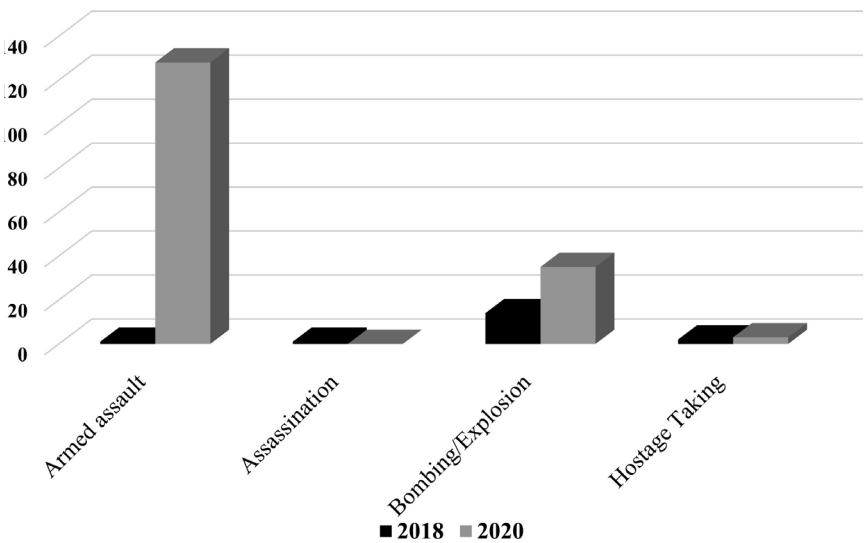


Figure 2.2. Islamic State targets and modus operandi in Syria.
© Katalin Pethő-Kiss.

Iraq

Iraq remained the main arena of IS global activity. A significant increase can be observed in Islamic State's attack intensity in the region in 2020. Not only did the Islamic State expand its areas of operation, but it also diversified its activities. The trend is obviously linked with IS intentions to capitalize on the pandemic crisis situation (Cruickshank 2020).

In the middle of March 2020, IEDs and sniper fire were targeted at Iraqi soldiers, their army camps, and Tribal Mobilization forces in twenty-two operations. Between 17 and 22 March 2020, Iraqi army forces and their military vehicles were struck in thirteen missions. Iraqi armed and police forces, together with Tribal Mobilization fighters, were targeted by IS between 23 and 29 March 2020 in eighteen operations. During the last days of the month, IS attacked Iraqi military camps and the Tribal Mobilization's compound in seventeen operations (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020).

Between 7 and 22 April 2020, IS mounted thirty attacks targeting Iraqi military forces and Tribal Mobilization fighters. On 22 April 2020, a suicide bomber blew himself up at the entrance of the Intelligence and Counterterrorism Directorate of Kirkuk. Later in the month, Iraqi police forces and a SWAT team were struck in twenty operations. Iraqi soldiers and army camps were the targets of twenty-four IS attacks between 30 April and 4 May 2020 (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020).

Between 4 and 11 May 2020, IS militants raided Tribal Mobilization fighters and Iraqi government forces in a further eleven operations (Barak 2020). In its first documented attack in the Iraqi capital since November 2019, IS claimed thirty-six casualties among Shi'ites in five bombings in Baghdad on 11 May 2020. The next day the Islamic State claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing at a funeral of a police commander in IS Khorasan Province (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). In the middle of May, Tribal Mobilization and Iraqi military fighters and compounds were targeted in thirty-seven missions (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). Army vehicles together with a helicopter and military officers were shot in sniper fires and IED detonations in eighteen IS operations between 20 and 24 May 2020 (Rubin, Jakes, and Schmitt 2020). In the last days of the month, the intensity of IS activity in Iraq decreased; IEDs detonations, mortar shells, sniper fire, and arson were the most common modus operandi in eleven strikes (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020).

At the beginning of June 2020, IS militants attacked Iraqi army compounds and Tribal Mobilization operatives six times (*ibid.*). On 13 June 2020, civilians of the Kaka'i sect were targeted by sniper fire. In the fol-

lowing days, Popular Mobilization militants and Iraqi compounds were struck in eleven IS operations (Al-Hashimi 2020). In the middle of June, Iraqi army vehicles and Popular Mobilization fighters were targeted in eleven IS missions. In the last days of June 2020, Iraqi soldiers and policemen were the targets of ten Islamic State operations (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020).

In the first week of July 2020, IS claimed responsibility for ten attacks targeting the Iraqi army and Popular Mobilization fighters. The most common form of attack between 7 and 13 July 2020 was the detonation of IEDs against the Shi'ite militias and the Iraqi security forces, in seventeen operations. Iraqi soldiers and Popular Mobilization fighters were again killed in twelve IS attacks between 14 and 20 July 2020. The most noteworthy attack that week was the killing of an Iraqi army brigade commander in an IS ambush about 30 km north of Baghdad. On 26 July 2020, an IED was activated against a vehicle of the Iraqi Interior Ministry's Commando Unit about 60 km north of Baqubah. Between 21 and 27 July 2020, Popular Mobilization vehicles and Iraqi armed forces were targeted in eleven IS operations (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020).

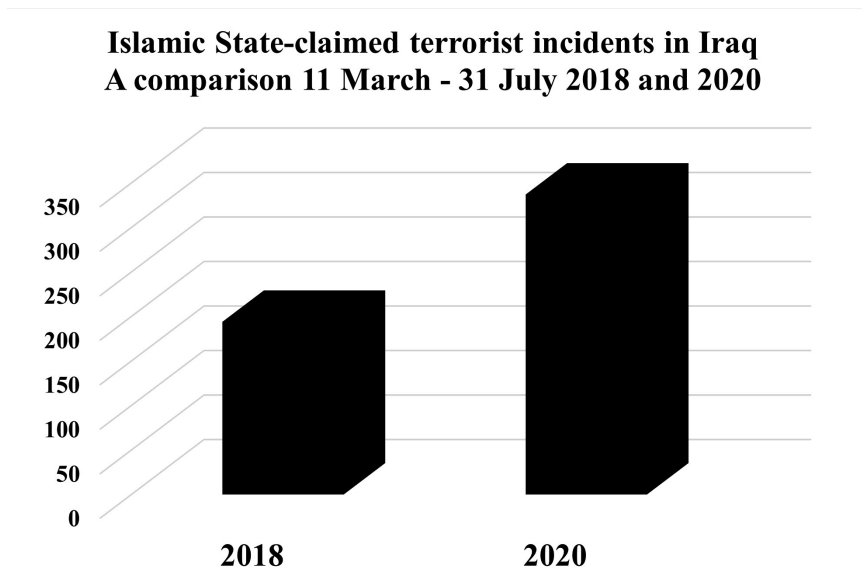


Figure 2.3. Islamic State-claimed terrorist incidents in Iraq.

© Katalin Pethő-Kiss.

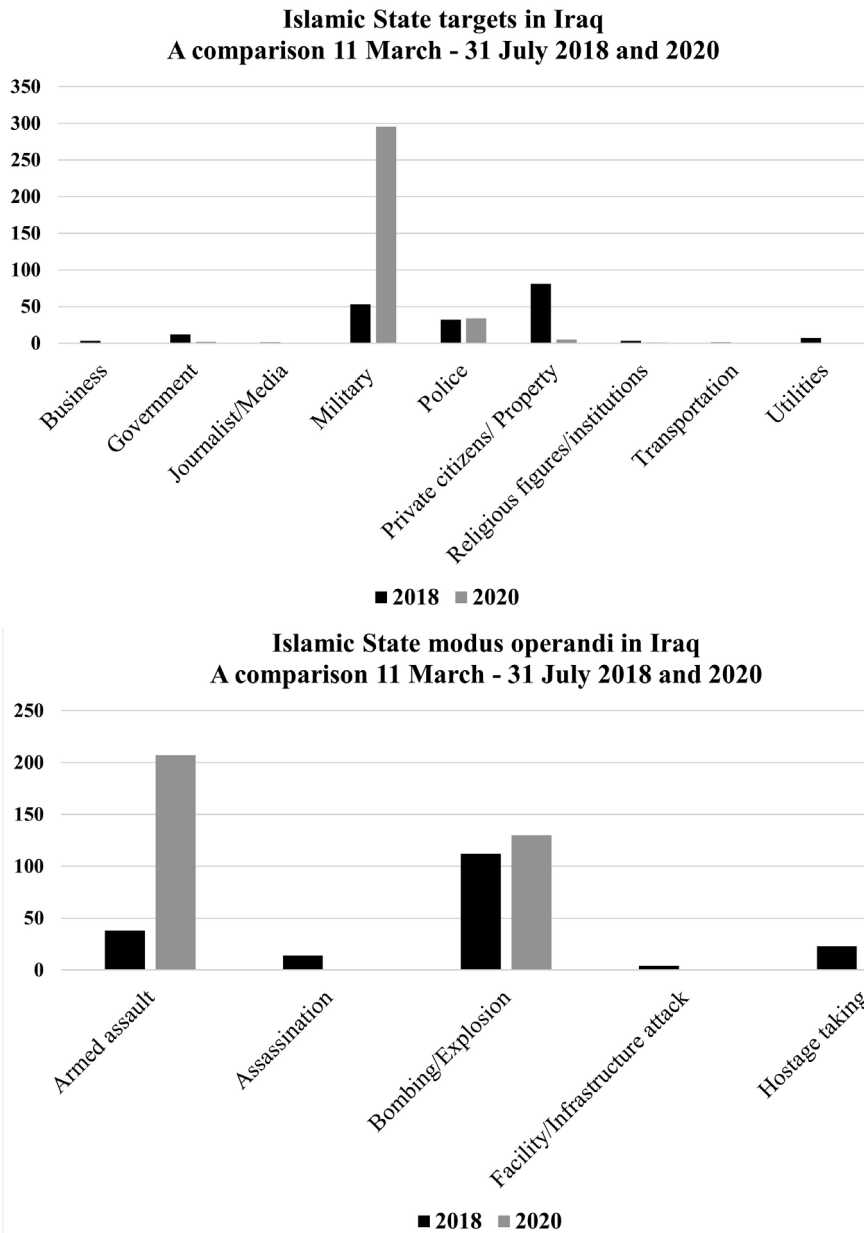


Figure 2.4. Islamic State targets and modus operandi in Iraq.
© Katalin Pethő-Kiss.

Euphrates Valley

Between 19 and 25 March 2020, SDF fighters, vehicles, and intelligence headquarters were targeted in five IS operations. In the last days of March, IS militants struck SDF forces again in five missions. In early April, IS activated IEDs and attacked SDF vehicles and personnel in eight attacks (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020).

How Has the Radical Islamist Threat Evolved in Iraq?

There is an almost 150 percent increase in the number of attacks for which the Islamic State claimed responsibility between 11 March and 31 July 2020. Obviously, it cannot be unequivocally confirmed that the evolving trend is due to the pandemic, but it is absolutely realistic that Islamic State took advantage of the crisis situation in Iraq and intensified its activities in the country.

It is beyond dispute that the military had a prominent symbolic role during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of the armed forces were given extraordinary responsibilities in this crisis situation. Their enhanced presence and proximity during lockdown measures increased their exposure as targets, reducing their ability to respond to crises. Lockdown measures made traditional soft targets, such as private citizens and religious sites, almost impossible to attack, thereby substantially decreasing the psychological impact an act of terrorism strives to induce. Therefore, striking other targets of opportunity such as military and police headquarters made sense (Kruglanski et al. 2020).

Changes in Islamic State's modus operandi suggest that the pandemic has altered the circumstances in which the terrorist organization operates. Armed assault of low sophistication was more feasible and practicable in times of difficulties due to restrictive measures. IS fighters could not obtain the materials to make sophisticated weapons so they resorted to less complicated means of operation. The timing of attacks was of paramount importance as they knew the chaos due to the pandemic might not last long or offer exceptional opportunities to revive the radical Islamist relevance.

Afghanistan

The Taliban hosted al-Qaeda but have had a political office in Doha since 2013. The Qatari capital was the venue for signing the deal between the US and the Taliban. Governments worldwide are critical of the Taliban presence in Qatar, as it is tantamount to political recognition of the Taliban. With the Doha Declaration, the talks between the

Afghanistan government and Taliban started, the fighting stopped, and violence decreased. Until then Afghanistan had seen the largest number of terrorist attacks in any single country. “Afghanistan experienced 21 percent of all terrorist attacks worldwide in 2019, and 41 percent of all people killed in terrorist attacks (including assailants) in 2019” (Mashal and Rahim 2020). Just as the number of terrorist attacks had declined globally for six consecutive years since 2014, plots in Afghanistan also diminished following the US-led peace negotiations between the Taliban and the government in Kabul. Still, multiple terrorist plots were reported from the region. In a noteworthy incident on 13 July 2020, for instance, the Taliban mounted a devastating attack on an Afghan intelligence complex, killing at least eleven people and wounding more than sixty others. While the number of attacks committed by the Afghan Taliban decreased dramatically, in parallel the Islamic State became more active in Afghanistan in 2020 (Mashal and Rahim 2020).

Islamic State Khorasan Province resumed its continuous operation in the region. Because of the withdrawal of US troops from the country, COVID-19 provided an advantageous opportunity for the recovery of the threat group. Supposedly with the intention to disrupt the agreement between the US and the Taliban, on 20 March 2020, Islamic State operatives fired ten rockets at Bagram Airbase, where US army troops were stationed. An operative of IS Khorasan Province carried out a suicide bombing attack at a Sikh temple in Kabul on 25 March 2020. The next day, an IED was detonated against a gathering place of Sikhs and Hindus in the Afghan capital. In another recorded incident, an Afghan Special Forces commander was targeted with gunfire in the Nangarhar Province on 31 March 2020 (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020).

The Afghan Special Forces arrested the Emir and nineteen senior commanders of IS Khorasan Province on 4 April 2020 (*ibid.*). On 9 April 2020, Islamic State operatives fired rockets at Bagram US Airbase (United Nations Security Council 2020). At the beginning of May, IS fighters in Kabul took Sufi imam Abdel Hadi al-Naqshbandi hostage, and he was later executed. An IED was activated against two Taliban fighters on 6 May 2020. A Taliban fighter was targeted with gunfire on 11 May 2020. Later the same day, an IED was activated against a senior officer at the Afghan National Directorate of Security (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). Another improvised explosive device struck the vehicle of a commander of the forces supporting the Afghan army on 16 May 2020. The next day, another IED attack targeted Afghan police in Kabul. On 24 May 2020, Islamic State militants fired rockets at Bagram US Airbase. Later in the month, hand grenades were thrown at an Afghanistan police checkpoint in Jalalabad. In another incident, an IED was activated on a

Islamic State-claimed terrorist incidents in Afghanistan A comparison 11 March - 31 July 2018 and 2020

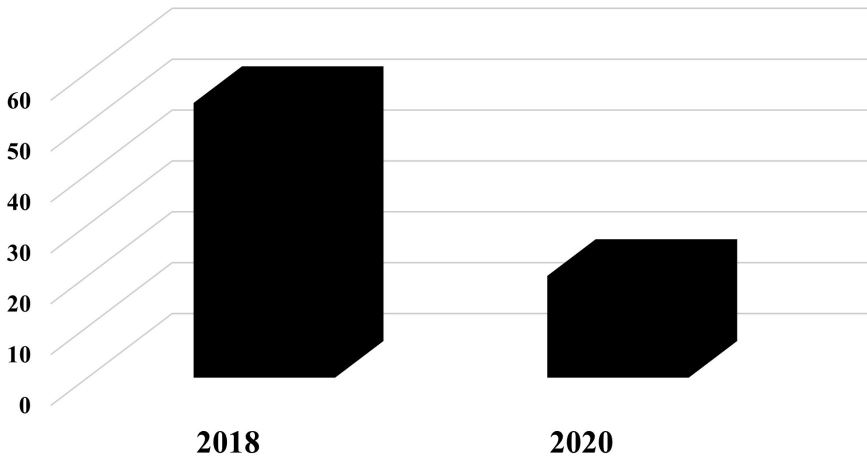


Figure 2.5. Islamic State-claimed terrorist incidents in Afghanistan.
© Katalin Pethő-Kiss.

bus carrying employees of the Afghan government-affiliated Khurshid TV station in the capital Kabul on 30 May 2020. The next day, an IED was targeted at Afghan police forces in Kabul (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020).

On 25 July 2020, an investigator of the Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS) was struck by gunfire in Jalalabad. The next day, a sticky bomb was activated against the vehicle of an Afghan NDS militant in the eastern Nangarhar Province. An IED was targeted at an Afghan police vehicle in Jalalabad on 28 July 2020. On 29 July, a limpet charge detonated on a bus carrying Shi'ites in the city of Herat (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020).

How Has the Radical Islamist Threat Evolved in Afghanistan?

As statistics demonstrate, the number of incidents IS Khorasan Province claimed responsibility for more than halved in the middle of 2020. First, losing its main territorial stronghold in Nangarhar and second the losses in its chain of command (Pikulicka-Wilczewska 2020) may explain this decrease.

As Figure 2.6. shows, the pandemic changed the main targets of Islamic State operations. Strikes against military, police, and private citizens were frequent but carried out at a lower level of intensity. No

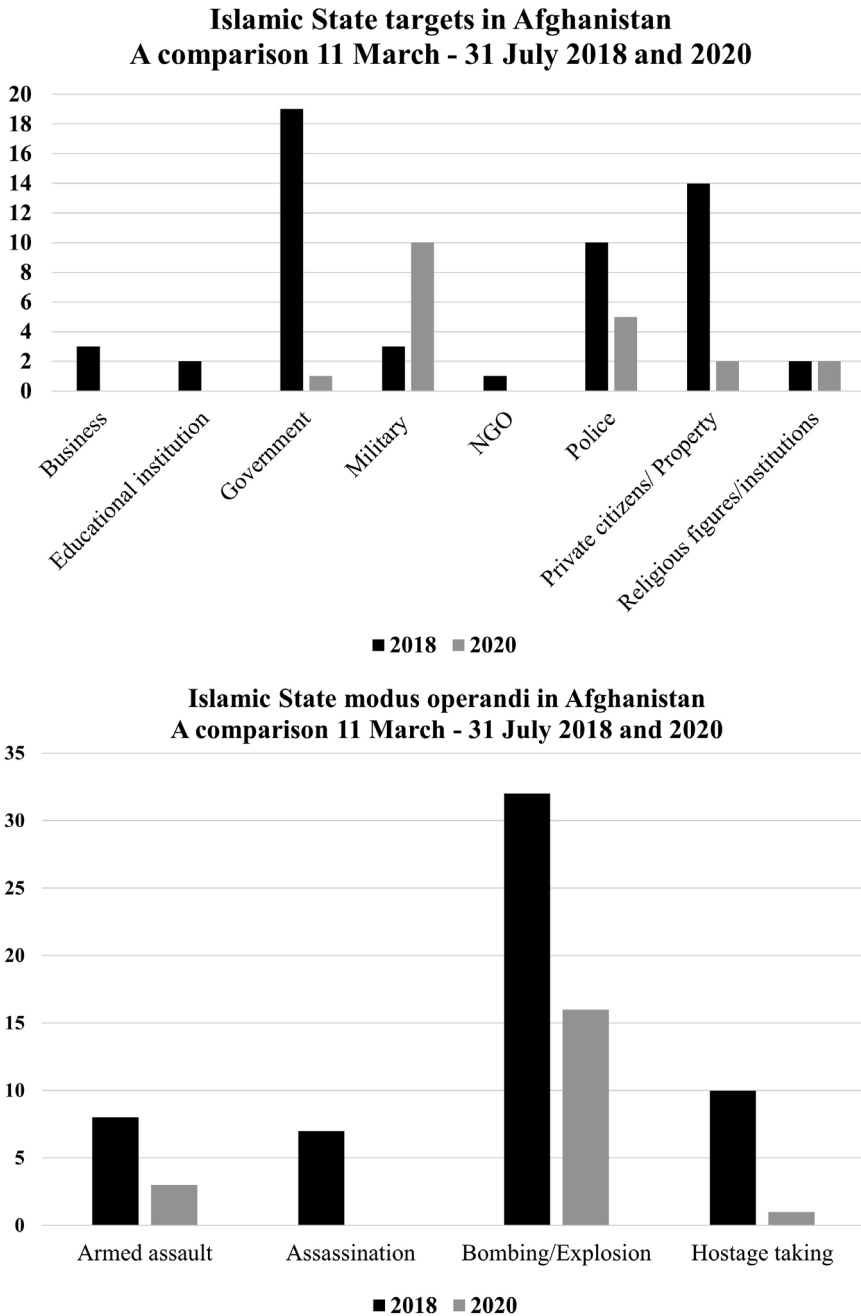


Figure 2.6. Islamic State targets and modus operandi in Afghanistan.
© Katalin Pethő-Kiss.

assassinations occurred, and only one hostage-taking event happened, but the prevalence of bombing over armed assault remained.

Africa

Egypt

In the Sinai Peninsula, between 11 and 14 March 2020, Islamic State Sinai Province ambushed Egyptian military vehicles in three attacks. An IED was activated against an Egyptian military patrol on 19 March 2020. In the last days of March, IS militants attacked Egyptian military vehicles, personnel, and camps in five operations. Ambushes continued in April with nine IED detonations against Egyptian army vehicles and patrols (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). The group claimed six operations between 22 April and 3 May 2020; all were IED detonations targeted at Egyptian soldiers. The group fired at Egyptian forces and activated three IEDs in North Sinai in the middle of May. IS Sinai Province attacked a checkpoint east of Sheikh Zuweid, killing four Egyptian soldiers on 20 May 2020 (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). An IED was activated against an armored Egyptian military vehicle on 30 May (Rubio 2020). As Islamic States's first attack in South Sinai since August 2019, it claimed a roadside IED detonation on a military vehicle in Wadi Maghara (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). Early June 2020, IS Sinai Province killed three Egyptian soldiers in an armed assault (United Nations Security Council 2020). On 21 June 2020, the group assaulted a gathering in Wadi Maghara. During the last days of the month, IS attacked Egyptian security forces in seven operations in the vicinity of Bir al-Abed (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). In one of its most active weeks, at the beginning of July 2020 IS Sinai Province claimed eight attacks on Egyptian forces. On 24 July 2020, the group carried out a dual VBIED suicide operation, targeting positions in Bir al-Abed (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). In the last days of July, two IEDs were detonated at Egyptian army tanks, soldiers were targeted by sniper fire, and two Egyptian officers were abducted and then executed (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). There is a recognizable change throughout the period in the group's modus operandi, as instead of the previous trend in IED detonations on military vehicles, in-person armed assaults became more frequent (SITE Intelligence Group 2020).

Libya

Islamic State Libya Province detonated a roadside IED at the entrance of a battalion post in Taraghin town, south of Sabha, on 25 May 2020 (Reuters, 25 May 2020). Libya Province's Fezzan division claimed the

IED activated against a police station on 28 May 2020. Some days later, the group struck projectiles at the LNA-operated Tamanhant airbase (SITE Intelligence Group 2020).

Mozambique

Islamic State operatives attacked five Mozambican army and Mozambican police centers on 23 and 25 March 2020. In early April, IS militants ambushed a Mozambican military camp and seized control of two villages in the region (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). IS Central Africa Province claimed an armed assault on Mozambican soldiers on 5 May 2020. Later in the month, the group executed two Mozambican soldiers and targeted Mozambican militia as well as homes of Christians via armed assault in the Muidumbe district of Cabo Delgado (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). Islamic State operatives attacked two compounds in Cabo Delgado on 27 June 2020 (BBC, 27 June 2020).

Niger, Nigeria, and Chad

IS West Africa Province militants struck four army camps in Niger between 10 and 16 March 2020. In the last days of March, IS operatives hit various Nigerian military compounds, ambushed their vehicles (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020), and later targeted a military post in Diffa, on the border with Nigeria (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). Several soldiers were killed in 11, 16, and 29 May 2020 Islamic State attacks (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). IS West Africa Province claimed an armed assault on Nigerian soldiers, as well as a series of arson attacks on government buildings, all in the city of Diffa on 24 and 26 July (Campbell 2020).

Islamic State West Africa Province attacked Nigerian military headquarters on 14 and 17 April 2020 in Chad (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). The group targeted Chadian soldiers in Kega and captured two aligned intelligence members in Krajakia in late May (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). IS West Africa Province claimed responsibility for an attack against a Nigerian military base on 3 May 2020. Islamic State operatives struck a Nigerian military camp on 18 May 2020. Two days later, the group captured Chadian military officers, who were then executed. Chadian soldiers and an army camp were ambushed on 8, 10, and 14 July (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020).

Nigeria remained Islamic State's most consistent bastion outside of Syria and Iraq. IS ambushed Nigerian security forces and struck their camp in Borno state in five operations between 10 and 15 March 2020 (ibid.). Islamic State operations against Nigerian military bases continued, with two army sites attacked on 21 and 24 March (Umar and Olu-koya 2020). IS West Africa Province claimed a series of attacks carried

out in the Lake Chad area on Nigerian security forces on 6 April 2020 (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). In the middle of April, IS West Africa carried out six operations, targeting Nigerian forces (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). On the Eastern part of Yobe state, IEDs were activated against Nigerian military vehicles and personnel on 2 May 2020 (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). A series of roadside IEDs killed seventeen Nigerian soldiers as a result of an IS operation in Nigeria on 3 May (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). Islamic State news outlet Amaq reported arson attacks on two Christian churches in Geldi town on 7 May. There were three armed assault incidents between 7 and 12 May on Nigerian forces. In Yobe State, a Nigerian military base was struck (Zenn 2020). IS West Africa Province attacked Nigerian army camps and convoys together with Nigerian police forces in seven incidents between 18 and 22 May (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). In the following days, IS West Africa Province claimed three armed assaults and ten projectile strikes targeting Nigerian soldiers in various villages of its foothold Borno. In late May, Islamic State carried out five operations, consisting of four armed assaults and an IED detonation targeting Nigerian forces in Borno. In early June, the group issued claims for three attacks—all armed assaults—targeting Nigerian soldiers in Borno (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). More than eighty civilians died in an 8 June 2020 plot, when IS West Africa Province raided a village in Borno state (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). As a result of three armed assaults, the Islamic State killed more than eleven Nigerian soldiers between 17 and 20 June 2020 (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). The group claimed responsibility for five attacks on Nigerian military camps and vehicles between 24 and 28 June (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). In the first weeks of July 2020, IS West Africa Province claimed an armed assault targeting Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) personnel in Gombe and eleven additional armed assaults targeting Nigerian forces. Thirteen operations targeted Nigerian forces, Cameroonian forces, Nigeria-government-aligned militiamen, and a Christian community between 23 and 31 July 2020 (SITE Intelligence Group 2020).

Cameroon and DRC

In Cameroon, at the end of May, Islamic State claimed its first cross-border attack since June 2019 in the country from the Nigerian side of Lake Chad. Early June 2020, IS West Africa Province hit on an army position in Sagmé and ambushed a Cameroonian army compound (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). Thirty-four soldiers were killed on 20 June when an Islamic State suicide bomber activated a car bomb among a group of Cameroonian soldiers near Lake Chad (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). On 27 July, the group carried out its third attack in the country in 2020

in targeting a military post in Sagmé town, Fotoko (SITE Intelligence Group 2020).

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, there were two clashes between IS Central Africa Province and the Congolese army in the middle of April 2020 (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). Between 16 and 20 May, Islamic State claimed three attacks—two targeting Congolese soldiers and one targeting Christians—across various villages of Beni (Africa News, 15 May 2020). Thirteen Christians were killed in a 23 May IS operation targeting Christian civilians in northeastern Congo. On 24 May, a soldier and two Congolese military intelligence officers were executed by Islamic State. The group claimed to have killed thirteen Christians as the result of an armed assault in Kumbwa Kobo village near Erineti on 25 May. Twenty soldiers were killed at a military compound on 26 May when IS attacked the base. Twenty other Congolese soldiers lost their lives in an armed assault on two military positions in Beni on 28 May. Later in June 2020, IS Central Africa Province killed eleven Christians in an armed assault, still in Beni. Two days later, the group claimed two more attacks on Christians and Congolese soldiers in the region. IS Central Africa Province claimed three armed assaults between 1 and 3 July. On 14 June, Islamic State operatives killed an officer at a Congolese military compound (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). The group targeted Congolese soldiers in two armed assaults in Beni on 20 and 22 June. The next day, the group attacked a new kind of target when killing five UN peacekeepers (Perkins 2020). As part of its “Battle of Attrition” campaign, IS Central Africa Province claimed three operations targeting Congolese forces between 29 and 30 July 2020 (SITE Intelligence Group 2020).

Mali, Somalia, Kenya

On 11 March 2020, Islamic State operatives activated an IED against a French and Malian military convoy (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). In Mali, under the “Invasions in the Holy Month” military campaign, JNIM claimed four operations against security forces in early May (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). Thabaa News Agency issued messages claiming JNIM attacked a Malian army position in an unidentified location within Mopti province on 27 July 2020 (Al-Lami 2020).

In late April 2020, al-Shabaab carried out standard operations across six regions in Somalia, targeting Somali police officers as well as Ugandan and Burundian troops. Their tactics remained the same, namely armed assaults, assassinations, IED detonations, projectile strikes, and capture/execution (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). In the suburbs of the capital Mogadishu, two Somali policemen were targeted by machine

gun fire on 9 May 2020 (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). Mid-May Islamic State Somalia Province killed a Somali police officer in the Elasha area of Lower Shabelle (Weiss 2020). Marking its third attack in the country in June, the group claimed killing a Somali police officer when deploying a grenade at Wedo intersection. In late May, Islamic State killed a Somali law enforcement agent in a projectile strike on the outskirts of Mogadishu. On 4 June 2020, the group claimed its first operation in Afgoye—a past hotspot (2017–2019)—since late January with a grenade strike at a police headquarters (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). IS Somalia Province targeted Somali police patrols in Mogadishu on 8 June. A policeman was killed in a 22 June attack when a hand grenade was thrown at him (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). Seven policemen were killed when an IED was activated in Mogadishu on 25 June 2020 (Rolbieczki, Van Ostaeyen, and Winter 2020). In the first days of July, IS Somalia Province wounded three police officers in a grenade attack in Mogadishu. As part of the “Battle of Attrition,” the group attacked a joint US/Puntland security convoy on 22 July 2020. The next day they claimed to have killed four Somali police officers with a hand grenade at a Bakara intersection in Mogadishu. Between 16 and 22 July, al-Shabaab claimed twenty operations across six provinces in Somalia and one in Kenya, with standard operations. Al-Shabaab carried out eighteen operations across five provinces in Somalia and one in Kenya between 23 and 29 July 2020, targeting Ugandan troops and Somali

Islamic State-claimed terrorist incidents in Africa A comparison 11 March - 31 July 2018 and 2020

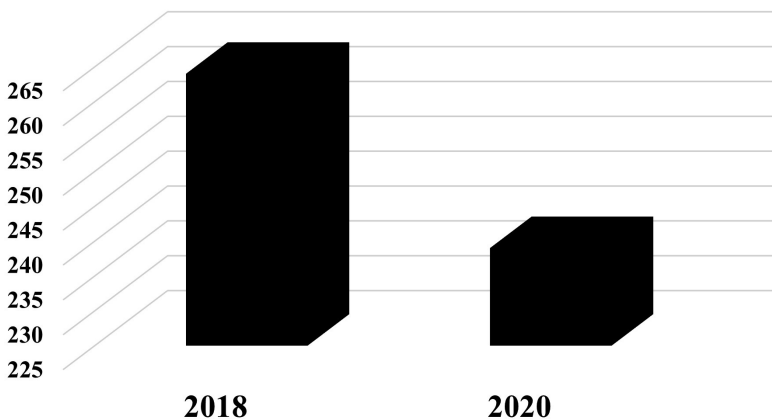


Figure 2.7. Islamic State-related terrorist incidents in Africa.
© Katalin Pethő-Kiss.

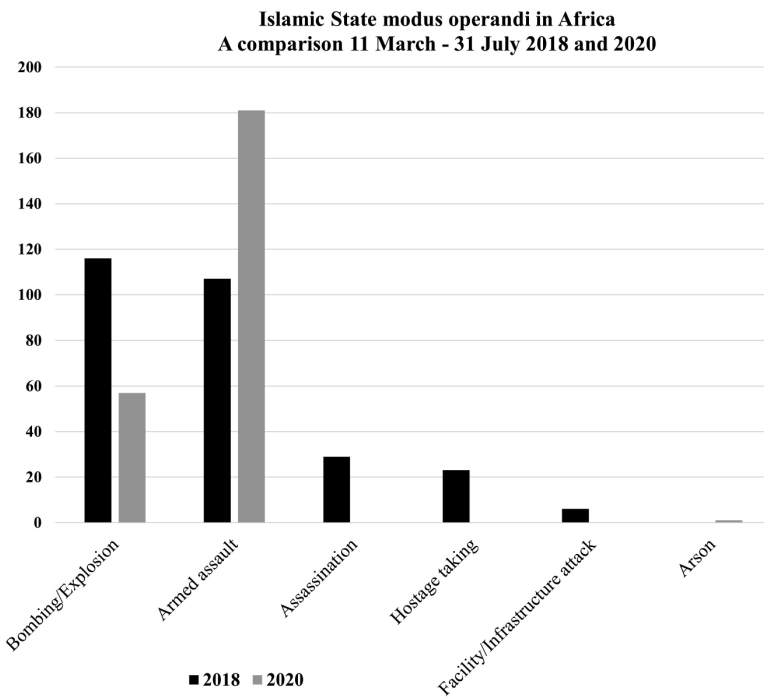
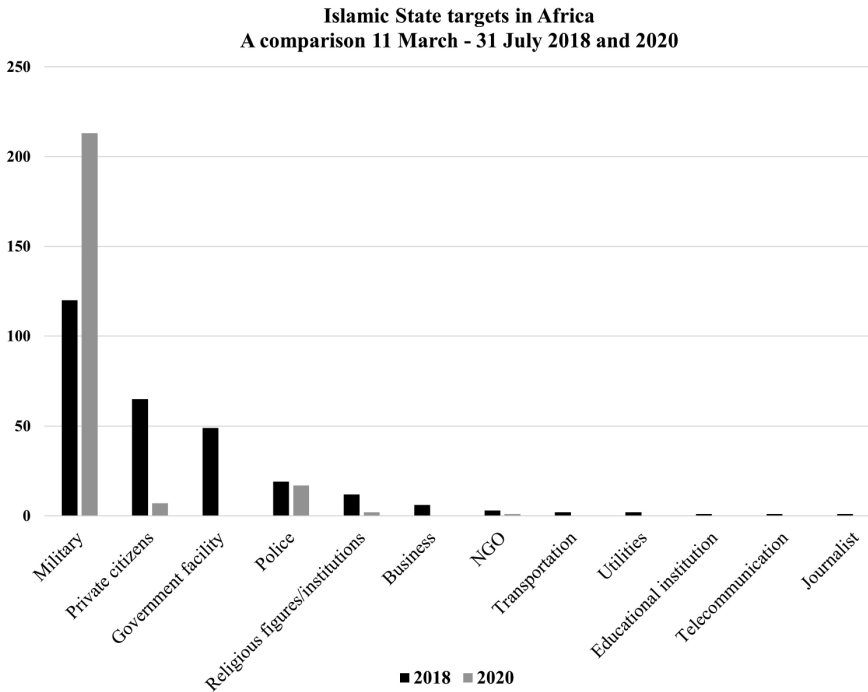


Figure 2.8. Islamic State targets and modus operandi in Africa.
© Katalin Pethő-Kiss.

special forces. At the end of July IS Somalia Province attacked a police checkpoint in Mogadishu (SITE Intelligence Group 2020).

How Has the Radical Islamist Threat Evolved in Africa?

A slightly fewer number of IS-linked incidents were reported in 2020. However, more obvious are the changes both in radical Islamist targets and modus operandi. The number of military targeted attacks nearly doubled, while strikes on private citizens, religious institutions, and businesses drastically decreased. Interestingly, police stations and personnel were attacked roughly the same number of times. This trend might reflect the consequences of restrictions having been put in place. As traditional gatherings were canceled, the more visible military forces became the primary jihadist targets.

There is, however, another observable change in Islamic State's operational tactics in Mozambique. Prior to COVID-19, the group ambushed government institutions and military camps, but after the outbreak they attacked cities, towns, and critical infrastructure to capitalize on the crisis situation (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020).

Islamic State's modus operandi also went through an elementary change, as IED attacks were replaced by armed assaults. Obviously, epidemiological restrictions resulted in disruptions in jihadist supply chains, and this is most likely the reason for this trend.

Nonconflict Zones

Europe

The 2020 European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report asserted that radical Islamist terrorism, more specifically foreign terrorist fighters, were a real security concern in the EU (Europol 2019). There were some significant terrorism-related plots in Europe between 11 March and 31 July 2020.

French police launched a terrorism investigation after two people were killed and five wounded in a knife attack in Romans-sur-Isère, near Grenoble on 4 April 2020. The Sudanese offender, an Islamic State-sympathizer, attacked more people at various shops before being arrested (BBC, 5 April 2020).

Four Tajik nationals were arrested as suspected members of an Islamic State cell on 15 April 2020. They were supposed to have joined IS in January 2019 and had continuously received orders from high-ranking IS members in Syria and Afghanistan inciting them to carry out

attacks in Germany, in particular on US military bases and personnel (Gartenstein-Ross, Chace-Donahue, and Clarke 2020). A French man rammed his car into two police motorcyclists in a Paris suburb on 28 April 2020. The offender pledged allegiance with Islamic State after the incident (Reuters, 28 April 2020).

In the United Kingdom, the official terrorism threat level was reduced from “severe” to “substantial” in November 2019. Since then, three major incidents have occurred in the country, including the stabbing attack in a Reading park. On 20 June 2020, Khairi Saadallah was held on suspicion of killing three people at the scene. The Libyan national perpetrator was known to MI5; in 2019 he caught the attention of security services when information about his aspirations to travel abroad for terrorism purposes emerged. However, at that time no immediate security risk was identified (BBC, 22 June 2020).

Two Algerian citizens were arrested in a Spanish antiterror operation on 2 July 2020. According to the Catalan police, the two citizens were part of a cell that was planning an attack with explosives in Barcelona (Al Jazeera, 14 July 2020). As a result of a joint investigation with Moroccan security forces, earlier in May 2020 Spanish police arrested a suspected Islamic State terrorist. The radicalized Moroccan man broke the pandemic restrictions and was allegedly planning a militant attack in Barcelona (The Telegraph, 8 May 2020).

Islamic State claimed terrorist incidents in Europe

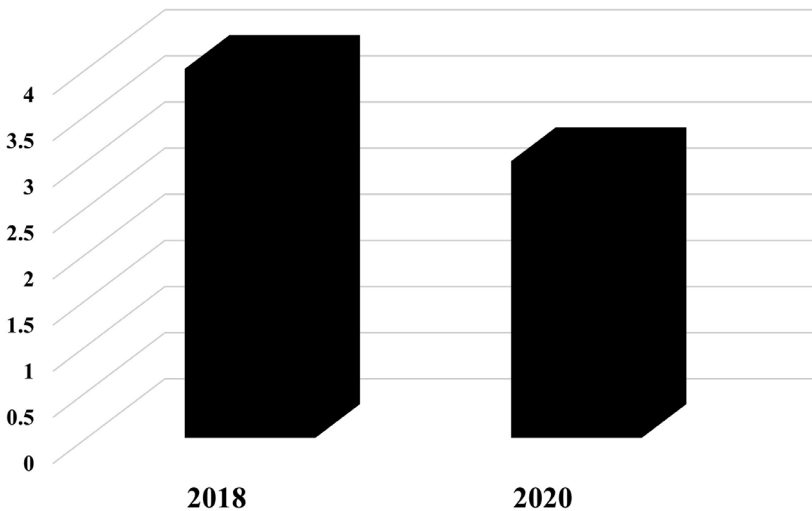


Figure 2.9. Radical Islamist terrorist incidents in Europe.

© Katalin Pethő-Kiss.

How Has the Radical Islamist Threat Evolved in Europe?

All the seven completed European plots in 2018 were of radical Islamist nature and were committed by lone individual actors (Europol 2019). As Figure 2.9. indicates, fewer completed terrorist attacks occurred be-

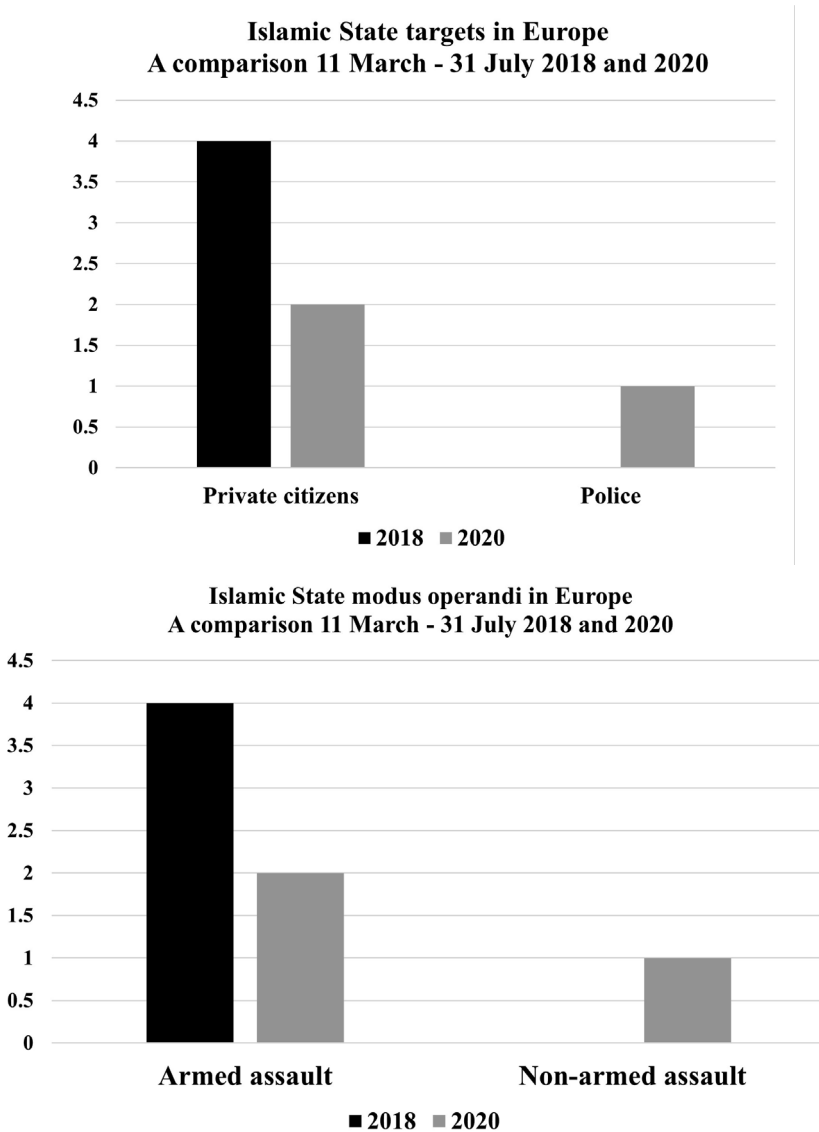


Figure 2.10. Radical Islamist targets and modus operandi in Europe.
© Katalin Pethő-Kiss.

tween 11 March and 31 July 2020, but there has not been a significant decrease in their numbers.

With regard to terrorist targets, no COVID-related changes can be observed. Notably, private citizens were the targets of radical Islamist attacks both in 2018 and 2020. Besides civilians, however, two police officers were stabbed and shot in the Liège attack (BBC News, 30 May 2018).

Typically, unsophisticated *modus operandi* (a gun and a knife) characterized the attacks, although in one instance in the heat of the attack a passer-by was taken hostage (BBC News, 30 May 2018). Regarding the Colombes attack, the perpetrator was unarmed, but he rammed his car into two stationary police patrols on motorcycles (Reuters, 28 April 2020). As mentioned above, radical Islamist-inspired individuals were responsible for the plots occurring in Europe within the examined time period. With regard to the Reading stabbing attack, there was no immediate evidence for allegiance to Islamic State or al-Qaeda. Khairi Saadallah was, though, under investigation as a person who might travel abroad “for extremist reasons” (Grierson et al. 2020).

Southeast Asia

Indonesia

Mujahidin Indonesia Timur claimed responsibility for plots allegedly taking advantage of the pandemic crisis situation in the middle of April 2020. Police killed two suspected MIT operatives after they attacked police officers in Poso city on 15 April. Some days later, the Islamic militant group kidnapped and killed a farmer in Kilo village. Islamic State militants set fire to a police car and attacked police officers in South Kalimantan province on 1 June 2020. IS operatives allegedly shot two Muslim farmers in the Poso regency on June 2 (International Crisis Group 2020).

Philippines

Islamist militants continued to mount small IED and suicide attacks against security forces and engage in small-arms firefights in Mindanao. Islamic State operatives exchanged fire with Filipino soldiers on the island of Jolo on 14 March 2020. From the middle of April till late July, Islamic State militants had numerous confrontations with the Philippine army. They exchanged fire on Jolo Island, threw hand grenades at a roadblock of the Philippine army and later ambushed Philippine army forces and one of their camps on the island of Mindanao (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). Islamic State-linked Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) clashed with the military in two operations in April. ASG took hostage of five Indonesians on 28 April 2020 (International Crisis Group 2020).

In its first documented attack during Ramadan, Islamic State East Asia Province claimed the deaths of two Philippine soldiers in a center located in Datu Hoffer, Maguindanao on 3 May 2020. An “exclusive” in Al-Naba 232 revealed a previously unclaimed attack in Sulu by fighters in East Asia Province, which resulted in the wounding of eight Philippine soldiers. According to the article, the casualties occurred on 23 April 2020, the first day of Ramadan, during an encounter in Latih village, Patikul town (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). In two other May operations, IS East Province militants attacked again Philippine army forces on the island of Mindanao (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). Islamic State East Asia Province claimed to have killed and wounded an unspecified number of Philippine soldiers as the result of an armed assault on an army barracks in Maguindanao on 20 May 2020 (SITE Intelligence Group 2020) and some days later declared the responsibility for killing fifteen Philippine soldiers in a large-scale armed assault in Patikul municipality, Jolo, Sulu (Broches 2020). Confrontations between soldiers and Abu Sayyaf Group militants continued in two May operations. Operatives of Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters attacked military personnel on 3 May and on 18 and 19 May 2020 in Maguindanao province (International Crisis Group 2020).

Islamic State East Asia Province ambushed Philippine soldiers on Jolo Island on the first day of June 2020. Abu Sayyaf Group operatives attacked military personnel in three operations between 5 and 13 June. In Maguindanao province, members of Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters killed a soldier on 9 June 2020 in Sultan Kudarat town. IS militants fired machine guns at Filipino soldiers in the northern part of Jolo Island on 22 June 2020. The leader of Abu Sayyaf was reported dead after a clash with the Philippine armed forces in July 2020. Operatives of IS East Province ambushed Philippine army forces in two operations between 24 and 25 July (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). In early July, IS East Asia Province targeted a checkpoint of Philippine soldiers on the Island of Maguindanao (SITE Intelligence Group 2020). Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters clashed with police and military in three operations in July. Abu Sayyaf Group attacked government forces in Patikul municipality on 6 July (AP News, 30 July 2020).

Borneo Island

In the southern part of Borneo Island, a police officer was killed when Islamic State mounted an attack on a police station on 1 June 2020 (Meir Amit Intelligence 2020). On the same day, a single Islamic State fighter struck a police station in South Daha district, South Hulu Sungai Regency (SITE Intelligence Group 2020).

**Islamic State claimed terrorist incidents in Southeast Asia
A comparison 11 March - 31 July 2018 and 2020**

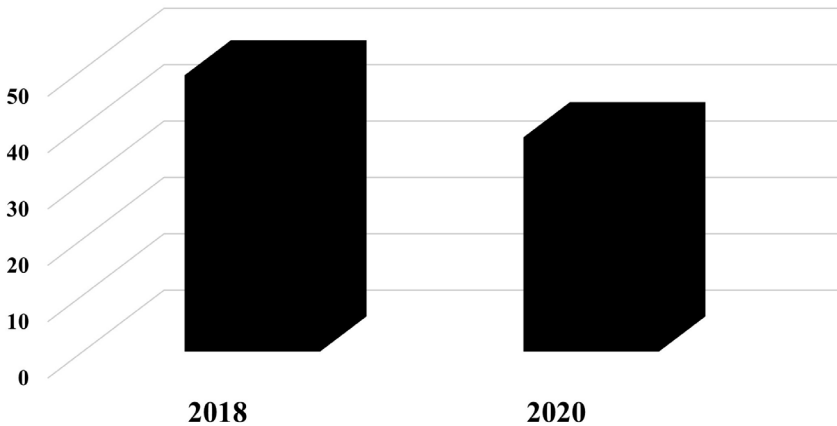


Figure 2.11. Radical Islamist terrorist incidents in Southeast Asia.
© Katalin Pethő-Kiss.

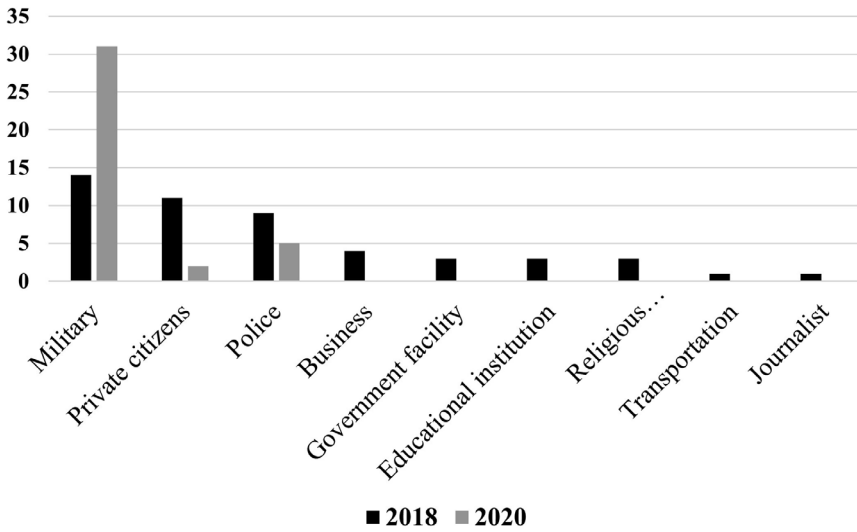
How Has the Radical Islamist Threat Evolved in Southeast Asia?

As the information in Figure 2.11 represents, there was a 23 percent decrease in the number of Islamic terrorist incidents from 2018 to 2020. In Indonesia, the decrease in the number of terrorist attacks and plots can be attributed to the following factors. First, radical Islamist movements became restricted because of the pandemic. Second, counterterrorism operations resulted in successful arrests and weapon hauls. Third, Indonesia-based networks were suffering from an apparent absence of financial assistance from foreign fighters based in Syria (Rahmah 2021).

The change in radical Islamist terrorists' targets is even more apparent. While Islamist fighters previously attacked national armies, private citizens, and police roughly the same amount, in 2020 the vast majority of radical Islamist terrorist incidents targeted military personnel and compounds. There were very few 2020 plots in which police and private citizens were struck. As Figure 2.12 shows, businesses, government facilities, educational institutions, religious figures/institutions, journalists, and means of transportation were no longer targets by prominent terrorist entities in 2020.

There is also a noteworthy change in the way radical Islamist terrorists plotted their attacks. While in 2018 46 percent of Islamist terrorist incidents occurred by activating an improvised explosive device or a

Islamic State targets in Southeast Asia A comparison 11 March - 31 July 2018 and 2020



Islamic State modus operandi in Southeast Asia A comparison 11 March - 31 July 2018 and 2020

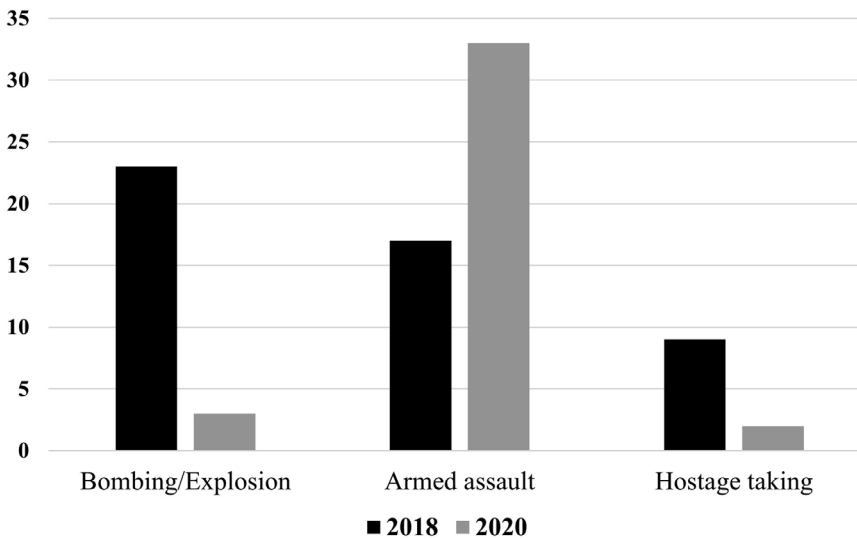


Figure 2.12. Radical Islamist terrorist targets and modus operandi in Southeast Asia. © Katalin Pethő-Kiss.

grenade, in 2020 IEDs were involved much less frequently. Apparently, armed assault became the most commonly applied modus operandi. Stabbing remained jihadists' preferred tactic, which requires less effort in terms of training, planning, and funds (Rahmah 2021). In 2018 there were nine instances in which radical Islamist operatives kidnapped their victims; this number decreased to two in 2020. This seems to contradict those predictions that suggested the chaos caused by the pandemic would exasperate the factors that contribute to kidnapping for ransom (Damora 2020).

The same radical Islamist terrorist entities were active in Southeast Asia, but their level of intensity was reduced. The previously noteworthy Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement's activity in the region decreased almost three-fold. Meanwhile, the Islamic State claimed an increased number of attacks. Interestingly, there is no change with regard to Abu Sayyaf Group, which claimed responsibility for nine attacks both in 2018 and 2020. The number of attacks claimed by Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) may have dropped because of the following factors. First, by May 2020 Indonesian National Police had arrested fifty-seven individuals suspected to be members of JAD. And second, a disagreement emerged within the group, as operatives perceived the relevance of the pandemic in different ways. While one section was busy working out a contingency plan to save themselves from the pandemic, others were eager to become martyrs and incited attacks (Levenia and Sciascia 2020).

United States

An assailant at a sleepover party stabbed three people in Ballen Isles neighborhood, Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, United States in March 2018. At least one person was killed and two others injured in the assault. Corey Johnson claimed responsibility and stated that he carried out the attack because the victims made fun of how he practiced his Muslim faith. Sources also noted that Johnson allegedly contacted members of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and showed interest in joining the group. Previously, he had shown a fascination for Nazis and white supremacists, had reportedly antagonized female classmates, and had made derogatory comments against Jews and LGBT people (Wang 2018).

A Salafi jihadist-inspired aviation student from Saudi Arabia killed three men at Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida in December 2019 (NBC News, 8 December 2019). Religious terrorism and the threat

Table 2.1. Radical Islamist terrorism in the United States.

© Katalin Pethő-Kiss.

Radical Islamist-related terrorist incidents in the USA A comparison — 2018 and 2020 March 11–July 31		
Year	Number of terrorist attacks	
2018	1	
2020	0	
Radical Islamist targets in the USA A comparison — 2018 and 2020 March 11–July 31		
Type target	2018	2020
Private citizens	1	0
Radical Islamist modus operandi in the USA A comparison – 2018 and 2020 March 11–July 31		
Modus operandi	2018	2020
Armed assault	1	0
Radical Islamist groups in the USA A comparison — 2018 and 2020 March 11–July 31		
Terrorist groups	2018	2020
Radical Islamist	1	0

posed by Salafi jihadists remain a concern in the United States because of the following factors. First, al-Qaeda and Islamic State incitements to conduct lone offender-type attacks are continuous. Second, there are still a considerable number of radical Islamist fighters in Syria and Iraq. At the same time, AQ and IS-aligned groups operating in Yemen, Nigeria, Somalia, and Afghanistan also constitute an ongoing serious threat (Jones, Doxsee, and Harrington 2020).

How Has the Radical Islamist Threat Evolved in the United States?

Within the examined time period, in 2020 no radical Islamist-inspired terrorist incident was reported. In 2018 right-wing extremists were responsible for 90 percent of extremist-related killings (ADL Center on Extremism 2020). In 2020 the Department of Homeland Security confirmed that home-grown white supremacist and neo-Nazi terrorists are the greatest security concern. In 2020 Boogaloo movement activists conducted most of the terrorist incidents in the United States (Hoffman and Ware 2020).

The Role of Ramadan

One-third or 600 million of the world's Muslim population is from or lives in South Asia. They also form a significant immigrant diaspora in the west and east, with a presence in North America, Europe, Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. Islam is the dominant religion in Afghanistan (35 million), Bangladesh (150 million), Maldives (550,000), and Pakistan (200 million), and the dominant religion after Hinduism in India (200 million) and Buddhism in Sri Lanka (2 million) and Nepal (1.3 million) (Pew Research Center 2020). While South Asia hosts the world's largest regional population of Muslims, Southeast Asia hosts 242 million adherents, or 42 percent of the population. From the eighth century, Islam grew in South Asia, starting with India and Sri Lanka through maritime trade. After adapting to local traditions, Islam flourished in South and Southeast Asia. However, reformist, revivalist, and radical Islamic movements, most notably Wahhabism, challenge local and traditional Islam today (Nationsonline 2015).

The most sacred month for Muslims is Ramadan. In the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, Muslims mark that Allah gave the first chapters of the Qu'ran to the Prophet Muhammad in 610. Muslims around the world abstain from pleasures and pray to get closer to God. Ramadan is also a powerful symbol of unity; fasting brings together family and friends without geographic restrictions (Ross 2018).

On 23 April 2020, the beginning of the Holy month of Ramadan, Islamic State-aligned groups and supporters shared in multiple languages across their channels well wishes together with guidelines to remain safe. As the rewards are multiplied for an attack during Ramadan, there were supposed to have been more attacks in conflict areas (Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Mindanao, Poso). Radical Islamist posters called Ramadan the "month of invasions and jihad" (SITE Intelligence Group²⁰²⁰). IS-linked groups posted a litany of material, including praise of the alleged IS supporter who carried out a vehicular attack in Paris. They called for further attacks during the pandemic and expressed joy for those who had died from the virus in the United States and Italy. In conjunction with the destabilization of law and security enforcement caused by COVID-19 around the world, the potential for an increase in attacks and incitements posed a heightened threat (SITE Intelligence Group 2020).

With the dawn of Ramadan, Islamic State began its campaign by mounting two attacks in which policemen and intelligence personnel were injured in France and Iraq respectively. An IS lone wolf conducted

a vehicle ramming attack against police during an identity check on 27 April 2020. A 29-year-old Frenchman drove his car into police cars and motorcycles, injuring three officers in the northwestern Paris suburb of Colombes. The driver had a knife in his car along with a letter pledging allegiance to IS and claiming that he wants to impose Islamic sharia law around the world (Reuters, 28 April 2020). In response to the call, both operatives and supporters threatened attacks in retaliation for closing the mosques. Two Islamic State supporters in Tunisia attempted to infect police officers by coughing and deliberately contaminating a busy precinct (Middle East Eye, 17 April 2020).

During Ramadan 2020, IS media output from the “Battle of Attrition” military campaign in the form of provincial photo reports spiked to the highest monthly levels since November 2019, with the majority coming from Iraq for the second consecutive month. Feature video output remained on pace with the 1–2 average seen in the last six months, with a piece from Iraq Province, while unofficial Amaq News Agency videos totaled six, down from eight in April 2020. Islamic State claimed its first suicide operation in Iraq in nearly a year. An IS suicide attacker with explosive belts detonated himself on 28 April 2020 while attempting to penetrate Kirkuk’s intelligence headquarters. The security guards at the entrance started to shoot him, making him detonate himself, which resulted in injuries to the security guards (Abdul-Zahira 2020). Islamic State’s remnants regrouped and initiated a series of attacks on both Peshmerga forces as well as the Iraqi army. Islamic State’s Al-Naba Issue 235 included an infographic of statistical breakdowns of IS operations in Iraq during Ramadan 2020. Accordingly, group fighters killed and wounded 426 in 266 attacks in the holy period (SITE Intelligence Group 2020).

In addition to the release of the third issue of the Indian Subcontinent-focused magazine “The Voice of Hind” (2020), Islamic State-linked, India-centric Islamist groups increased calls for attacks in India. “The Voice of Hind” suggested multiple ways to mount attacks in India and also promoted past incidents in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. Referring to the latest plot in the Maldives, Islamic State said: “May Allah accept all your efforts and operations you have executed such as the burning of a hotel and two of their boats and the stabbing of an Australian Kaafir. May it be worse for the apostate democratic government so that Allah punishes them by your hands.” It suggested lone wolves in India use kitchen knives, axes, hammers to stab and bludgeon, ropes and belts to choke, vehicles to run over people, petrol bombs to “wreak the havoc,” and bare hands to throw heavy objects from rooftops in order to maim and kill (The Voice of Hind 2020).

Indonesian Islamic State supporters on Telegram celebrated previous attacks carried out by jihadist fighters and incited attacks against Indonesian National Police counterterrorism squad Densus 88's newly appointed chairman, along with other high-ranking officials. They called for operations during the holy month of Ramadan targeting Christian churches in particular (SITE Intelligence Group 2020).

We have detected a clear difference between trends during Ramadan in conflict and nonconflict zones. The novel circumstances of being on the battlefield provided terrorists with more beneficial conditions, and accordingly a heightened level of intensity characterized radical Islamist operations. Meanwhile, restrictions on social gatherings off the battlefields resulted in a decrease in the frequency of radical Islamist attacks.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to better understand emerging trends in Islamist terrorism between 11 March and 31 July 2020, which have been contrasted with incidents reported in the same period in 2018. The comparison has been based on four perspectives, namely the number of attacks, their targets together with their modus operandi, and the active radical Islamist terrorist groups in the respective geographic regions. Finally, the role of Ramadan 2020 has been evaluated.

Note

1. Hadith of Prophet Muhammad:

COVID-19

1) *QUARANTINE* is a Prophetic advice.

“Run away from the leper (the one with contagious ailment) as you would run away from a lion.” (Bukhari Volume 7, Book 71, Number 608)

2) *SOCIAL DISTANCING* is a Prophetic command. “Those with contagious diseases should be kept away from those who are healthy.” Bukhari (6771) and Muslim (2221)

3) *TRAVEL BAN* is a Prophetic teaching. “Do not enter a land where the plague (contagious ailment) has broken out; don't leave from where it has broken out.” Bukhari (5739) and Muslim (2219)

4) *DON'T HARM OTHERS* if you have symptoms. The Prophet said: “Do not cause harm or return harm.” Sunan Ibn Mājah (2340)

5) *STAYING HOME* is a Prophetic teaching. “Those who stay at home to protect themselves and others are under the protection of Allah.” Musnad Ahmed, Saheeh

- 6) If necessary, *HOUSE IS A MASJID*. The Prophet said: “The entire earth has been made a Masjid, except graveyards and washrooms.” Tirmidhi (al-Salaah, 291)
- 7) *THERE’S CURE*; patience is the virtue. The Prophet said: “There is no disease that Allah sent without sending for it a cure.” Bukhari (Volume 7, Book 71, Number 582)
- 8) Let’s *TREAT; ALLAH WILL CURE*. The Prophet said: “Every disease has a cure. If a cure is applied to the disease, it is relieved by the permission of Allah.” Muslim (2204)
- 9) *FACE MASKING* is a Prophetic teaching. Prophet while sneezing would cover his face with his hand or with his garment.” Abu Dawud; Tirmidhi (Book 43, Hadith 2969), Sahih
- 10) *WASH HANDS* every time you enter home. The Prophet said: “Cleanliness is half of faith.” Muslim (223)
- 11) *HOME QUARANTINE* is a Prophetic advice. “The plague (contagion) patient who remains in his home with patience and expectation of reward, knowing that nothing will befall him other than Allah’s decree will attain the reward or a martyr.” Musnad Ahmad, Sahih also Bukhari (2829) and Muslim (1914)

References

- Abdul-Zahira, Qassim. 2020. “Iraq Officials Say IS Targets Intelligence Bureau; 3 Wounded.” *AP News*, 28 April.
- Alexander, Audrey. 2020. “The Security Threat COVID-19 Poses to the Northern Syria Detention Camps Holding Islamic State Members.” *CTC Sentinel* 13: 6.
- Al-Hashimi, Husham. 2020. “ISIS in Iraq: From Abandoned Villages to the Cities.” Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy website. Retrieved September 2022 from <https://newlinesinstitute.org/isis/isis-in-iraq-from-abandoned-villages-to-the-cities/>.
- Al-Khateb, Khaled. 2020. “Islamic State Spreading Terror Once Again in Syrian Desert.” *Al-Monitor*, April.
- Al-Lami, Mina. 2020. “Africa’s Sahel Becomes Latest al-Qaeda-IS Battleground.” *BBC*, 11 May.
- Azani, Eitan, Michael Barak, and Lorena Atiyas-Lvovsky. 2020. “ISIS’ Threat Assessment to Israel Threat Assessment in Light of ISIS’ Spokesman’s Call to Foil the ‘Plan of the Century’ and Attack Israel.” International Institute for Counter-Terrorism website. Retrieved September 2022 from <https://www.ict.org.il/images/ISIS%E2%80%99Threat%20Assessment%20to%20Israel.pdf>.
- Barak, Michael. 2020. “ISIS Strengthens in Iraq.” International Institute for Counter-Terrorism website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://ict.org.il/isis-strengthens-in-iraq/>.
- Broches, Emma. 2020. “Southeast Asia’s Overlooked Foreign Fighter Problem.” *Lawfare* 5 June.
- “Call for Violence to Reopen Philippine Mosque Closed by COVID-19 Restrictions.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.

- Campbell, John. 2020. "Niger Attack Demonstrates Islamic State in West Africa's Growing Reach." Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.cfr.org/blog/niger-attack-demonstrates-islamic-state-west-africas-growing-reach>.
- "Contending with ISIS in the Time of Coronavirus." 2020. International Crisis Group website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/contending-isis-time-coronavirus>.
- Cordesman, Anthony H. 2020. "The Real World Capabilities of ISIS: The Threat Continues." CSIS website. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/real-world-capabilities-isis-threat-continues>.
- "Corona: It Is the Prayer of the People of al-Baghouz, Whom You Burned Alive, It Has Killed You So Reap the Results of Your Actions." 2020. TRAC Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.trackingterrorism.org/chat/cgi-green-b1rds-unofficial-islamic-state-corona-it-prayer-people-al-baghouz-whom-you-burned-/>.
- Cruikshank, Paul. 2020. "ISIS Exploiting Coronavirus Security Gaps to Relaunch Insurgency, UN Report Warns." *CNN*, 23 July.
- Damora, Brittany. 2020. "COVID-19: Impact on Kidnap for Ransom Activity." *Security Magazine*, 13 April.
- "European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2020." 2019. Europol website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-te-sat-2020>.
- Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed, Emelie Chace-Donahue, and Colin P. Clarke. 2020. "The Threat of Jihadist Terrorism in Germany." International Centre for Counter-Terrorism website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://icct.nl/publication/the-threat-of-jihadist-terrorism-in-germany/>.
- Grierson, Jamie, Dan Sabbagh, Matthew Weaver, Simon Murphy, and Molly Blackall. 2020. "Libyan Held over Reading Multiple Stabbing 'Known to Security Services.'" *The Guardian*, 21 June.
- Hanna, Andrew. 2020. "What Islamists Are Doing and Saying on COVID-19 Crisis." Wilson Center website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/what-islamists-are-doing-and-saying-covid-19-crisis>.
- Hoffman, Bruce, and Jacob Ware. 2020. "The Terrorist Threat from the Fractured Far Right." *Lawfare*, 1 November.
- "Imam in Hamas TV Friday Sermon a Day before Coronavirus Cases Confirmed in Gaza: 'This Virus Is a Soldier of Allah.'" 2020. Memri website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.memri.org/tv/gaza-friday-sermon-palestinian-sheikh-jamil-mutawa-coronavirus-allah-soldier-praise-victims>.
- "Indonesia." 2020. International Crisis Group website. Retrieved May 2022 from https://www.crisisgroup.org/crISwatch/database?location_percent5B_percent5D=44&date_range=last_6_months&from_month=01&from_year=2020&to_month=01&to_year=2020.
- "Indonesian IS-Aligned Account Urges Supporters Carry Out Attacks during COVID-19 Pandemic." 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- "Interactive Data Table: World Muslim Population by Country." 2019. Pew Research Center website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.pewforum.org/chart/interactive-data-table-world-muslim-population-by-country/>.

- “IS-Aligned Group Mocks ‘Disbelieving’ Countries over Inability of Scientific Progress to Stop COVID-19.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- “IS-Aligned Maldivian Channel Urges for Attacks during COVID-19 Crisis.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- “Islamic World.” Nations Online website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/muslim-countries.htm>.
- Jackson, Ashley. 2020. “For the Taliban, the Pandemic Is a Ladder.” *Foreign Policy*, 6 May.
- “Jihadist Threat Alert IS-aligned Group Portrays COVID-19 Pandemic as Revenge for Muslims of Baghuz.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- Johnson, Bridget. 2020. “ISIS Lauds ‘Death and Terror’ of Coronavirus Outbreak.” *Homeland Security Today*, 27 January.
- Jones, Seth G., Catrina Doxsee, and Nicholas Harrington. 2020. “The Escalating Terrorism Problem in the United States.” CSIS Briefs. Retrieved May 2022 from https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/200612_Jones_DomesticTerrorism_v6.pdf.
- Joscelyn, Thomas. 2020. “How Jihadists Are Reacting to the Coronavirus Pandemic.” Foundation for Defense of Democracies website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2020/04/06/how-jihadists-are-reacting-to-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>.
- Knights, Michael, and Alex Almeida. 2020. “Remaining and Expanding: The Recovery of Islamic State Operations in Iraq in 2019–2020.” *CTC Sentinel* 13: 5.
- Kruglanski, Arie W., Rohan Gunaratna, Molly Ellenberg, and Anne Speckhard. 2020. “Terrorism in Time of the Pandemic: Exploiting Mayhem.” *Global Security: Health, Science and Policy* 5(1): 121–32.
- Levenia, Ultra, and Alban Sciascia. 2020. “How COVID-19 Is Reshaping Terror Threats in Indonesia.” *The Diplomat*, May.
- Lurie, Devin. 2020. “ISIS in the Philippines: A Cause for Concern.” American Security Project website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.americansecurityproject.org/isis-in-the-philippines-a-cause-for-concern/>.
- Mashal, Mujib, and Najim Rahim. 2020. “Taliban Stage a Major Attack, as Violence Intensifies in Northern Afghanistan.” *The New York Times*, 13 July.
- Meek, James Gordon. 2020. “Terrorist Groups Spin COVID-19 as God’s ‘Smallest Soldier’ Attacking West.” *ABC News*, 2 April.
- Millward, James, and Dahlia Peterson. 2020. “China’s System of Oppression in Xinjiang: How It Developed and How to Curb It.” *Brookings*, September.
- “Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2019.” 2020. ADL Center on Extremism website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.adl.org/media/14107/download>.
- Perkins, Brian M. 2020. “IS-CAP Attack Claims in DRC Increase, but Capabilities Largely Remain the Same.” *Terrorism Monitor* 18(14).
- “Philippines.” 2019. International Crisis Group website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/philippines>.
- Pikulicka-Wilczewska, Agnieszka. 2020. “The Islamic State Remains Alive in Afghanistan.” *The Diplomat*, April.
- Rahmah, Unaesah. 2021. “Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore.” *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 13(1).

- “Recent Global Jihadist Updates on the COVID-19 Pandemic April 1–7, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- “Recent Jihadist Updates on the COVID-19 Pandemic April 28–May 6, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- Rolbieczki, Tomasz, Pieter van Ostaeyen, and Charlie Winter. 2020. “The Islamic State’s Strategic Trajectory in Africa: Key Takeaways from Its Attack Claims.” *CTC Sentinel* 13(8).
- Ross, Rachel. 2018. “What Is Ramadan?” Live Science website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.livescience.com/61815-what-is-ramadan.html>.
- Rubin, Alissa J., Lara Jakes, and Eric Schmitt. 2020. “ISIS Attacks Surge in Iraq Amid Debate on U.S. Troop Levels.” *The New York Times*, 10 June.
- Rubio, Pablo. 2020. “Egypt a Recurrent Target of Jihadist Terrorism.” Atalayar website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://atalayar.com/en/content/egypt-recurrent-target-jihadist-terrorism>.
- Schmid, Alex P. 2012. “The Revised Academic Consensus Definition of Terrorism.” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 6: 2.
- “Security Council Press Statement on Terrorist Attack in Afghanistan.” 2020. United Nations Security Council.
- “Security Situation in Somalia.” 2019. ECOI.NET website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.ecoi.net/en/countries/somalia/featured-topics/security-situation/>.
- Seldin, Jeff. 2020. “Pushed to the Brink Again, Islamic State’s Afghan Affiliate Claims Deadly Attacks.” *VOA News*, 12 May.
- “Situation in West Africa, Sahel ‘Extremely Volatile’ as Terrorists Exploit Ethnic Animosity, Special Representative Warns Security Council.” 2020. United Nations Security Council website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14245.doc.htm>.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad March 12–18, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad March 19–25, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad March 26–April 1, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad April 2–6, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad April 7–22, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad April 23–30, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad May 1–6, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad May 7–13, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad May 14–20, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad May 21–26, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.

- “Spotlight on Global Jihad May 27–June 3, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad June 4–10, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad June 11–17, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad June 18–24, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad June 25–July 1, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad July 2–8, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad July 9–15, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad July 16–22, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad July 23–29, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Spotlight on Global Jihad July 30–August 5, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- “Syria Security Situation.” 2020. European Asylum Support Office website. Retrieved May 2022 from https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/05_2020_EASO_COI_Report_Syria_Security_situation.pdf.
- “The Voice of Hind.” 2020. Issue 3.
- Umar, Haruna, and Sam Olukoya. 2020. “In Nigeria, an Islamic State-Linked Group Steps Up Attacks.” *AP News*, 26 June.
- “Virus Fears Spread at Camps for ISIS Families in Syria’s North East.” International Crisis Group website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/syria/virus-fears-spread-camps-isis-families-syrias-north-east>.
- Von Hein, Matthias. 2020. “‘Islamic State’ Exploiting Coronavirus and Conflict to Rise Again.” *DW*, 22 May.
- Wang, Amy B. 2018. “A Teen with Former Neo-Nazi Ties Claims His ‘Muslim Faith’ Led Him to Stab Three, Police Say.” *The Washington Post*, 22 March.
- “Weekly Report on the Islamic State, April 22–28, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- “Weekly Report on the Islamic State, April 29–May 5, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- “Weekly Report on the Islamic State, May 6–12, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- “Weekly Report on the Islamic State, May 20–26, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- “Weekly Report on the Islamic State, May 27–June 2, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- “Weekly Report on the Islamic State, June 3–9, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.

- “Weekly Report on the Islamic State, June 17–23, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- “Weekly Report on the Islamic State, July 1–7, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- “Weekly Report on al-Qaeda Branches and Linked Groups July 16–22, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- “Weekly Report on al-Qaeda Branches and Linked Groups, July 23–29, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- “Weekly Report on the Islamic State, July 30–August 4, 2020.” 2020. Retrieved May 2022 from SITE Intelligence Group.
- Weiss, Caleb. 2020. “Islamic State in Somalia Suffers Setbacks Despite Uptick in Claimed Activity.” *Long War Journal*, 1 June.
- Zenn, Jacob. 2020. “ISIS in Africa: The Caliphate’s Next Frontier.” Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy website. Retrieved May 2022 from <https://newlinesinstitute.org/isis/isis-in-africa-the-caliphates-next-frontier/>.