



## Future Trajectories for Emerging Radical Islamist and Far Right Trends

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### Could Violent Extremists Weaponize COVID-19?

Since the beginning of the contemporary wave of international terrorism in 1968, there has never been so much chatter on a virus. Terrorist groups worldwide have expressed interest in capitalizing on COVID-19. The virus is hard to weaponize in order to cause mass casualties, but deliberate infection is still a serious concern. There have been instances recorded where nonstate actors engaged in the malicious spread of coronavirus, particularly within law enforcement and medical research facilities. For instance, in the United Kingdom, infected assailants used spit as a weapon on police officers (Weaver and Dodd 2020). Similarly, Belly Mujinga, a 47-year-old British railway ticket office worker, died after a man deliberately coughed on her (DW, 12 May 2020). In Belgium, where several cases of spitting were reported, offenders could be fined up to €2,400 and could face prison terms of up to two years. If claiming to be infected to scare others, the offenders will be subjected to the same penalties (The Brussels Times, 31 March 2020). A Pennsylvania woman, Margaret Cirko, aged 35, coughed and spat on US \$35,000 worth of produce and merchandise at a grocery store. She was arrested and charged with two felony counts of terrorist threats, one felony count of threats to use a “biological agent” and one felony count of criminal mischief (Halpin and Kalinowski 2020).

Regardless of the aforementioned handful of attempts at deliberate infection, SARS-CoV-2 has not yet proved stable enough for violent extremist purposes for two reasons. First, the virus loses its ability to infect after a relatively short period of time. We have learnt the virus causes serious or fatal consequences mostly in the elderly generation and has been shown to be mild or even asymptomatic in younger generations. Second, restrictions on mass gatherings as well as newly adopted

sanitary habits such as wearing masks in public spaces have all undermined malicious intentions to infect groups of people. Ultimately, it is looking more likely that people will learn to live with the virus, reducing the virus vulnerabilities violent extremists aim to exploit. This may be the best-case future scenario barring a more fatal mutation. A future dangerous and highly infectious disease may revive violent extremists' motivations for bioterrorism.

## **The Future Radical Islamist Threat**

The Islamic State has already declared they will have a role in paving the way for the future (Islamic State quoted by SITE Intelligence Group 2020):

As we all know, the corona virus Pandemic has cast its gloomy, painful shadow over the entire world. Across the globe, there appears to be no light at the end of the dark tunnel that the world finds itself in. People are stuck in their homes, and shops and businesses are being forced to shut down. The global economy is paralyzed and the world is utterly perplexed by this predicament. Everything that was once taken for granted lies now in grave jeopardy. Economies of major nations lie in ruin as they find their entire state apparatus, including army and security [,] pinned down by an invisible enemy. Norms of social behavior, lifestyles, everything is being redefined. Allah alone knows what the coming days hold in store. In the midst of this unprecedented crisis, we consider it our duty to console our Muslim brothers and sisters and discuss the way forward for the Muslim world specifically and humanity in general.

With Afghanistan emerging as an alternative base to Syria, the strategy of the Islamic State is to radicalize the Muslim population in South Asia (Mines and Jadoon 2020). Having declared Wilayat (provinces of the caliphate) in India and Pakistan, Islamic State propaganda claims that attempts to eradicate jihad in Afghanistan failed and instead spread to other regions of the subcontinent. Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi as “the Pharaoh of India,” the Islamic State says that the recent attack against the Sikh temple in Kabul was to avenge Indian actions in Kashmir (Mir 2020).

And if the Hindu Polytheists today have begun to bother the Muslims who testified Tawheed and live in India by arresting them, lynching them, and introducing new laws to evict them, then soon they will begin to take them away either dead, imprisoned, or homeless. Allah said: “And they will continue to fight you until they turn you back from your religion if

they are able” [2:217]. So, remember they will not leave anyone amongst you except the one who apostates from his religion and follows theirs. The only cure to it is Jihad as Shaykh Abu Musab az-Zarqawi said: “Verily after Tawheed the best antidote to the problems of this Ummah is Jihad for the sake of Allah.” (Mir 2020)

With the decentralization of the Islamic State, it is creating regional capabilities. The focus of the Islamic State is to expand throughout South Asia by spreading its ideology among the Muslims of the region (Business World 2020).

Thus, the barren lands which had become devoid of Jihad turned fertile after being nourished by the blood of Shuhadah. The patrons of the creed of al-Wala’a wal Bara’a rose against the enemies of Allah and reaffirmed that they will not cease their Jihad until the word of Allah becomes the Highest. The Knights of Wilayah Hind, on one hand, have marched forth with this blessed caravan and on the other hand, the Mujahideen of Wilayah Pakistan are exerting all efforts to intensify the flames of war. Striking the enemies of Allah, they are supreme by their aqeeda and tawheed, not through themselves. They are defiant by their certainty that victory, strength, and triumph are for them by the grace of Allah not by their weapons nor numbers. (Business World 2020)

Islamic State’s South Asia issue of *The Voice of Hind* (issue 6) was designed and developed to radicalize South Asian territorials and its diaspora. One of the articles focused on “Prison, The University of Yusuf.” The article called for prisoners to reflect on their religious education and be supported and freed. “It is from the utmost responsibilities of the Muslims that he removes the distress from the other oppressed Muslim brothers and sisters and more so when someone from the Muslimeen is in the prisons of the kuffar. Therefore, we must try every possible way to free them and comfort them” (The Voice of Hind 2020). Governments should pay special attention to attempts at prison infiltration to connect with terrorists, prison breaks to free terrorists, and radical and violent groups supporting families of terrorists.

The message of the Islamic State is essentially Islamic domination or Islamic supremacy of the subcontinent.

And prior to that, your brothers in Sri-Lanka have also glorified the Khilafah by shedding the filthy blood of crusaders while they refused humiliation and subservience and offered their blood and lives for their religion. And so, have the lions of the Khilafah in Bangladesh, who trod the path of honor and dignity and have been carrying out attacks against the apostate regime. We also congratulate the brothers from the Maldives for carrying out the blessed arson attack against the apostate regime, a first of its kind

officially announced by the Khilafah. O Muwahideen in Pakistan, Kashmir, Bangladesh, Maldives, Sri-Lanka, and India we bring you glad tidings of Ghazwa e Hind. So, thank Allah and praise Him for He has provided us a chance for being among those who have been promised the conquest of Hind by Imam of Mujahideen and last messenger Muhammad SAW. . . . The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There are two groups of my ummah whom Allah will protect from the Fire: a group who will conquer India, and a group who will be with ‘Eesaa ibn Maryam’ (peace be upon him).” (Narrated by an-Nasaa’i (no. 3175) and Imam Ahmad in al-Musnad (37/81)) (SITE Intelligence Group 2020)

Muslim radicals advocating Shariah (Islamic law) are nearly 10 percent of Indonesia’s population. Although they are small, they exercise disproportionate power (Indonesia Investments 2020). They have the capacity to mobilize on current issues and conduct massive and at times aggressive campaigns. The radicals do not agree with the “new normal” policy, which they present as one of the capitalist systems that does not benefit society. Increasingly, there is support from the youth; a survey by Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) found that 10 percent of millennials agree to Khilafah. Every year, there is growing support for the implementation of Islamic law (Beach and Suhartono 2020).

In East Asia, where the Islamic State created a province, the Philippines is the center of gravity (Zenn 2019). There has been an increase in terrorist incidents in the Southern Philippines since the new counterterrorism bill was passed in parliament and signed into law as the Anti-Terrorism Act (Business and Human Rights Resource Centre 2020). In response to this Act, which was approved by Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, a Facebook post on 4 July 2020 said that the new legislation will not stop IS from mounting attacks. Threatening members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Mindanao, the English-language post said:

A Message to the Crusader forces of the Philippines the “ally Dog of Coalition of forces” wanted to defeat the Islamic State. The head of the Crusader Forces Duterte signed Anti-Terror Bill yesterday to Intimidate the Mujahideen and its supporters and Followers to stop their fight towards the Crusader forces and its Devilish Democratic governance. Indeed, your terror bill is just a piece of junk paper that will not intimidate us or make us stop what we are doing. But it will surely motivate us to do more for the sake of Allah. Oh, crusader forces this is a dire warning to all of you living among our City and land, Surrender and pack your things up and go back to your own city, or else one way or another, the sword of the Islamic state will be on your neck Bi’idnillah. What is happening in Sulu, Cotabato, and in Lanao Del Sur for this past month is just the beginning. The more you force Muslims to be afraid of you the more blood of your

Crusader forces will spill on our soil. (Abu Musa Mashriqi) (SITE Intelligence Group 2020)

Twenty-six days after twin bombings that killed fourteen people and hurt seventy-five others in Jolo, Sulu province on 24 August 2020, Islamic State attempted to mount another plot demonstrating its capacity to attack. Reportedly, the terrorist operation was disrupted when a concerned citizen alerted the authorities. The military's Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) coastguardsmen found a package containing explosives at Jolo pier between the offices of the harbormaster and the maritime police at Barangay Walled City. Westmincom chief Lt. Gen. Corleto Vinluan Jr. said personnel of the PCG (Philippine Coast Guard) explosives and ordnance division (EOD) were conducting paneling operations at the pier when they stumbled upon the package a little past 6 PM on Saturday. The package contained a rifle grenade, two electric blasting caps, a spark plug, and concrete nails. Troops of the 35th infantry battalion were immediately deployed to cordon off the area while an EOD team from the Sulu provincial police office and personnel from the Jolo police station responded to the site. The improvised explosive device was promptly disarmed and safely disposed of (Peralta-Malonzo 2020).

To counter the emerging threat in South Asia, it is paramount to counter both the operational and ideological networks and dismantle them. If the threat is not adequately countered, the ideology will spread to South Asian Muslims living outside the subcontinent, and they too will support or stage attacks. The South Asian male and female Muslim population and its diaspora and migrant communities are a huge reservoir of potential support for Islamic State's radicalization and recruitment.

In 2020, Islamic State took control of one of the world's largest natural gas reserves at the strategic port of Mocimboa da Praia in Cabo Delgado Province, Mozambique (BBC News, 12 August 2020). Since 2017, there had been many battles between government forces and the local terrorist group, which was known previously as Al-Sunna wa Jama'a (ASWJ) before reinventing itself as the Islamic State. The fighting in 2020 killed more than 1,500 people and displaced at least 250,000 (Machado 2020). At the time, the Islamists publicized that they had accomplished two great feats in Mozambique "by the grace of Allah, through which they changed the course of events and cut off the ambitions of major countries in the resources of Muslims there" (BBC News, 18 September 2020). The second of these feats was taking control of the two islands of Metundo and Vamizi, which lie in the Indian Ocean off

the northeast of Mozambique. This had a great impact on the region, as the two islands are located close to the middle of the sea corridor between Mozambique and Madagascar, the width of which does not exceed 460 km. Control over these islands was a disruption of all movement in this corridor.

Islamic State had occupied the port twice before, and after the first occupation all the international newspapers were abuzz due to the amount of natural gas that had been discovered there, estimated at 1,000 billion cubic meters. We can tell the value of this discovery from the number of investments made in the field. The most prominent company that has invested is the US energy firm Anadarko, with a value of \$25 billion. Transport vessels that are contracted with this company have been attacked twice since the start of their investment (DW, 13 July 2020). Other investors include the French company Total, at a value of \$20 billion, and the Japanese government, at a value of \$14 billion. Also, several other countries such as Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, South Africa, and Vietnam have contributed approximately \$14.9 billion (Darby 2020). African nations and the international community responded decisively to support Mozambique to retake the port.

Discovery of the giant gas field (as well as a huge ruby deposit) in Cabo Delgado in 2009–10 did not improve the quality of life of the people. Both Christian and Muslim clerics and preachers from religious international aid agencies competed to convert local people. A majority Muslim hub, both East Africans and Mozambicans trained in Saudi Arabia introduced their version of Islam. One year after the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria proclaimed a caliphate, violent confrontations started in 2015, where traditional Muslim leaders supported by the police tried to block the Islamists (Morier-Genoud 2020).

The Islamic State strategy in Africa suggests that they think it preferable to spread over wide geographical areas with mobile armed groups and thus not concentrate on any one particular place. IS is still committed to keeping the war on the move and responsive, and to starting qualitative work by targeting the important economic and military centers in Africa, in addition to inciting Muslims to pursue jihad (Gargard 2020).

In the spectrum of Muslim threat groups, the Islamic State (IS) remains the most dominant movement. However, al-Qaeda (AQ) poses a long-term strategic threat (Mueller and Stewart 2016). While the Islamic State poses the most imminent operational threat to governments and societies worldwide, the AQ movement is deepening its capabilities and expanding its networks appreciably (Fitton-Brown 2020). A vacuum created by IS in Syria is being rapidly filled by AQ. In the past few years,

AQ as a movement has grown manifold. With the loss of Baghouz, the last territorial stronghold of the IS in Syria, its rival Hay'at Tahrir al-Shām (HTS), the AQ branch in Syria, has emerged as the single biggest group in the Syrian theatre (CSIS 2020). HTS is now building a global network. It is co-opting many AQ affiliates and working with them ideologically and operationally. The AQ movement has emerged stronger (Taylor 2019) for three reasons. First, the global counterterrorism focus is on the IS and not on AQ (UN News, 24 August 2020). Second, IS suffered significantly both in its core in Syria and Iraq and in the periphery in its wilayats (provinces). Third, there has been stepped-up covert support from Arab and non-Arab regimes for HTS to fight the Russian and Iran-backed President Bashar al-Assad regime (Ajjoub 2020).

HTS has built significant alliances worldwide, increasing its strength, size, and influence. As the most active AQ branch, HTS is providing new capabilities to AQ affiliates worldwide (CSIS 2020). In addition to the AQ core in Afghanistan and HTS, the other branches of AQ are the Afghan Taliban, al-Shabaab in Somalia, AQ in the Islamic Maghreb, AQ in Arabian Peninsula, Turkistan Islamic Party in China, AQ in the Indian Subcontinent, Abu Sayyaf Group, and Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia. The HTS has a growing presence in Asia—northeast Asia, Central Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia. As the Southeast Asian fighters have been integrated into the other fighting formations, HTS has not identified the dedicated Southeast Asian group. Through its Indonesia-based Abu Ahmed Foundation, Jemaah Islamiyah funded the HTS training capability Malhama Tactical (Soliev 2020).

In the future, AQ will have two global epicenters—in Afghanistan, with the AQ core until 2020 led by Dr Ayman al-Zawahiri (Congressional Research Service 2020; Schmitt 2020), and in Syria, with Abu Mohammad al-Julani (Schmitt 2020). With Ayman al-Zawahiri now deceased, Abu Mohamed al-Jolani is likely to provide global leadership to AQ affiliates. The resurgent AQ movement is likely to eclipse the global threat posed by the Islamic State in the coming months and years (Schmitt 2020). At the same time, the HTS, threatened by Russian- and Iranian-backed Syrian forces, face a split within. The HTS and its AQ-linked groups face rivalry. To consolidate its strength, the HTS invited several groups to sign a statement reaffirming their allegiance (CSIS 2020). In the coming years, it is very likely that the threat group as a semi-conventional military force will be defeated by the Syrian forces. However, HTS will survive as an underground insurgent and terrorist organization. If the HTS core in Syria maintains its alliance with other AQ-aligned groups, the fledgling HTS global network will pose a formidable and continuing threat to global security (Al-Tamimi 2020).

Unless and until world leaders find the resolve to work together, the AQ and IS global footprint is likely to grow in the coming decades. Global command structures of AQ and the IS stretch from Africa to the Caucasus and from the Middle East to Asia. Both AQ and IS have successfully co-opted local groups and built capabilities to expand their influence. Through these means, they will disseminate propaganda, raise funds, and recruit more people to their cause. The outcome of such efforts is likely twofold. These groups are likely to launch attacks in their home and neighboring countries while encouraging individuals, cells, and networks in the West to carry out attacks in their name. Although their local affiliates may cooperate on some occasions, competition between the IS and AQ for leadership of the other's affiliates—and the global movement as a whole—is likely to encourage more competition than cooperation in the long run. Nevertheless, temporary pressure arising from the deaths of incumbent leaders and ideological similarity between both movements renders short-term cooperation likely in at least some theatres, particularly where friendly or noncompetitive relationships have already existed between their local affiliates. If there is a long-term fusion or merger of these movements, the global threat to governments and communities can be expected to increase exponentially.

Instead of allowing geopolitical egos to harm their long-term security, governments should work together to address security challenges common to all. On 9 October 2019, Turkey launched Operation Peace Spring to secure its borders north of Syria and east of the Euphrates River (Uras 2019). As a sequel to past operations such as Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch, the aim of this operation was to fight the Kurdish groups who had played a pivotal role in the military defeat of IS. Coupled with the US withdrawal, a power vacuum exists that has been filled by Turkey, Russia, Iran, and threat groups such as the IS and local AQ affiliates such as HTS. If the geopolitical agendas of both distant and regional governments continue to take a priority over these pressing security concerns, it is likely that the IS will reconstitute itself in the short term—approximately over one to two years—and re-emerge as a formidable threat within five years. Unless governments work together to fight both a resurgent al-Qaeda (Zimmerman 2021) and a presently weakened IS (Tarallo 2020), this threat is sure to return with a greater vengeance.

Despite its territorial losses in 2019, IS has remained resilient. There has been an upsurge of attacks in Iraq, Syria, and across Africa. The terrorist organization could yet capitalize on the pandemic by exploiting the security vacuum in Iraq and Syria left by the reduced military presence. After Europol removed jihadist online content from Telegram



in November 2019, supporters identified new platforms for spreading propaganda, indicating a persistence that might not be directed by IS leadership (Azman 2021). AQ, however, has suffered the loss of many chief commanders. This is reflected in their network, which is more focused on local conflicts and cannot advance the group's core aspirations (Pantucci 2020b). Both IS and AQ used social media to provide "a broad strategic narrative to guide the actions of a widely scattered global network of affiliates and cells" (Ramakrishna 2021).

Experts agree that despite the progress in eliminating the Islamic State progress in Syria and Iraq, the radical Islamist threat will not cease to exist in the future. Africa is of most concern in this regard. Likewise, Afghanistan "must not be allowed to be used as a safe haven for terrorists or threaten the stability of neighboring countries" (UN Security Council 2022). The Islamic State's Afghanistan-Pakistan chapter (Islamic State Khorasan) carried out the deadliest attacks in the area. IS Khorasan fighters attacked a maternity ward in a predominantly Shi'ite neighborhood of Kabul in 2020, killing sixteen mothers and mothers-to-be. Despite its high-profile attacks, the terrorist organization has suffered serious losses from Taliban and US-led military operations. Therefore, it cannot hold any territory in the region and operates in smaller covert cells. Unlike other radical Islamist terrorist organizations in the region, IS-Khorasan did not accept the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan and highlighted that the Taliban "betrayed jihadists with the US withdrawal deal and vowed to continue its fight" (India Today, 26 August 2021). Importantly, a 2021 US Department of the Treasury report stated that the finances of the richest jihadist organization have significantly shrunk. Islamic State's revenue generated from its illicit financial activities, together with its cash reserves, is claimed not to be enough to establish a new caliphate in the region. Experts argue that because of the security vacuum in Syria and Iraq, IS will remain present in the area and will try to consolidate its position, but it may not pose "a strategic threat on an international or even regional level" (Holleis and Knipp 2022).

## **The Future Far Right Threat**

There are also worrisome factors when considering the right-wing extremism-related future threat. To begin with, the number of live streaming audiences has drastically increased since the lockdowns in the spring of 2020.<sup>1</sup> This socially isolated audience were tending to engage with misinformation campaigns, propagandistic speeches on

conspiracy theories, and incitements to hatred. It is alarming that for instance on the DLive platform the most popular content has included racial justice protests, antivaccine propaganda, conspiracies linking 5G networks to the spread of COVID-19, and calls to make more white babies while quarantined. Lone actors who obtain tactical inspiration and gain social support in online communities have been given utmost significance within right-wing extremist entities (Bjørge and Ravndal 2019). We have already witnessed certain tragic incidents that testify to the impact of online radical propaganda on unstable individuals. Both the New Zealand and German attackers were radicalized in cyberspace and were streamlining their malevolent actions. In March 2019, a Florida man who had been radicalized by online conspiracy theorists was arrested after sending pipe bombs to the critics of Donald Trump. Still in that spring, four people were shot dead at the Poway synagogue by a gunman who had beforehand posted racist content on 8chan. In August 2019, a man who had previously made publicly available a racist manifesto killed twenty-three people at the El Paso Walmart (Bergengruen 2020). Challenges associated with detecting lone wolf actors remain for intelligence and law enforcement agencies (Aasland and Bjørge 2018).

While major social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, or Twitter have targeted hate speech with focused strategies, less-regulated channels are more concerned about their income to survive and therefore care less about content that should be banned. For platforms like DLive, becoming what their users consider “free speech” and “uncensored” alternatives can be lucrative. More speech also means more money for the platform, and less content moderation means less expense. Another pull factor for radical propagandists lies in finances. Twitch and YouTube take a 45 and 50 percent cut respectively from live streamers’ earnings, while sites like DLive ask for only 10 percent of creators’ profit (Bergengruen 2020).

The impact of radical online content may be even more concerning for members of the younger generation. Numerous recent examples show that teenagers—spending hours daily on platforms where extremist content is circulated—are ready to share Black Lives Matter messages illustrated in racist cartoons. These all substantiate that bigger efforts are necessary to better understand “this new extremist ecosystem” (Bergengruen 2020). Another noteworthy factor here is the potential long-term effect of the pandemic’s economic consequences on radicalization. The pool of hopeless and unemployed people will likely increase because of the crisis situation, and in parallel a more susceptible audience is about to be established. This enhanced online recruited

base may considerably heighten the risk of offline extremist activities in the long term (Ariza 2020).

One promising avenue may be the tracking of emerging platforms. Extreme right-wing groups have become increasingly sophisticated in using social media platforms, and the internet in general, to recruit and radicalize (UN CTED 2020). These entities are eager to adopt new technologies that can be easily exploited, to bolster their narratives and advance their agenda. Effective counterpolicies should be the endeavor of governments and law enforcement agencies together with experts in civil society. Violent extremists are on the edge of seeking new forums, and such intentions should be recognized and abolished in a timely manner (Bergengruen 2020).

Lockdowns and epidemiological restrictions on public gatherings arguably gave extraordinary power to right-wing extremist demonstrations (Dave et al. 2020). Ignited by the killing of George Floyd by a police officer, the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement became an international phenomenon (Westerman, Benk, and Greene 2020). These protests (Hill et al. 2020) induced social tension and unrest (Eligon 2020) and further challenged law enforcement capabilities. Far right entities enhanced their online social media activities to capitalize on the turmoil. White supremacist propaganda increased by more than 65 percent in 2020 compared to the previous year.<sup>2</sup> The far right managed to unite the fragmented, more moderate extremist groups (Murdoch 2020). The Boogaloo movement, which includes loosely far right individuals, also increased its visibility during the surge in protests (Cohen 2020). Anti-lockdown demonstrations provided a handy platform for these antigovernment extremists. First, they rallied at protests organized by other groups. Later in May, however, their “Blue Igloo” section called for participation in their own gatherings in North Carolina. Boogaloo supporters took relatively passive roles at these demonstrations, emerging since May 2020 as armed protectors of local businesses who countered lockdown measures (ADL 2020), but have become increasingly violent in their actions. Several members of the Boogaloo movement were arrested for firing guns at police personnel (Campbell 2020) and possessing materials for Molotov cocktails (Blankstein 2020). Members of Proud Boys, a far right, anti-immigrant, all-male group (Sardarizadeh and Wendling 2020), clashed with left-wing activists at Black Lives Matter demonstrations in Seattle, Washington, and Portland, Oregon over the summer of 2020 (McEvoy 2020). The group was particularly active in spreading conspiracy theories regarding the pandemic (Wilson 2020).

There was also a heightened risk of political violence and instability in the United States around the 2020 general election (Armed Conflict

Location and Event Data Project 2020). The Department of Homeland Security's assessment identified "white supremacist extremists" as the biggest physical threat to the democratic elections (Klippenstein 2020) and that they remain the "most persistent and lethal threat in the homeland" (US Department of Homeland Security 2020). A mob of protesters attacked the United States Capitol on 6 January 2021. In the unrest, five individuals were killed and over 100 people were injured (Wilber 2021). Federal authorities arrested almost 300 individuals (NPR, 19 January 2021) who participated in the 6 January riot. Members of various extremist groups throughout the country coalesced in the storm of the US Capitol. They were allegedly affiliated with organizations such as The Three Percenters, The Oath Keepers, Proud Boys, and Texas Freedom Force (Schmidt 2021). Several followers of the QAnon online conspiracy theory were also arrested (Lewis 2021). Two Proud Boys supporters were charged, one with conspiracy and the other one with leading a mob of 100 people (Benner and Feuer 2021). Rioters arrived at the siege from over 180 counties throughout the United States (The George Washington University Program on Extremism 2021). It was an unprecedented event, where disparate extremist groups mobilized themselves together. It is of great concern whether these violent extremists have established links with each other and will mobilize themselves in the future (Selsky 2021).

The bulletin issued by the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, and the National Counterterrorism Center predicted that in 2021 the "anti-government specifically militia violent extremists will likely pose the greatest domestic terrorism threat" (Tomazin 2021). The United States Capitol Police Department issued a statement on 3 March 2021 about threats made toward members of Congress and the Capitol complex. Security arrangements were accordingly upgraded at the venue (United States Capitol Police 2021).

A 16-year-old boy was the first detainee. Inspired by far right extremist ideology in Singapore, he was arrested for allegedly planning to knife Muslims in two nearby mosques on the Christchurch attacks anniversary. Inspired by Brenton Tarrant, the detained boy intended to live stream his attack. Because of the strict gun-control rules in Singapore, he planned to use a machete instead of a rifle like Tarrant (Mahmud 2021). The boy intended to steal his father's credit card to rent a car and drive between the two mosques. The Ministry of Home Affairs claimed that he was a Protestant Christian of Indian ethnicity and had been motivated by a strong antipathy toward Islam and a fascination with violence. "He was watching Islamic State propaganda videos and falsely believing that IS represents Islam. He prepared a manifesto for dissemination prior to the attack" (BBC News, 28 January 2021). While

in detention, he will receive a comprehensive program of religious, psychological, and social rehabilitation (Mahmud 2021).

The extreme far right consists of loosely affiliated organizations with the same ideological settings. The porous nature of these relationships substantially heightens their associated threat as compared to traditional terrorist organizations because it is more challenging to track or predict their actions (White 2020). This challenge can only be addressed by the joint effort of authorities, society, and the tech industry (ADL 2020). Currently, the complexity of national legislation makes the disruption of these networks fragmented (Janik and Hankes 2021; Pantucci 2020a).

## Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was twofold. First, the discussion has attempted to identify future trajectories for emerging radical Islamist and far right trends. Secondly, the challenges associated with novel threats have been taken into account.

## Note

1. In 2019, 2,724; in 2020 more than 4,500 incidents of white supremacist propaganda were distributed. ADL Center on Extremism, “A Report from the Center on Extremism Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2020” February 2021. <https://www.adl.org/media/15825/download>.

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