Global Extremism Monitor: Islamist Violence after ISIS

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FOREWORD FROM TONY BLAIR

We publish this Global Extremism Monitor as a data point around violent extremism and its impact; but also to drive a wider point which the recent tension and conflict over Iran, underscores. Though today there are elements of extremism associated with most mainstream religious faiths, the threat of Islamist extremism has had the largest impact on lives, on nations' development and on world peace.

What is apparent is that the roots of this run deep, go back way beyond 9/11, and have two different strands – one linked to Sunni Islam and most obviously connected with the plethora of groups like al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, and ISIS; and one deriving from Shia Islam and in particular the creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979.

This report has shown that state-building remains the over-arching ambition for Islamist extremists, as is all too clear through their military, communications and recruitment tactics. Despite stripping ISIS of its amassed territories, the pursuit of an 'ideal' state continues to embolden fighters, attract new followers, undermine governments and threatens the fabric of societies around the world.

Many of the 140 Islamist extremist groups my Institute has tracked and documented since 2017 routinely exploit political vacuums, weak infrastructure, ethnic and cultural divides, resource scarcity and unemployment in order to establish systems of governance where state-enacted services are perceived to be failing. While security-led approaches are obviously essential, improving conditions, strengthening communities and their relationship with their governments remains key to preventing groups from exploiting opportunities for unrest and therefore tackling this issue long-term.

The report outlines the ten deadliest countries to suffer from Islamist violence, but also seven places, including Kenya, Philippines and Kashmir, where Islamist extremism is again on the rise. While we need systems in place to monitor extremist activities in existing theatres of war, we also need to do more to identify earlier

emerging hotspots, before the violence becomes entrenched. Unless we understand on a deeper level what extremists are striving to create and sustain, and how they go about achieving their aims, our solutions will address only part of the problem.

Above all, this is a global struggle. It requires global leadership and cooperation. And it has to be confronted at the level of ideas, including replacing the narrative of extremism with a more soundly based religious narrative of co-existence, not merely by measures related to traditional security operations.

My Institute's work on preventing extremism encourages countries to work together as a matter of global responsibility, and across all sectors of society - particularly in the area of education. It strives to root out religious prejudice and promote open-mindedness, inclusivity and global citizenship in public and private education systems. Initiatives to prevent extremism in the long-term can engender a generational shift in perceptions of violent extremism, equipping young people with the dialogue skills and resilience to harmful narratives that they need to effectively resist future incarnations of this deeply-rooted and longstanding problem.

What is clear is that today there is a strong pushback against the extremism from within Muslim nations, whose people are the biggest victims of the violence and whose future depends on escaping the poison of turning a particular view of one religion into a political ideology.

All over the Middle East today, there is a desire for modern economies and religiously tolerant societies. These moves of modernisation should be strongly supported.

The final months of 2019 saw the people of Iran and Iraq lose lives for voicing legitimate demands for reform. It has been a tragic reminder of the sacrifices of ordinary people, but it also highlights that Iran's destabilising actions, left unchecked, have consequences that will fuel extremism and undermine efforts to prevent cycles of radicalisation in communities affected by conflict and instability.

In 2020, my Institute will explore further the impact of Shia Islamism which is creating sectarian divides among Sunni and Shia communities that will last generations if not better tackled. We will

also look more closely at fragile environments in the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, and South East Asia where compounding factors from political uncertainty to resource scarcity is creating fertile ground for violent extremism.

Islamist extremism will remain one of the biggest challenges for global policymakers for generations to come. I am humbled when I meet the people who work day-to-day to tackle the rise of extremism within their communities, but it will take the collective political will to match the scale of this challenge we now face. Unless we take seriously the scope, scale and depth of the issue, we will witness further years of the types of atrocities and loss of life, as well as life chances, identified in this Monitor.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Physical victory does not equate to ideological defeat. Despite the eradication of ISIS's caliphate across Syria and Iraq in 2017, the group remains active, while 96 other Islamist extremist groups were tracked in 2018 by the Tony Blair Institute's annual Global Extremism Monitor (GEM). Our research exposes how these groups pursue a campaign of violence to undermine and weaken institutional capacity. As with ISIS, they seek to enhance political vacuums and social fractures which can be exploited to create their own "state." Unless global decision-makers comprehend the true vision of Islamist extremist groups, the violence will continue around the world.

Of the 97 groups verified active by the GEM, as many as 48 operate outside the world's major conflict zones, which in 2018 remained Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. Forty countries in six regions globally suffered an Islamist extremist attack in 2018, with the GEM identifying at least 43 groups having perpetrated an attack. Egypt, Mali, Nigeria and Pakistan complete the list of the world's ten deadliest countries to suffer most from violent Islamist extremism, with Mali exhibiting the biggest surge in year-on-year violence.

New frontiers for Islamist extremism are also emerging. The GEM found several places in the world that were either on the brink of an Islamist extremist crisis or seeing a rapid rise in Islamist extremist activity. It identified the countries to watch as Bangladesh, Tunisia, Indonesia, Kenya, Mozambique, Kashmir and the Philippines.

Muslims were yet again the biggest victims of Islamist-inspired violence and Shia Islam was the most persecuted sect in 2018. While violence against Christians was down compared to 2017, Christianity was again the most persecuted of non-Islamic faiths in 2018.

The GEM identified systematic campaigns of violence directed by Islamist extremist groups against government officials, Western education, labourers, businesses, infrastructure and media. These actions often resulted in mass casualties and were routinely instituted to undermine and disrupt state-led governance.

Finally, as previous the GEM revealed, the establishment of Islamist extremist groups today can be traced to networks and conflicts as far back as 40 years ago. But Islamist extremism evolved, and in doing so, is becoming ever more entrenched. The GEM shows that groups are implementing their own forms of governance where state-enacted governance is failing. From healthcare to education, criminal justice to resource distribution, the true vision of Islamist extremists is to build "a state" governed by their narrow interpretation of Islam – and violence more often serves as a smokescreen for long-term objectives. The groups documented by the GEM show not just the capabilities of capturing new territory but the ability to maintain and hold territory, even after military intervention.

The Global Extremism Monitor tracks violent Islamist extremism, and efforts to counter it, worldwide. Drawing on open-source data, our analysis reveals the international spread and scale of Islamist extremist violence. While 2017 saw unprecedented levels of Islamist violence, in 2018 the GEM documented 17,848 incidents of violent Islamist extremism and state and non-state efforts to combat it in 40 countries. At least 43,144 people died during the year because of this problem, a 49 per cent decrease compared to 2017. Extremists accounted for 52 per cent (22,267) of those killed in 2018, a 7 per cent reduction year-on-year in deaths of Islamist militants. The proportion of non-state actors killed in 2018—4 per cent (1,806)—remained the same, but deaths of both civilians—27 per cent (11,512)—and security personnel—18 per cent (7,559)—increased in 2018, by 1 and 6 per cent, respectively.

Violent Islamist extremism continues to be a global problem
Despite 11 per cent fewer attacks in 2018—6,876 compared to 7,697 in 2017—extremism affected 40 countries in six regions globally during 2018. Nine of the world's most developed countries suffered, including the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Germany and Australia. In the last two years, the GEM has recorded more than 120,000 deaths from Islamist extremism. At least 68 countries were affected by violent Islamist extremism and efforts to combat it during this period.

Plethora of Islamist extremist groups
As many as 97 Islamist extremist groups were active in 2018.

Nigeria's Boko Haram and Mali's Jamaat Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) continue to operate across multiple countries in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, while Houthi-launched ballistic missiles struck two countries in the Middle East beyond Yemen, yet again exposing the transnational capabilities of these extremist organisations. Groups ebb and flow in and out of existence, with more than 140 groups being operationally active in the last two years, according to our analysis.

Islamist extremist groups are implementing their own forms of governance

The GEM finds that Islamist extremist groups are implementing robust systems of governance where state-enacted governance is failing. From healthcare and disaster management to community policing and criminal justice, the distribution of food and resources for fighters and the civilians in their territory, violent Islamist extremist ensuring all areas of "the state" are suffused with their interpretation of fundamentalist Islam.

Fragile states continue to suffer the most violence

For the second year running, Somalia, Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq made up our top five deadliest countries and were also ranked among the world's fifteen most fragile states. Libya, Mali, Egypt, Nigeria and Pakistan were yet again on the list of countries most affected by violent Islamist extremism. The ten deadliest countries in the world accounted for 95 per cent of all fatalities globally. Niger and Cameroon were the countries at most risk of entering the list of the ten deadliest countries globally.

New frontiers for Islamist extremism are emerging

Islamist extremism is spreading to new geographies. The GEM found that Islamist-inspired violence is on the rise in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Mozambique and Tunisia, while Kenya, Kashmir and the Philippines are increasingly at risk of an Islamist extremist crisis.

Muslims are the biggest victims of violent Islamist extremism

Muslims were the most frequently targeted demographic. Nearly two-thirds of all attacks took place in nations with a Muslim majority while over 70 per cent of all attacks on the public space targeted Muslim civilians. Islamist extremist groups have claimed the collateral killing of fellow Sunni Muslims is acceptable because victims will be welcomed into heaven as martyrs. These groups also

adhere to a perverse ideology that condones deliberate campaigns against Sunni Muslims.

Sectarian violence focused on Shia communities while Christianity is the most persecuted non-Islamic faith
Shia Muslims continued to be the sect most persecuted by Islamist extremism in 2018. Violence against Shias accounted for over two-thirds of all sectarian attacks and 71 per cent of all sectarian related deaths. The GEM also confirmed that Christianity continued to be the most persecuted non-Islamic faith in 2018, with one of the deadliest attacks against the religious group occurring in Indonesia—one of the GEM's places to watch in 2018.

Government officials, schools, businesses and journalists systematically targeted by extremists
The GEM recorded 196 attacks against government personnel and sites and 40 attacks on educational establishments, including assassinations of teachers and hostage-takings of students, while several offensives were launched against the news and media industries from eight countries. At least ten major attacks took place on critical energy infrastructure including oil pipelines, power plants and dams.

Islamist extremism remains one of the biggest threats to global security and peace in the 21st century. Evidence-based research such as the GEM, which exposes the nuances of the problem, needs to underpin decision-making processes aimed at containing and defeating violent Islamist extremism.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL EXTREMISM MONITOR

Violent extremism—both the violence and the underlying ideology that drives it—is an urgent and pressing challenge that holds back development, stability and opportunity for many around the world. The GEM builds on previous work by the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change that has highlighted the shared ideologies and international networks of the global violent jihadi movement. The Institute presents and designs evidence-based solutions to help defeat extremist ideologies. We lead research that harnesses innovative techniques to support decision-makers and

bolster programmatic interventions. The GEM provides data to explore and understand the process and conditions through which extremist groups spawn, thrive and mature.

The methodology for sourcing, recording and categorising each incident of violent Islamist extremism was designed and developed over two years. Every incident recorded in the GEM has been thematised and geocoded with coordinates of where the incident is reported to have taken place. Tracking and monitoring groups has allowed the GEM to attribute an instigator to an event when news reports are unclear. The GEM draws conclusions on the basis of location analysis and records the parties only if there is a high probability of Islamist extremist group involvement.

INTRODUCTION

"We have defeated ISIS in Syria." In December 2018, US President Donald Trump claimed the end of a group that has terrorised Iraq and Syria for more than five years—a group whose violence has affected dozens of countries, killing tens of thousands of civilians, the vast majority Muslim. Three months later, the US leader said that "100%" of the group's so-called caliphate had been retaken.

But the assessment was premature. ISIS and its affiliates continue to conduct attacks, and where territory has been lost, ISIS has mutated back into the insurgency it once was. The group, which is consolidating ahead of a desired resurgence, continues to torment northern Iraq as well as Baghdad while continuing to carry out attacks in Syria amidst the unending conflict. ISIS's affiliates around the world remain active. Before being killed in a US raid in October 2019, the ISIS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, used a video appearance to emphasise the global reach of the group's various affiliates. In the footage, al-Baghdadi confirmed the status of provinces in countries including Somalia and Yemen, while alleging a presence in places such as Turkey.

Beyond ISIS and its direct affiliates, 84 groups continued to operate and carry out violence in 2018. In total, 97 groups were operational in 2018 according to the GEM, down in number from the 121 groups verified as active the previous year. Despite what appears to be a diminishing number of extremist groups, we must be alert to the fact that many organisations ebb and flow in and out of existence. Several groups recorded by the GEM in 2017 were subsumed into jihadist coalitions, splintered or evolved into fresh entities during 2018. Such transformations were particularly common in Syria, Libya and Mali, and are explored in more depth later in this report.

What remains undamaged is the unifying ideology that underpins the global Islamist extremist movement. The driving force of this brutality continues: a belief in the obligation to establish and enforce a totalitarian articulation of sharia law and governance, for which violence and intimidation are legitimate methods to overcome perceived enemies. As armed Islamist extremist groups continue to exploit vacuums of governance, infiltrating

communities and filling basic service provision gaps, the connection between stability and security becomes more evident. This GEM report explores violent Islamist activity in "places to watch" as well as traditional conflict zones, and demonstrates the need for multifaceted approaches that addresses the Islamist extremist ideology while supporting development in fragile states.

Global Overview of 2018

The GEM found that the levels of Islamist-inspired violence observed in 2018 were lower than in 2017. At least 43,144 people were killed from Islamist extremism and efforts to counter it in 2018, nearly 50 per cent less than the fatalities recorded in 2017. Following the fall of ISIS's territorial caliphate in Iraq and Syria, the number of deaths has decreased with Iraq seeing a 79 per cent reduction in overall fatalities.

Of all those killed during the year, 52 per cent were extremists, 27 per cent were civilians and 18 per cent were security personnel, while non-state militias accounted for 4 per cent of deaths. Islamist violence was global, spanning six regions and 40 countries. On average, there were approximately 19 attacks perpetrated by Islamist extremists around the world each day. Despite differing tactics, more than two-fifths of the extremist groups recorded by the GEM deliberately engaged in violence against civilians.

Figure 1.1: Map of Countries Affected by Violent Islamist Extremism, 2018
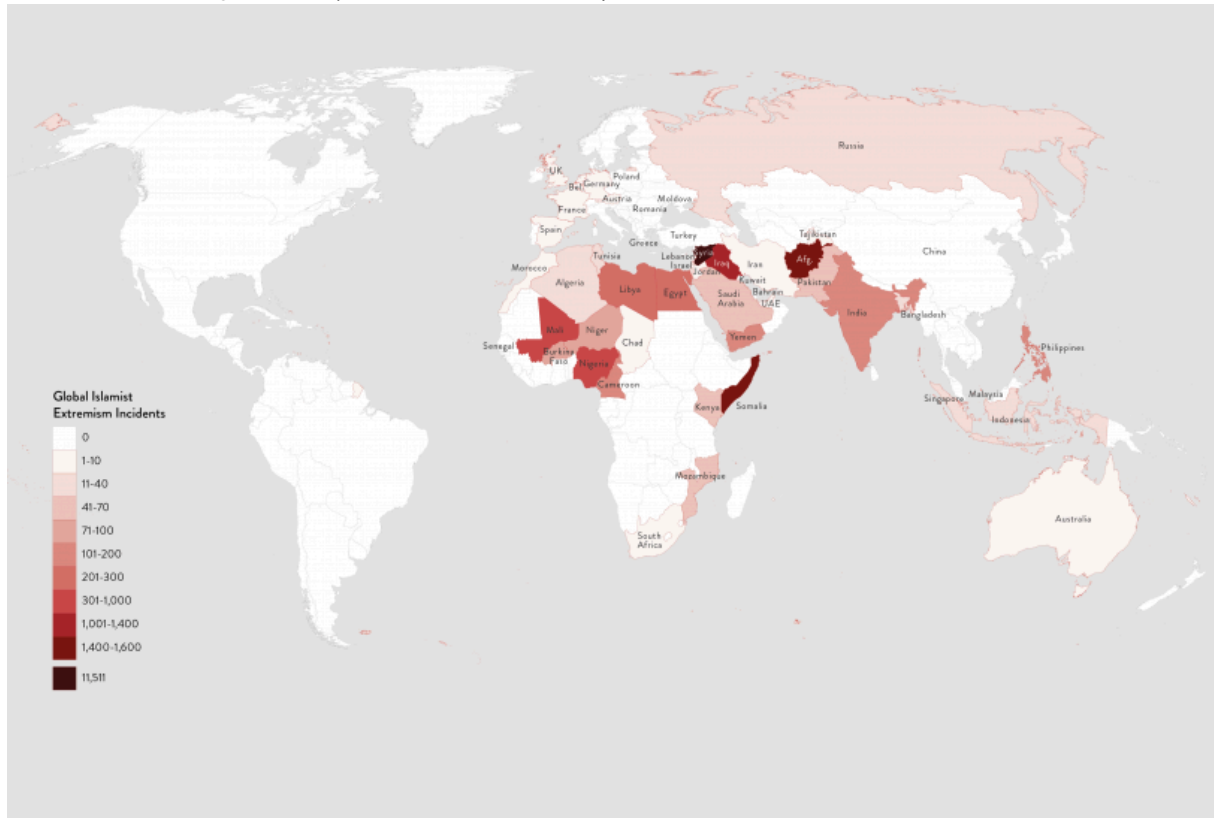
The most active and deadly group remains ISIS and its international network of affiliates, which killed 6,141 people in 2018. Violence perpetrated by the group was indiscriminate, targeting schools, governments, militaries, businesses, mosques, markets, national infrastructure and religious sites.

In spite of ISIS's predominance in the global landscape of Islamist extremist violence, it is by no means the only threat. Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups remained active and carried out attacks in 2018, killing 3,024 people in 11 countries, including in Syria, Yemen, Mali, Somalia and Libya.

The ten deadliest countries recorded by the GEM in 2018 were the same as in 2017, indicating that the problem is persistent and difficult to eradicate. Syria continues to be the global epicentre for violent extremism; and while ISIS was militarily defeated in Iraq, the group continued to launch attacks through cells scattered across the country. However, Mali saw the biggest increase in activity compared to 2017, moving up three places and becoming the seventh deadliest country in the world for Islamist extremism. The

GEM also found that Islamist violence has spread into new environments including Indonesia and Kenya, threatening to destabilise more countries and affect more communities.

The largest proportion of victims from Islamist-inspired violence remained civilians in Muslim-majority countries. Two-thirds of attacks aimed at public targets occurred in Sunni majority states while Shia Muslims continued to be the most persecuted sect by Islamist extremists. Christianity was confirmed as the most persecuted of non-Islamic faiths for a second year running.

The GEM also found that Islamist extremists systematically targeted government personnel and sites, state implemented educational systems, news and media figures and critical energy infrastructure.

The True Vision of Islamist Extremist Groups

The destruction of the ISIS's caliphate does not mean the end of the group, nor does it hinder its pernicious ideology to inspire attacks around the world. Events in 2019 have also mirrored some of the deadliest attacks in 2018. Evidence-based research can help expose the nuances of Islamist extremism and why groups that espouse these radical ideologies ultimately engage in violence against perceived non-believers.

In April 2019, a video emerged of eight men with faces covered, posing with knives in front of ISIS's black flag. They stood facing the camera, pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the group's self-proclaimed caliph (who has since been killed), promising that violence was to come soon.[1] The scene has become an eerily familiar sight, a predictable feature in the aftermath of a devastating Islamist terror attack. Except this was not a video of Islamist militants in Iraq, Syria or any of the established theatres of jihadi violence. Nor was it a pledge to conduct an attack on Western soil.

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1 Alasdair Pal, "Islamic State Video Throws Spotlight on Suspected Ringleader of Sri Lanka Bombings", Reuters, 24 April 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sri-lanka-blasts-claim/islamic-state-video-throws-spotlight-on-suspected-ringleader-of-sri-lanka-bombings-idUSKCN1S01AN.

These men were the Sri Lankan-born perpetrators of the Easter Sunday bombings, a series of coordinated suicide attacks that struck targets across Sri Lanka, specifically targeting churches and high-end hotels on one of the holiest days in the Christian calendar, killing more than 250 people. Beyond the devastating violence, the attack symbolised a troubling shift. As pressure intensifies on ISIS's havens in the Levant, new frontiers are opening and new affiliates are emerging in a context where ideological affinity supersedes a desire for territorial control.

Some of the Sri Lankan attackers had reportedly trained with ISIS in the caliphate but their objectives were localised—to rid their native country of "crusaders" and "infidels", and ultimately to establish an Islamic state in Sri Lanka.[2] These assailants were drawing on the ideal of a state governed by a strict, narrow interpretation of Islam, in which sharia law is used to create a sacred land akin to the first Islamic state established by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina.

ISIS's so-called caliphate, declared in 2014, has been dismantled and the group's activity reduced to an insurgency, but the last five years have exposed the ideological objective of most Islamist extremists: the creation of an Islamic state. This desire is exemplified in Islamist groups' targeting of specific sectors of society. By attempting to eliminate local authorities, judiciaries and education systems, Islamist militants seek to undermine trust in a weakened government while positioning themselves as the rightful heirs of a broken state.

ISIS was not the first violent Islamist militant group to succeed in this mission. Arguably the most successful, and similarly violent, was the Taliban, which controlled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. The group, with its roots in Deobandi fundamentalism, emerged from the Arab-Afghan Mujahideen and the cross-fertilisation of radical Islamist ideologies, in what was a seminal moment in the development of Islamist militancy.

2 Jeffrey Gettleman, Dharisha Bastians and Hannah Beech, "'We Knew What Was Coming': Sri Lanka Sees ISIS' Hand in Attacks", New York Times, 3 May 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/03/world/asia/sri-lanka-attacks-isis.html.

Yet alongside its brutality against civilians, the Taliban's government brought some stability following years of conflict. The group ended the worst of the warlord-led violence and corruption, encouraging wealth distribution and the provision of much-needed public services including healthcare, infrastructure projects and agricultural support. Winning hearts and minds is a key part of these extremist groups' strategic approach to state building.

Similarly, al-Qaeda in Yemen has provided some public services in the country in the face of widespread suffering, spending millions from looted banks on infrastructure and welfare. Likewise, ISWAP has presented itself as a defender of equality and social justice, offering to share food stocks with villagers in northeast Nigeria and around Lake Chad.[3] When ISIS took territory in Raqqa, alongside brutality, its efforts were administrative, including rubbish collection, issuing birth certificates and providing healthcare.[4] In Mosul, some citizens, especially in the early stages of ISIS's rule, noted improvements in security and public services that had previously been lacking.[5] Hamas spends millions of dollars on social welfare schemes in the Gaza Strip, while Hizbullah has similarly invested in public services, creating school systems and distributing aid.[6]

These Islamist militant groups can tactically exploit the needs of their subjects, attempting to garner popular support, or at least a lack of resistance, to ensure compliance. This effort is bolstered by the ever-present fear of terrifying violent punishment. This activity is also ideologically motivated, ensuring all areas of "the state" are

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3 Colin Freeman, "Boko Haram Adopts 'Hearts and Minds' Strategy in Nigeria—Inspired by Isil", Telegraph, 22 May 2019, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/terror-and-security/boko-haram-adopts-hearts-minds-strategy-nigeria-inspired-isil/.

4 Rukmini Callimachi, "The ISIS Files", New York Times, 4 April 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/04/04/world/middleeast/isis-documents-mosul-iraq.html.

5 Mara Revkin and William McCants, "Experts Weigh In: Is ISIS Good at Governing?", Brookings Institution blog, 20 November 2015, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/11/20/experts-weigh-in-is-isis-good-at-governing/.

6 Lara Pham, "Terrorism and Charity: Defining Hamas", World Policy, 8 August 2014, https://worldpolicy.org/2014/08/08/terrorism-and-charity-defining-hamas/; Counter Extremism Project, "Hezbollah", https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/hezbollah.

suffused with their interpretation of fundamentalist Islam. There is no distinction between the provision of services and extremist ideology. Civilians, who are often in severe need, suffering the effects of instability, lack of prosperity and insecurity, are "saved" by the "defenders of Islam". Where good governance disintegrates, and protection, basic services, and law and order are found wanting, Islamist militants have room to pursue their ultimate objective—governing territory and people.

Figure 1.2: State Building Exercises Undertaken by Islamist Extremist Groups Around the World
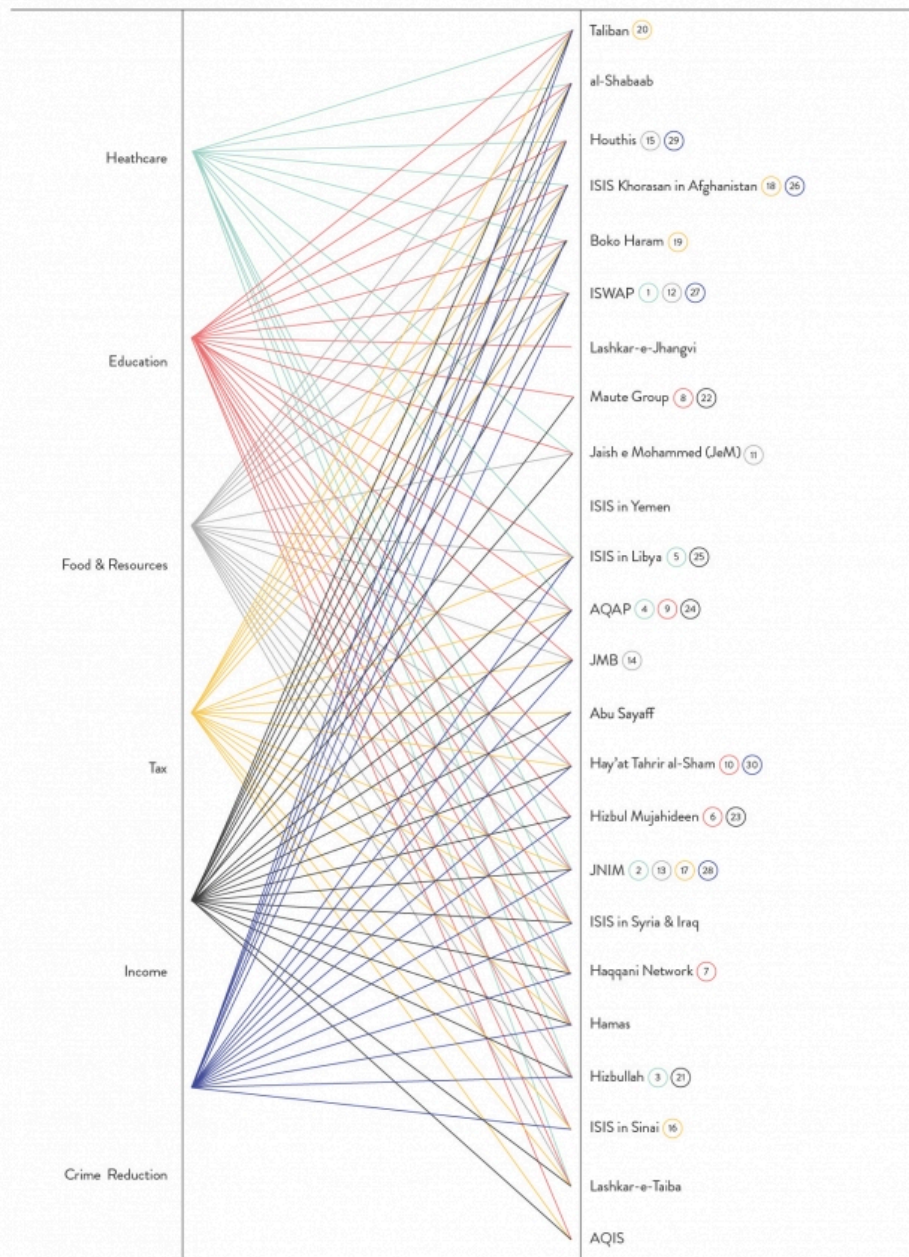
HEALTHCARE

1. (ISWAP) They employed medical specialists, stocked medical supplies, and transfered the seriously ill to hospitals abroad.
2. (JNIM) In Timbuktu, they provided fuel to hospitals and ambulances in addition to facilitating their work.

3. (Hizbullah) Their Islamic Health Unit has offered extensive services, serving as the primary provider in southern Lebanon.
4. (AQAP) Following the collapse of healthcare from war, they distributed medical supplies and equipment to hospitals.
5. (ISIS in Libya) In a video they called for medical professionals to join them and shows members delivering first aid.

EDUCATION

6. (Hizbul Mujahideen) The group has been closely tied to quasi-charitable organisations that run schools and orphanages across Kashmir.
7. (Haqqani Network) They have been known to run madrassas in North Waziristan and across Pakistan.
8. (Maute Group) They recruited from poor communities promising an Islamic educationand provided Quran lessons for children.
9. (AQAP) They created a local affiliate, Ansar al-Sharia, providing services including education in Abyan province.
10. (Ha'yat Tahrir al-Sham) In areas under their control, students with government-issued diplomas have been prevented from advancing.

FOOD AND RESOURCES

11. (Jaish-e-Mohammed) Following the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, the group delivered humanitarian assistance to affected areas.
12. (ISWAP) They have provided loans to entrepreneurs, seeds and fertiliser for farmers, and pasture for herders.
13. (JNIM) In Mopti, Mali, extremists have allocated pastoral land and regulated land use close to their encampments.
14. (JMB) The group has been able to attract recruits due to persistent food insecurity within low-income communities.
15. (Houthis) The rebel group has been accused of diverting food aid to areas under their control.

TAX

16. (ISIS in Sinai) They have extracted zakat taxes from local

farmers and extorted prolific smuggling networks.

17. (JNIM) They have extracted tax from locals and traffickers in return for the provision of social services.
18. (ISIS Khorasan in Afghanistan) They have levied taxes based on Islamic law on goods such as livestock and agricultural produce
19. (Boko Haram) In Northeast Nigeria, the group has slaughtered non-Muslims for not paying the Islamic Jizya tax.
20. (Taliban) The group taxed the production of opium, such as a 10% cultivation tax on farmers.

INCOME

21. (Hizbullah) They provided bonuses for wives and children, in addition to housing and transportation subsidies.
22. (Maute Group) Fighters gained a regular salary of between 20,000 and 50,000 pesos ($382 - $954).
23. (Hizbul Mujahideen) They have paid children as young as 15-years-old to carry out grenade attacks at checkpoints.
24. (AQAP) A fighter could expect $200 a month, an improvement on the $140-150 for Yemeni soldiers.
25. (ISIS in Libya) They have paid fighters $100 a month, for many an increase on their previous income.

CRIME REDUCTION

26. (ISIS Khorasan in Afghanistan) They established courthouses and prisons and impose sharia by burning poppy fields and banning cigarettes.
27. (ISWAP) The group operated checkpoints in towns they control and enforced a strict interpretation of Sharia.
28. (JNIM) The group mediated disputes and punished those pursuing justice through official channels.
29. (Houthis) They have used arbitrary and abusive detention in order to extort relatives and conduct swaps.
30. (Ha'yat Tahrir al-Sham) In Idlib, the group had an internal security body that imprisoned and tortured perceived opponents.

In order to truly end the spread of Islamist extremism and violence that ensues, the complex challenge of state fragility must be faced. Islamist extremists seek to implement a form of governance where state-enacted governance is failing. The exploitation of weak governance, especially in fragile regions such as the Sahel, should act as a warning, not least because 2.3 billion people are predicted to live in fragile contexts by 2030.[7]

Approaches must therefore be holistic, combining humanitarian, development and security strategies to deliver effective, long-term solutions. Efforts should be coordinated through a multilateral approach, as seen in 2018 when the US Defense and Aid departments presented a joint strategic stabilisation initiative.[8]

This report exposes the potential capacity for Islamist militant groups to expand and exploit new conflicts, proving the necessity for unified action. What we need to remember is that Islamist extremists adhere to harsh, distorted interpretations of Islamic texts. They continue to manipulate the tenets of religion and unless decision-makers seek to understand the ideologies driving Islamist extremism, the violence will continue.

7 George Ingram and Nancy Lindborg, "Implementing a Fragility Strategy", Brooking Institution blog, 25 July 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/research/implementing-a-fragility-strategy/.

8 United States Department of Defense, A Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of US Government Efforts to Stabilize Conflict-Affected Areas, 2018, https://media.defense.gov/2018/Jun/13/2001931133/-1/-1/1/STABILIZATION-ASSISTANCE-REVIEW.PDF.

THE TEN DEADLIEST COUNTRIES

Violent Islamist extremism spanned the globe in 2018, with incidents taking place in 40 countries across six regions. This chapter explores the ten countries that bore the brunt of this violence, analysing the contexts in which Islamist extremism has entrenched itself. Similar to 2017, ten states together experienced 95 per cent of all fatalities globally: Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq, Nigeria, Yemen, Mali, Egypt, Libya and Pakistan. Of these, Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen were among the most fragile nations in the Fund for Peace's 2018 Fragile States Index.

While these same ten countries also experienced the most Islamist extremist violence in 2017, six of them saw a marked uptick or decline in their violent activity in 2018, moving rank compared to the previous year. Of these, Mali demonstrated the biggest change between 2017 and 2018, rising three places from number ten to seven, overtaking Pakistan, Libya and Egypt in the list of the ten deadliest countries to suffer most from violent Islamist extremism. The military defeat inflicted on Islamic State in Iraq in 2017 contributed to low levels of violent activity in 2018. In turn, the 18-year war in Afghanistan and Somalia's prolonged battle against al-Shabaab saw the two nations rise to second and third place in this list respectively. They now sit behind only Syria as the countries in the world to suffer most from violent Islamist extremism.

SYRIA

Civil war in Syria is now in its eighth year, and has so far claimed the lives of an estimated 400,000 people. US withdrawal from northern Syria was premised on what President Donald Trump described as the "100%" defeat of ISIS. The group has suffered the loss of its territorial authority in Syria, but the GEM casts doubt on whether this constitutes a meaningful degradation of the group's deadly potential and—importantly—of Islamist extremism in Syria in general. At least 15,309 people died in 2018 from violent Islamist extremism in the country, a 56 per cent decline from 2017. However, at least 34 Islamist extremist groups are actively fighting in the country. These groups seek the territory lost by ISIS, and will

continue to sow violence across the country until their goal of establishing an Islamic emirate in Syria is accomplished.

Following the loss of its territorial "caliphate" across Syria and Iraq in 2017, ISIS regrouped and revised its tactics, stepping up guerrilla operations through sleeper cells it had pre-emptively sowed across the country. The GEM found that these organised cells proved capable of launching an average of three attacks per day throughout 2018, with Deir ez-Zor and Idlib witnessing most of this violence. Only a few months after the Syrian Democratic Forces ousted militants from ISIS's de facto capital Raqqa in October 2017, the GEM found ISIS had infiltrated 11 of 14 Syrian provinces. ISIS were responsible for the deaths of at least 2,461 civilians, security personnel and non-state actors during 2018 and remained the deadliest group in Syria for a second year running.

ISIS targeted 19 other Islamist extremist groups in nearly one-third of their operations, including the Salafi-jihadist coalition Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which perpetrated the most violence in Syria after ISIS. HTS is composed of mainly Syrian nationals, with a militant leadership professing an approach to militancy in which jihadists aim to win the hearts and minds of the Syrian people. Altogether, 34 Islamist extremist groups were deemed operationally active in Syria by the GEM in 2018. While these groups often compete with one another, they all subscribe to militant Islamism, justify the use of violence by a strict, narrow interpretation of Islam and seek the overthrow of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in order ultimately to carve an Islamic emirate out of Syria.

Syria was the world's biggest jihadi battleground in 2018. The GEM recorded 789 attacks and clashes between competing violent Islamist actors. An unprecedented 678 extremists were killed just from intergroup violence in Syria, with deep factionalism creating a recurring cycle of militancy that has lasted years.

At least 5,281 Islamist extremists were killed in Syria—more than a fifth of all militant deaths globally in 2018. Sixty-seven per cent of those deaths resulted from the 8,532 state counter extremist operations recorded by the GEM. Thirty non-state militias, including ten Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army factions, were verified active by the GEM—an unprecedented number of armed militias in one

country fighting against Islamist extremists. Israel, Iran and the US-led anti-ISIS coalition also continued to be engaged
militarily against Syria's Islamist extremist groups, killing 572 militants in eight different provinces in 2018.

The Syrian conflict presents one of the most significant policy challenges in the last 20 years. US withdrawal could leave the country politically vulnerable to regional players, sparking a geopolitical tug of war across the Middle East. Whoever ultimately controls Syria will face rebuilding a shattered country. Polling suggests that many Syrians preferred ISIS control to the government,[9] highlighting that to eradicate extremism, it is vital to address the underlying grievances that fuelled the conflict.

9 Orb International, "Raqqa-Hasakah Poll – October 2019", 6 November 2019, https://orb-international.com/2019/11/06/raqqahasakahpoll/.

Figure 2.1: Map of Violent Islamist Incidents and Counter-Measures in Syria, 2018
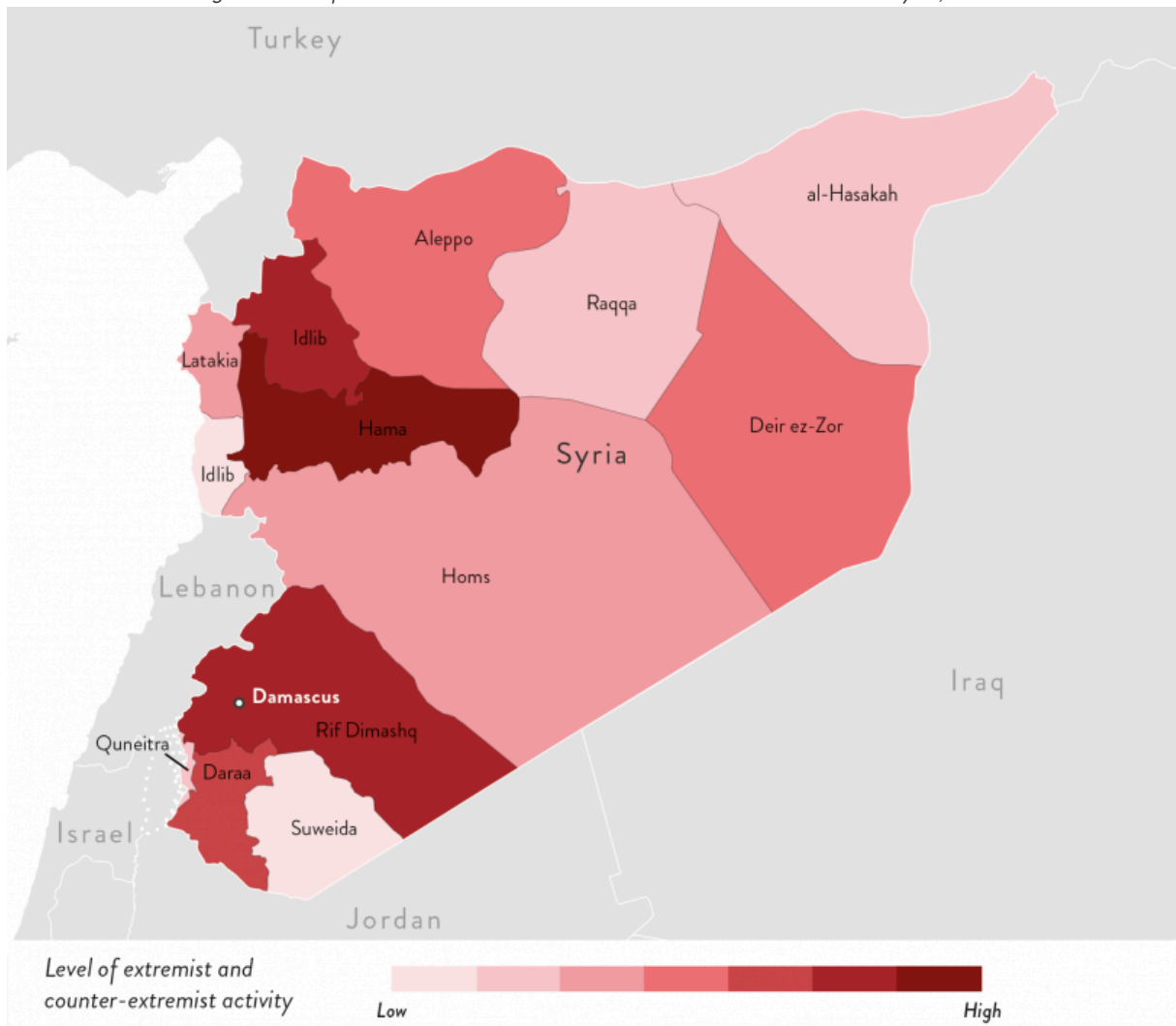
Level of extremist and counter-extremist activity

Low — High

Fig 2.2: Fatalities From Islamist Violence and Counter-Measures in Syria, 2018

Extremists — 35%
Civilians — 41%
Security forces — 15%
Nonstate militias — 9%

PERCENTAGE OF FATALITIES
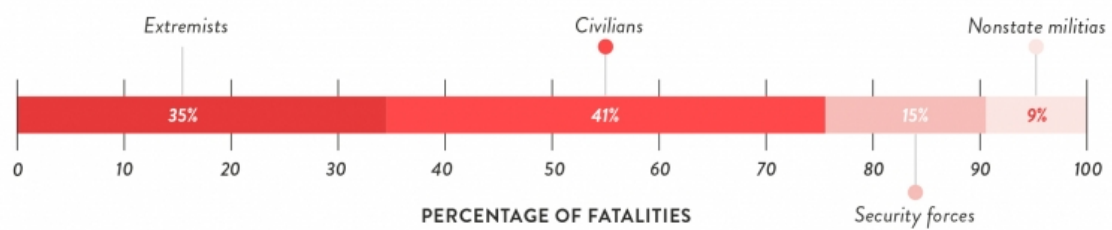
Figure 2.3: The Five Deadliest Islamist Extremist Incidents in Syria, 2018

	Location	Perpetrator	Description
1	As-Suwayda, As-Suwayda	ISIS in Syria and Iraq	String of suicide bombs and gun attacks targeting Druze communities kill 258 people
2	Al-Ramthan, Damascus	Jaish al Islam	44 people, mainly women and children, killed when rockets struck busy market
3	Northwest Idlib, Idlib	Tahrir al-Sham	Four explosions kill 34 people and injure 70 others
4	Idlib, Idlib	ISIS in Syria and Iraq	Car bomb explodes near military court (formerly Syrian Central Bank) of HTS, killing 18 including 10 HTS militants
5	Shaykh Najjar, Aleppo	ISIS in Syria and Iraq	Landmine placed by jihadists explodes, killing 14 civilians

AFGHANISTAN

Forty years since the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, from Islamist militancy in the country emerged, conflict and insecurity continue to affect the Afghan people. Islamist extremism–related violence claimed the lives of at least 12,187 people in 2018, with the GEM observing at least two attacks on average every day. Afghanistan rose above Iraq in the ranking of deadliest countries since 2017, laying claim to being the second deadliest country in the world despite an 18 per cent decrease in fatalities during 2018.[10] In June of that year, the Taliban agreed to a temporary ceasefire for the first time in 18 years. The agreement failed to create a long-lasting peace and the Taliban intensified its operations. GEM data found

10 "Another Sombre Milestone for Afghanistan: 2018 Saw Record Civilian Deaths – UN Report", UN News, 23 February 2019, https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/02/1033441.

that the Taliban killed four times as many people in the second half of the year, following the brief truce in June, as in the previous six months. With ISIS also in the fray since 2015, multilateral efforts at establishing peace in Afghanistan are vital to effectively bring about closure to one of the world's longest running battles against violent islamist extremism.

In 2018 the Taliban maintained control of territory, perpetrating violence that killed more than 2,500 people. Following the start of its spring offensive in April, it launched on average 13 per cent more attacks each month compared to the prior three months. When announcing the spring offensive, the group dismissed plans for peace talks as a "conspiracy" and vowed to target the US military and its "internal supporters". During the year, the Taliban focused its efforts on military targets, with 75 per cent of attacks targeting security personnel, including international forces. As the country held parliamentary elections in October 2018, widespread violence was directed at candidates and voters, with the GEM reporting the deaths of 107 people who were killed at polling and voter registration stations.

Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISIS-Khorasan) continues to contest ground in Afghanistan. The group's violence caused 977 deaths in 2018, with at least ten people killed on average per attack. This made it one of the deadliest groups documented by the GEM globally in 2018. Unlike the Taliban, ISIS-Khorasan targeted the public sphere throughout the year, with 72 per cent of offensives aimed at civilians and soft targets. The group also continued its violence against Afghanistan's Shia population, killing 43 people. The GEM found that 80 per cent of sectarian violence in Afghanistan was attributed to ISIS-Khorasan and its targeting of Shia Muslims.

ISIS-Khorasan has also emerged as a serious threat to the Taliban. In 2018, conflict between the two organisations resulted in 190 militant deaths. Sixty-nine per cent of this intergroup violence took place in Kunar and Nangarhar, where ISIS-Khorasan is concentrated. For example, an ISIS suicide bomber targeting the funeral of a Taliban member killed 16 people in July 2018. The two militant organisations have not always been at odds with each other, however. In April, ISIS militants and the Taliban launched an alleged

joint attack on an Afghan military checkpoint. While the groups remain divided by tactics and ideological agendas, overthrowing the government is a clear priority for them both.

At least 7,809 Islamist militants were killed as a result of counter-efforts by Afghan security forces and their international partners, including the US and NATO. According to the GEM, the US military carried out air offensives in 22 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, killing at least 1,241 militants. In 2018, President Trump confirmed plans to withdraw 7,000 troops from Afghanistan, the largest US troop withdrawal since the 2001 invasion—a military strategy that could prolong Islamist militancy in Afghanistan.

Figure 2.4: Map of Violent Islamist Incidents and Counter-Measures in Afghanistan, 2018
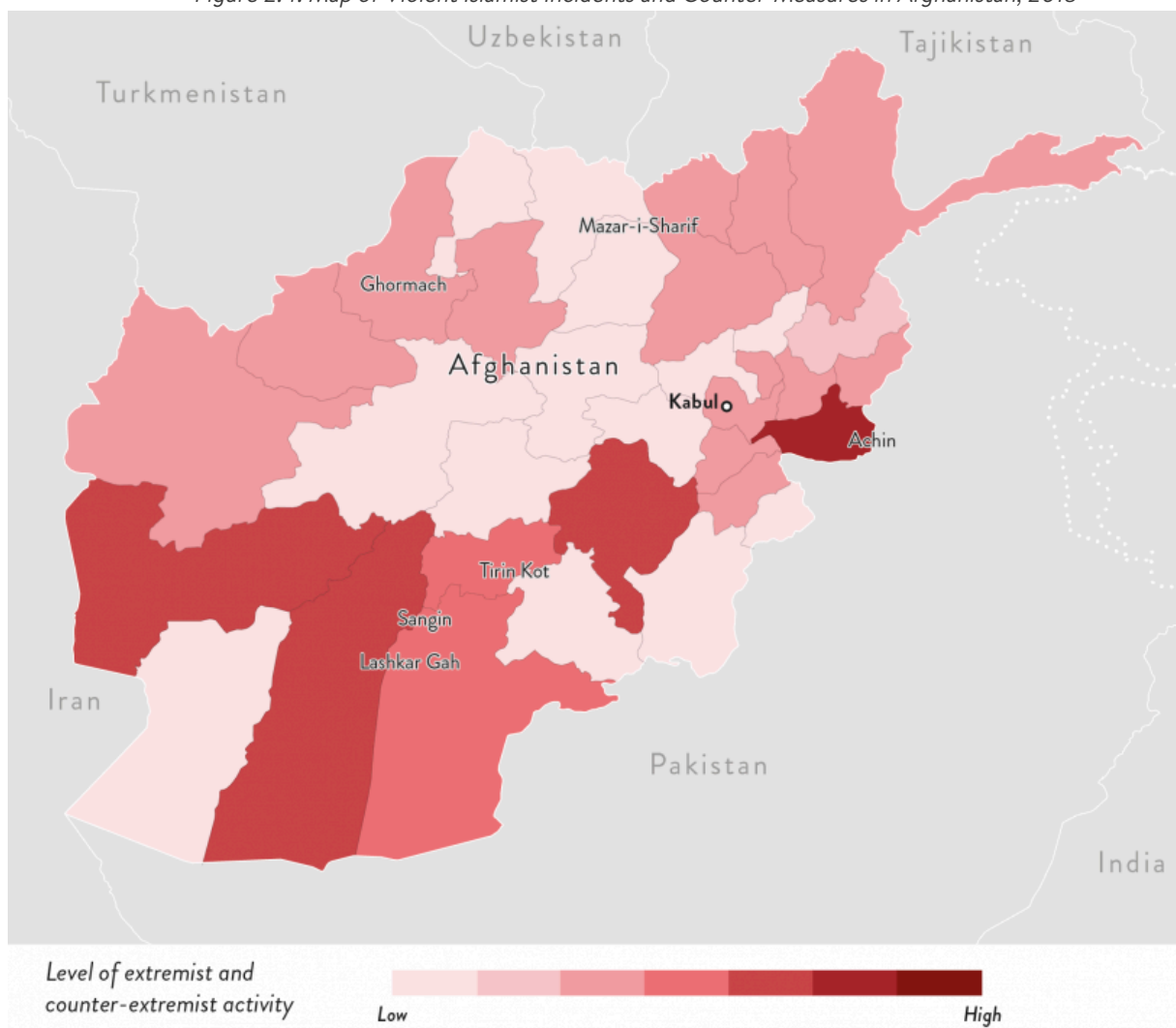

Level of extremist and counter-extremist activity   Low   High

Figure 2.5: Fatalities From Islamist Violence and Counter-Measures in Afghanistan, 2018
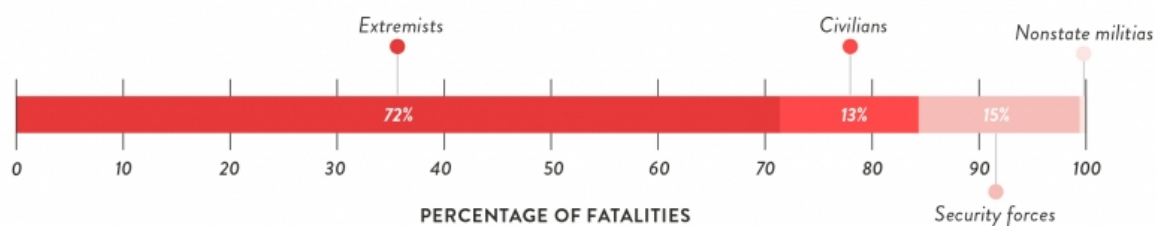
Figure 2.6: The Five Deadliest Islamist Extremist Incidents in Afghanistan, 2018

	Location	Perpetrator	Description
1	Kabul, Kabul	Taliban	Attackers detonated ambulance laced with explosived towards government buildings and foreign embassies, killing 103 people
2	Jalalabad, Nangahar	ISIS in Khorasan (Afghanistan)	Suicide bomber detonated explosives in crowd of protestors, killing 68 and wounding 150 others
3	Kabul, Kabul	ISIS in Khorasan (Afghanistan)	Suicide attack targeted religious scholars gathered for Prophet Muhammad's birthday at a wedding hall, killing 60 people
4	Dashte Barchi, Kabul	ISIS in Khorasan (Afghanistan)	58 people killed when suicide bomber detonated at voter registration centre
5	Kabul, Kabul	ISIS in Khorasan (Afghanistan)	48 killed when students preparing to sit university entrance exams targeted by suicide bomber

SOMALIA

Al-Shabaab has become al-Qaeda's most resilient affiliate globally and remains dominant despite local ISIS activity. Al-Shabaab continues to conduct large-scale attacks and control territory in the country, which is strategically situated in the Horn of Africa and is the subject of increasing economic and geopolitical interest from global powers. In 2018, Islamist extremism–related violence killed at least 3,568 people in Somalia, moving it above Iraq in the GEM's ranking of deadliest countries in the world in 2018. The GEM found that al-Shabaab conducted 1,209 attacks, three per day on average. Over the year, the frequency of their attacks was stable despite continued counter-terrorism operations.

Efforts to eliminate al-Shabaab rely on international cooperation, which is indicative of Somalia's strategic significance and the group's resilience. The GEM recorded nine foreign and multilateral forces in the country in 2018, including the US, Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Italy, Turkey and the UN. Al-Shabaab's violence targeted these forces, killing at least 56 people, according to the GEM. The group's attacks on international military personnel included the firing of mortars at a Turkish military base in Mogadishu and a suicide attack on an Italian military convoy. The group was also responsible for killing an American soldier, the second member of US security personnel killed in Somalia in 13 months.

The US has expanded its military efforts against al-Shabaab since 2017, conducting on average two airstrikes per week against al-Shabaab targets. This activity included coordinated efforts with the Somali army, as well as the use of drones. In October, a US air operation killed 60 al-Shabaab fighters in the northern Harardhere area. As our data indicates, the fight against al-Shabaab has become a cornerstone of America's war against Islamist militants, despite international attention largely focusing on operations in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

The GEM found that over half of al-Shabaab's activity focused on Somali military and government targets. The group launched offensives against 608 Somali security sites in 2018, averaging three attacks per week. Al-Shabaab also conducted 74 attacks

against Somali government targets in 2018. Eleven of these assaults were on government buildings, including at least seven aimed at the presidential palace in Mogadishu. Since the unprecedented bombing of 2017 that killed more than 500 people, the capital's government district has continued to suffer sustained assaults.[11]

Business owners and humanitarian workers all suffered from the activities of al-Shabaab during 2018, with the group's targeting of politicians and government officials the highest among all Islamist extremists documented by the GEM. Fourteen per cent of the group's attacks against civilians involved executions and other violence inspired by their interpretation of sharia law. In 2018, al-Shabaab demonstrated its desire to govern and control populations in its territory by beheading, lashing, stoning, burning, shooting and amputating at least 61 people. In May, the group stoned to death a woman accused of having multiple marriages and later in the year it beheaded a 15-year-old boy accused of sexual assault. Throughout 2018, al-Shabaab executed four people for burning charcoal, a resource that the group illegally smuggles and attempts to control, and attacked ten traders of khat, a business outlawed under al-Shabaab's system of Islamist governance.

The GEM confirmed that al-Shabaab was active in more than two-fifths of Somalia's administrative regions in 2018, emphasising the group's dominance across the country. However, preoccupation with the terror threat limits the scope for long-term solutions aimed at bringing peace and security to Somalia. While better central governance is a necessity, promoting localised economic development initiatives needs to happen in order to prevent groups such as al-Shabaab from exploiting the lack of state-led social provision.

11 "Somalia: Several killed in al-Shabab attacks in Mogadishu", Al Jazeera, 15 June 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/somalia-killed-al-shabab-attacks-mogadishu-190615165754730.html.

Figure 2.7: Map of Violent Islamist Incidents and Counter-Measures in Somalia, 2018
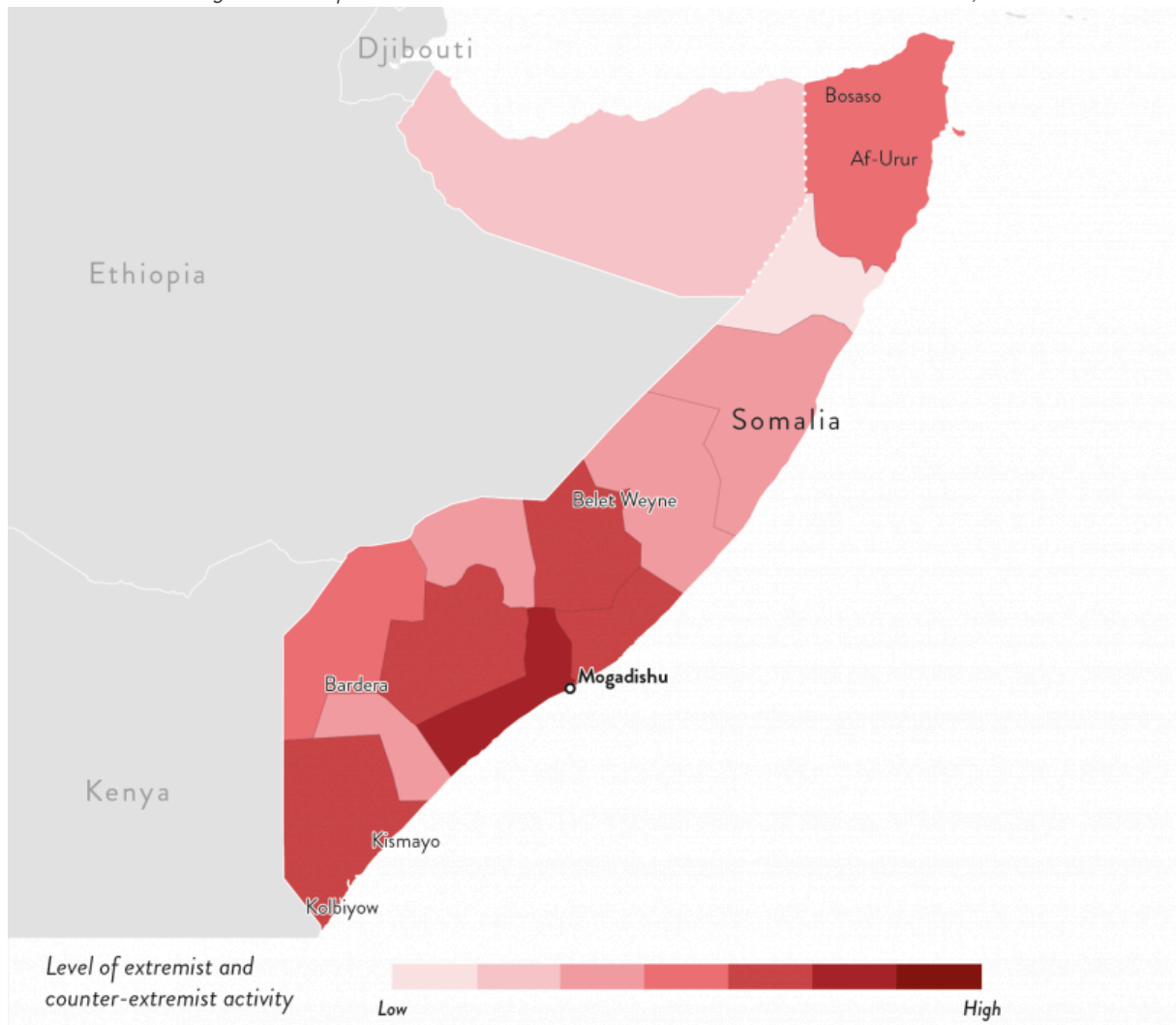

Level of extremist and
counter-extremist activity

Low   High

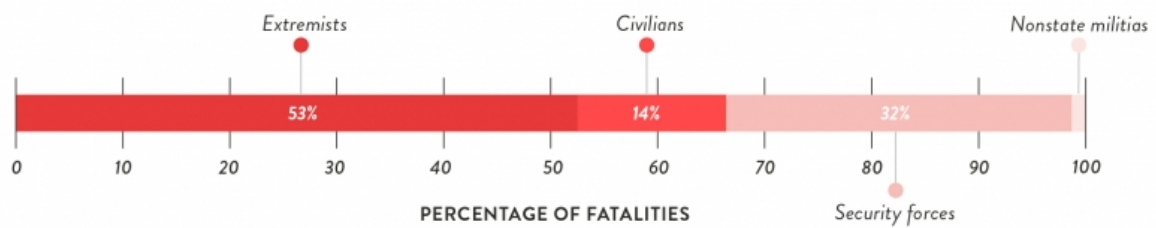*Figure 2.8: Fatalities From Islamist Violence and Counter-Measures in Somalia, 2018*

Extremists   Civilians   Nonstate militias

53%   14%   32%

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100

PERCENTAGE OF FATALITIES

Security forces

Figure 2.9: The Five Deadliest Islamist Extremist Incidents in Somalia, 2018

	Location	Perpetrator	Description
1	Moqokori, Hiraan	Al-Shabaab	Al-Shabaab attack military base and overtake area, killing 72 Somali and Ethiopian soldiers
2	Hodan, Banaadir	Al-Shabaab	Three car bombs explode outside Hotel Hayaat, Sahafi Hotel and the CID headquarters, killing 50
3	Belet Weyne, Hiraan	Al-Shabaab	Landmine planted by militants explodes, killing 30 soliders of AMISOM
4	Mogadishu, Banaadir	Al-Shabaab	30 dead after militants attack presidential palace
5	Mogadishu, Banaadir	Al-Shabaab	Twin blasts in Mogadishu claims 20 lives, mainly civilians

IRAQ

ISIS was declared militarily defeated in Iraq in December 2017, but data from the GEM shows that the group remains present in 11 out of 19 provinces across the country. The GEM observed a significant decrease in the total number of fatalities from Islamist extremist violence in the country in 2018—3,524 deaths, down from 17,033 in 2017 and contributing to its fall of two places in our ranking. Despite the reduction in fatalities and the regaining of territory by the Iraqi military, remnants of ISIS and its leadership remain in Iraq, with Pentagon officials estimating that 14,000 militants are at large.[12] With ISIS reverting to insurgency tactics and continuing to launch offensives in Iraq, there is a risk the group will

regenerate and strengthen, particularly if the underlying conditions that supported its rise persist.

Despite battlefield losses, the group launched an average of two attacks per day in 2018. Northern Iraq remained the epicentre of activity, corroborating reports that ISIS is reconstituting in areas formerly under its control. Seventy-eight per cent of ISIS attacks took place in four provinces: Baghdad, Kirkuk, Diyala and Nineveh, where the battle to bring down the group's stronghold in Mosul came to an end in July 2017. Baghdad also retained its status as one of the world's deadliest capitals, with an attack recorded once every three days.

The GEM found frequent and focused attacks to be the modus operandi of the group's violence in 2018. Nearly half of all ISIS violence against the Iraqi government during 2018 consisted of assassination attempts on district mayors, including in March when two mayors were shot dead by ISIS militants just hours apart. These selective attacks signal ISIS's desire to destabilise local governance structures and foment tensions that the group can exploit.

Beyond its strategy of eroding political stability in Iraq, ISIS also targeted the public sphere, including 67 attacks on marketplaces. In the past this tactic allowed the group to gain media attention, consolidating a reputation weakened by military losses. The group carried out 23 attacks against farmers in 2018, and in 2019 militants began burning the crops of landowners who refused to pay ISIS protection money—imposed as a form of "taxation" by the group.[13] This exposes ISIS's intent both to reassert control over civilians in territory it used to hold and to undermine reconciliation and recovery efforts by local authorities. At least 857 civilians were killed in Iraq from the activities and violent offensives launched by ISIS throughout 2018.

Despite the collapse of ISIS's so-called caliphate in the second half of 2017, counter-terror operations were still being conducted

12 "IS 'Caliphate' Defeated but Jihadist Group Remains a Threat", BBC News, 23 March 2019, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-45547595.

13 Wim Zwijnenburg, "Torching And Extortion: OSINT Analysis Of Burning Agriculture In Iraq", Bellingcat, 3 June 2019, https://www.bellingcat.com/news/mena/2019/06/03/torching-and-extortion-osint-analysis-of-burning-agriculture-in-iraq/.

against the group throughout 2018. At least 1,633 extremists were killed during the year, with operations by the US-led anti-ISIS coalition killing 222 ISIS militants. The Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) paramilitary units killed 189 militants, while operations by Iraqi security personnel led to the deaths of 1,203 ISIS militants. The PMF, consisting of dozens of Shia militias, was dominant in the fight against ISIS and has since gained further influence in Iraq—replacing Iraqi government forces in some areas and gaining parliamentary power.

One of the major factors that contributed to ISIS's rise was the sectarian agenda pushed by Iranian-backed Shia Islamist militias, which targeted Sunni Muslims living in Iraq. The post-ISIS environment has emboldened these Shia militias and in doing so has again increased sectarian tensions between Shia and Sunni communities. In 2020, as part of the Tony Blair Institute's "Shia Islamism in Focus: from Iran's Revolution to Today", we will publish a series of papers exploring Shia militias in greater depth.

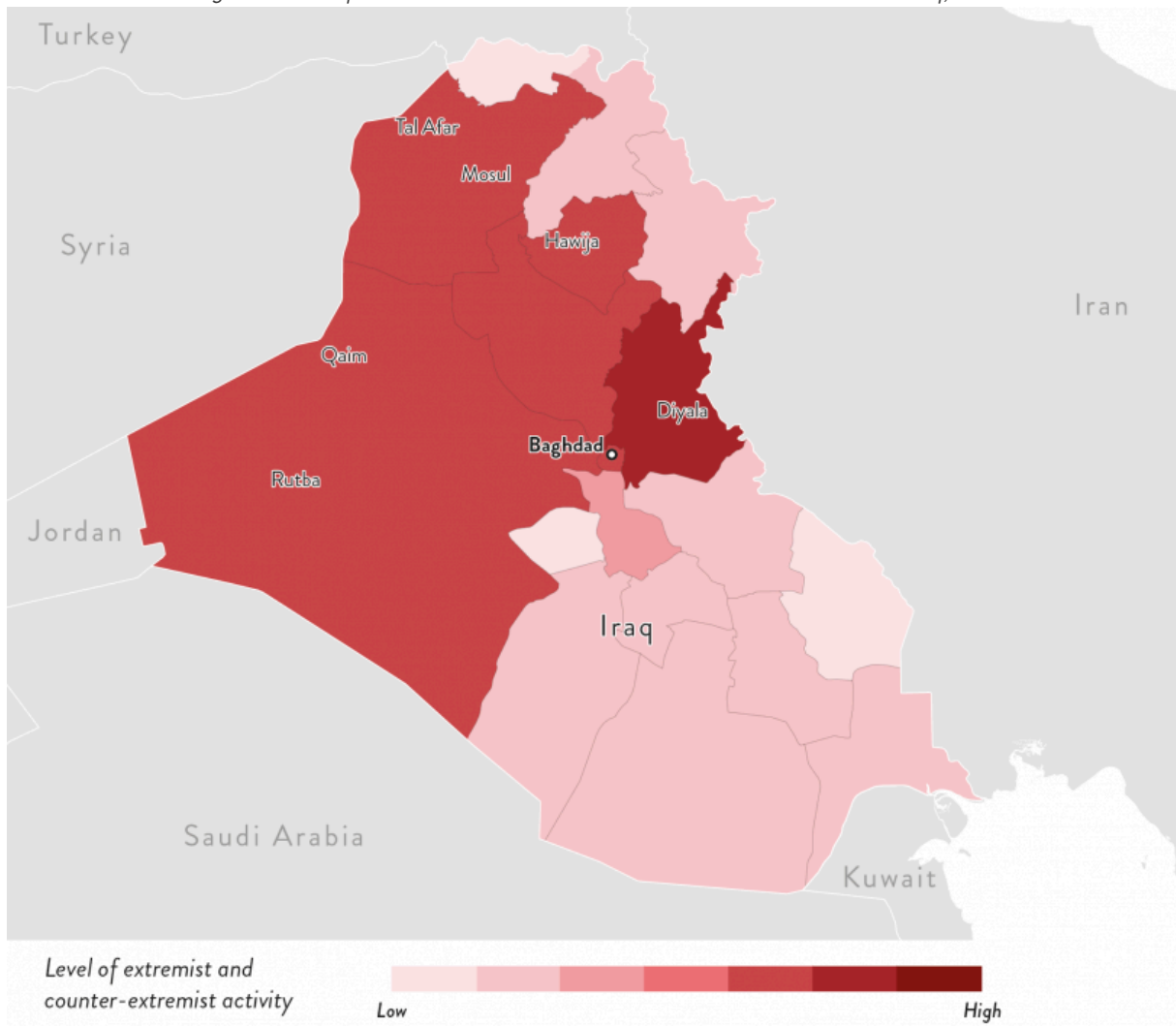*Figure 2.10: Map of Violent Islamist Incidents and Counter-Measures in Iraq, 2018*

Figure 2.11: Fatalities From Islamist Violence and Counter-Measures in Iraq, 2018
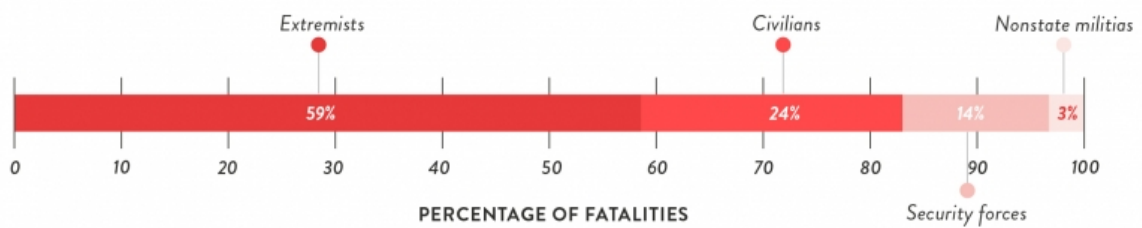

Figure 2.12: The Five Deadliest Islamist Extremist Incidents in Iraq, 2018

	Location	Perpetrator	Description
1	Al-Saadouniya, Kirkuk	ISIS in Syria & Iraq	21 Popular Mobilization Forces members beheaded by militants
2	Al-Saadouniya, Kirkuk	ISIS in Syria & Iraq	20 Iraqi forces killed after being ambushed
3	Anbar, Anbar	ISIS in Syria & Iraq	20 alleged smugglers killed by militants and their trucks stolen
4	Sadr City, Baghdad	ISIS in Syria & Iraq	Two bombs explode near Shia mosque, killing 20
5	Akkas, Anbar	ISIS in Syria & Iraq	10 Iraqi forces killed after militants attack Akkas gas field

NIGERIA

Ten years since Boko Haram established its devastating insurgency, Nigeria's northeastern region continues to suffer at the hands of Islamist extremists. At least 2,145 people were killed in Nigeria as a result of Islamist extremist violence and counter-efforts in 2018. The GEM recorded five deaths per attack on average, with Boko Haram and its offshoot, Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP), carrying out at least 226 attacks. The groups' activities continue to spill over into neighbouring countries, with 292 deaths in 187 attacks recorded in Chad, Cameroon and Niger. The sustained lethality of Boko Haram and its encroachment into the Lake Chad Basin exposes the continued hazard to Nigeria and the wider region, with internal factionalism also adding to the complexity of the threat.

Since Boko Haram split from ISIS in 2016, the groups have displayed differing tactics. Boko Haram was responsible for 72 per cent of the violent Islamist activity recorded by the GEM in Nigeria

in 2018—carrying out on average one attack per day, with 61 per cent of its activity directed at civilians. While attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram militants were more frequent, the impact of ISWAP's activity was more significant—inducing five deaths on average per attack. ISWAP prioritised security targets, with just 11 per cent of attacks aimed at civilians and public target, while 40 per cent of offensives were against military bases, with militants often seizing equipment in the process.

While Boko Haram and ISWAP have opposing views on attacking civilians, a divergence that has been discernible in the incidents recorded by the GEM in 2017 and 2018, both groups extended their regional footprint in 2018.[14] Twelve per cent of ISWAP attacks took place in Cameroon and Chad. A third of this activity targeted civilians—significantly more than its campaign in Nigeria. Boko Haram, present in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states, perpetrated more than half of their attacks beyond Nigeria; 80 per cent of the assaults in Cameroon and Niger were directed at soft targets, exploiting poorly governed spaces and porous borders.

While Boko Haram's use of suicide bombers decreased in 2018 compared with the previous year, the group continued to rely on suicide assaults for 21 per cent of its violence, a higher proportion than any other group recorded by the GEM. Boko Haram deployed 74 suicide bombers in Nigeria in 2018. Seventy-four per cent of the group's suicide assaults in Nigeria were directed at soft targets, including mosques, markets and refugee camps. All but one of the suicide attacks in Nigeria in 2018 were perpetrated by Boko Haram militants—demonstrating the ideological divergence from ISWAP on suicide bombings and civilian targeting.

In 2018, the GEM documented the kidnapping of 370 people by both Boko Haram and ISWAP. In February, ISWAP took 110 female students hostage in Bursari, Yobe state—the largest kidnapping by Islamist extremists since 270 schoolgirls were abducted from Chibok in 2014. All the girls kidnapped in Bursari, apart from one non-Muslim student, were returned to the village a month later. Aside from the group's oppressive and violent conduct towards

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14 Omar S. Mahmood and Ndubuisi Christian Ani, Factional Dynamics within Boko Haram, Institute for Security Studies Research Report, July 2018, https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/2018-07-06-research-report-2.pdf.

women, it has also instrumentalised abducted girls to carry out suicide assaults.

Northwest Nigeria is facing growing insecurity: kidnapping and cattle-raiding are rife, while intercommunal violence continues to afflict central Nigeria. The Nigerian government requires support from the international community to recognize the impact of systemic corruption, poverty and climate change— () factors intensifying the violence across the country and wider Lake Chad region. In 2020, the Tony Blair Institute will begin a program of work exploring violent extremism and its impact on the Lake Chad Basin of countries.

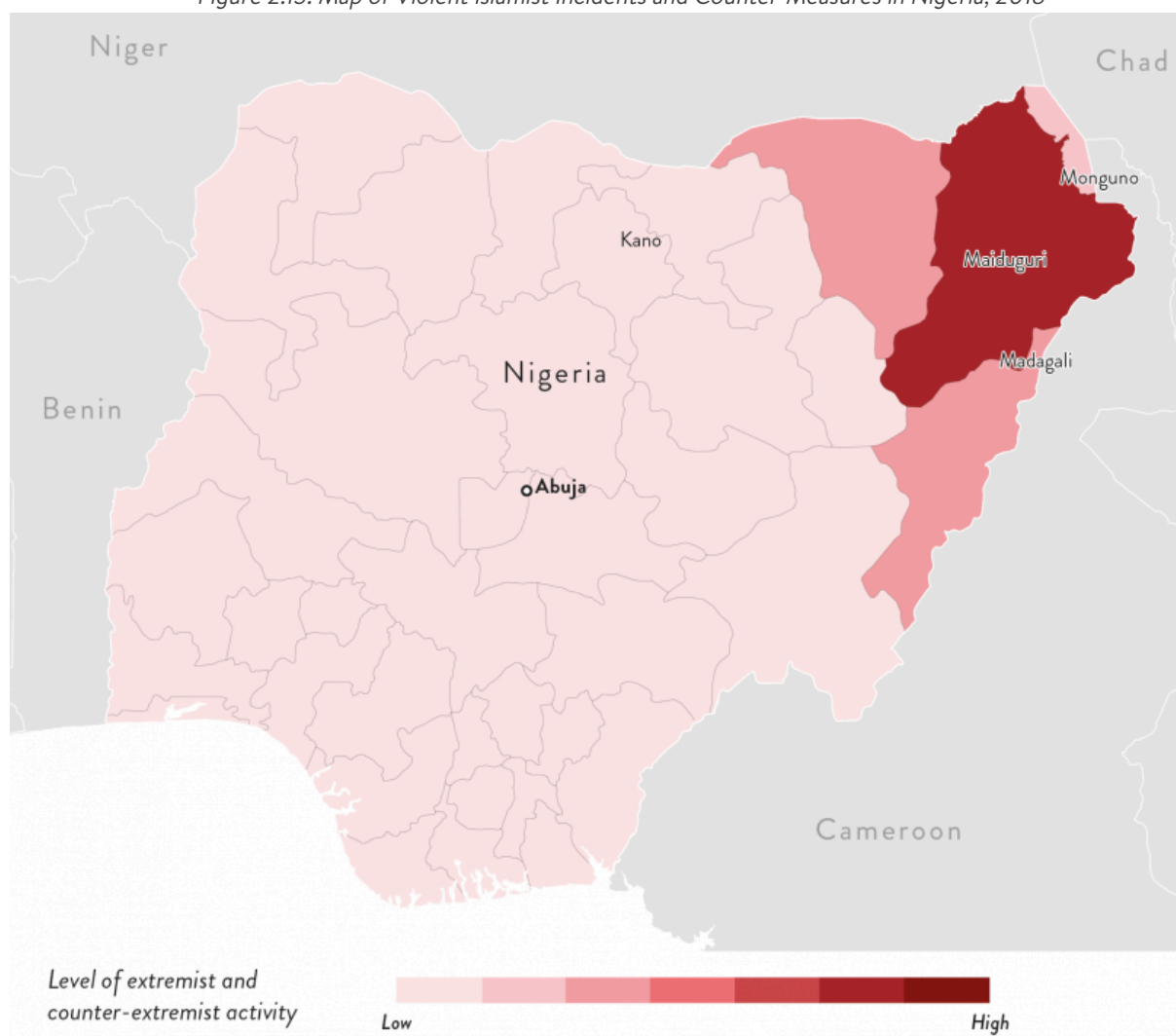*Figure 2.13: Map of Violent Islamist Incidents and Counter-Measures in Nigeria, 2018*

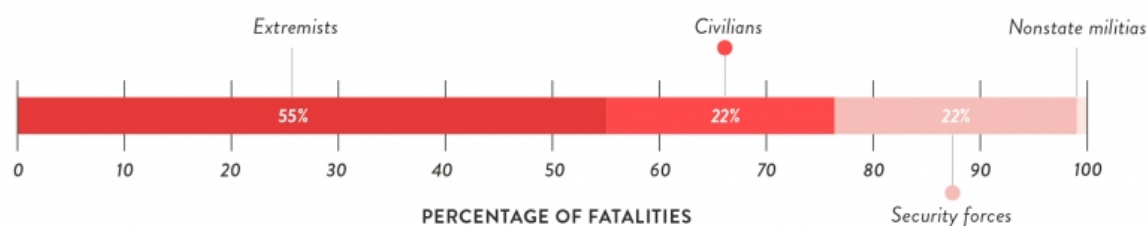*Figure 2.14: Fatalities From Islamist Violence and Counter-Measures in Nigeria, 2018*

Figure 2.15: The Five Deadliest Islamist Extremist Incidents in Nigeria, 2018

	Location	Perpetrator	Description
1	Metele, Borno	ISWAP	Militants overrun military base, killing 43 Nigerian soldiers
2	Damboa, Borno	Boko Haram	Six suicide bombers attack Eid celebrations, leaving 38 dead
3	Jilli, Borno	Boko Haram	Militants takeover military base, killing 31 and abducting over 100
4	Abadam, Borno	ISWAP	Military base overrun by militants, leaving 31 dead and five abducted
5	Monguno, Borno	ISWAP	5 Nigerian soldiers killed after militants attack village near Lake Chad

YEMEN

War in Yemen has created the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, four years after Houthi rebels ousted president Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi from the capital, Sana'a.[15] The GEM recorded at least 1,629 deaths from fighting during 2018, but this is only a fraction of

the estimated 230,000 killed by the resulting shortages of food and medicine since the war began in 2015. Half of Yemen's population of 28 million are starving, and the country is experiencing the worst cholera epidemic in modern history.

The Saudi-led coalition that began targeting Houthi positions in 2015 has been accused of deliberately bombing civilians. GEM data supports this claim by revealing that coalition airstrikes were responsible for 95 per cent of civilian casualties and that 71 per cent of airstrike casualties were civilians. In 2015 a coalition spokesman said that the entire city of Sa'dah, a Houthi stronghold with a population of 50,000, was a military target. Analysis confirms that this remains the case—all the casualties from coalition airstrikes in Saada province in 2018 were civilians, according to the GEM.

The Houthis employed advanced weaponry to extend the footprint of the conflict beyond the Saudi–Yemen border region, with the GEM recording that 41 Houthi ballistic missile attacks were launched against Saudi Arabia. In 2018 four ballistic missile strikes hit civilian airports inside Saudi Arabia, two of which were aimed at the capital, Riyadh. In June 2019 the Houthis struck the international airport in the southern Saudi city of Abha, killing one and injuring 26. The Houthis also targeted energy infrastructure in Saudi Arabia in 2018: four oil installations were struck by Houthi-launched ballistic missiles.

The GEM captured the rising use of unmanned drones by the Houthis to carry out attacks. Three oil facilities—including the refineries and oil fields of Saudi Aramco—were struck by low-tech drones launched by the Houthis from inside Yemen. This continued into 2019 with a drone attack on the Abha airport, causing disruption to air traffic. Houthi militants also claimed to have conducted three cross-border drone attacks on infrastructure targets in the United Arab Emirates, a significant ally in the Saudi-led coalition, including Abu Dhabi International Airport. This highlights the growing capabilities of Houthi militants, as well as a pattern of targeting critical infrastructure to inflict maximum economic disruption on their adversaries. In August 2019, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, while hosting a senior

15 "Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen Remains the Worst in the World, Warns UN", UN News, 14 February 2019, https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/02/1032811.

Houthi official in Tehran, pledged his continued support for the Houthis, and called for "strong resistance against Saudi-led plots to divide Yemen".[16]

Although their activity has been largely overlooked amid the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crises, the jihadi networks of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Islamic State in Yemen have continued to exploit the political vacuum and fragile security situation. AQAP carried out six times as many attacks as ISIS in Yemen, two-thirds of which targeted the Yemeni military. Attacks perpetrated by ISIS's Yemeni affiliate were fewer in number but nearly four times deadlier than those committed by AQAP, with an average of five deaths per attack recorded by the GEM, including a coordinated suicide operation in February that killed 14 security personnel.

In 2018, ISIS militants in Yemen focused on striking Emirati-backed militias in Aden. This reflects a considerable shift from their previous attacks targeting civilian populations, such as suicide bombings at two mosques in 2015 that drew widespread condemnation and undermined support for the group. Recent steps taken by the warring parties within Yemen and the Saudi military to de-escalate tensions are welcome and show a potential path for a national settlement to the war. International partners must support such a resolution as a foundation for containing the growth of extremist violence in the country.

Figure 2.16: Map of Violent Islamist Incidents and Counter-Measures in Yemen, 2018
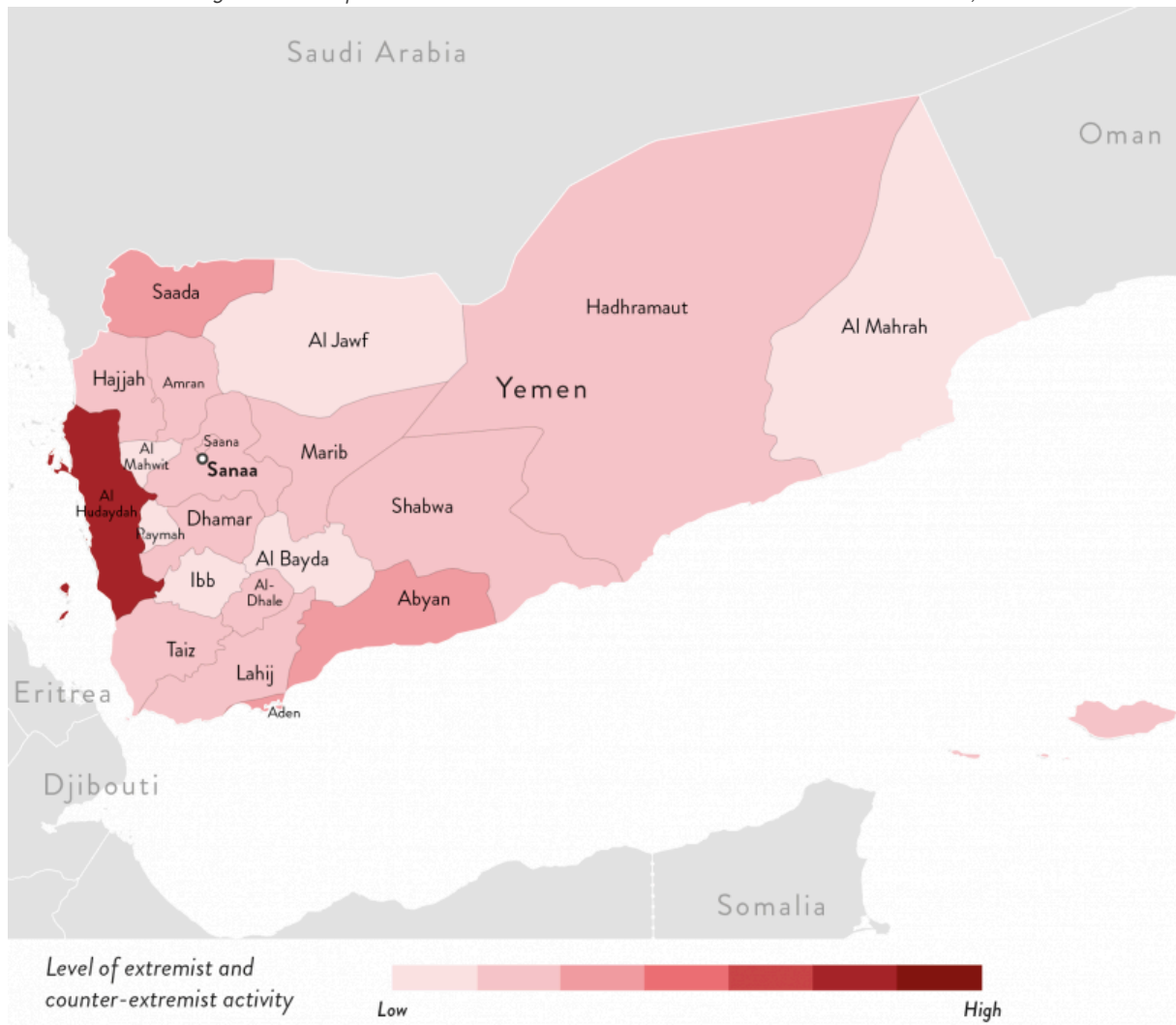

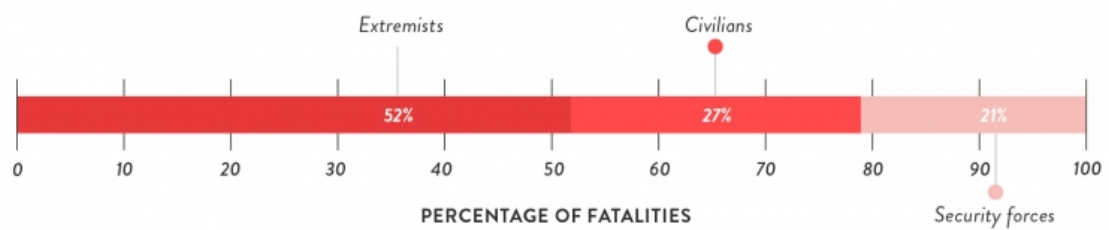*Figure 2.17: Fatalities From Islamist Violence and Counter-Measures in Yemen, 2018*

Figure 2.18: The Five Deadliest Islamist Extremist Incidents in Yemen, 2018

	Location	Perpetrator	Description
1	Al-Tahita,Hodeida	Houthis	Houthi offensive kills 37 Yemeni soldiers
2	Nehm, Marib	Houthis	Houthis capture several key sites, killing 24 Yemeni soldiers in their pursuit
3	Nokhan, Shabwah	AQAP	22 newly recruited Yemeni soldiers killed after suicide bombing struck their position
4	Al-Tawahi, Aden	ISIS in Yemen	Four suicide bombers attack a military base and checkpoint, leaving 18 dead
5	Hajjah, Hajjah	Houthis	12 Sudanese forces deployed in Yemen killed following ambush

MALI

Mali's ethno-separatist rebellion, launched in 2012, not only brought a halt to 20 years of democratic stability in the country, it also ushered in an era of radical Islamism. A plethora of groups allied with al-Qaeda and ISIS have enhanced their capabilities, exploiting Malians from a wide cross-section of society to fulfil an ideological agenda. At least 1,061 people died in 2018 from Islamist extremism in Mali—a figure that more than doubled in just 12 months, moving the country up three places in our ranking. Extremist activity is advancing, incubated by intersecting local grievances and a history of conflict and transnational militancy across the wider Sahel region.

Since 2015, jihadist groups fighting to establish an Islamic emirate in Mali have been edging into the country's central regions following prolonged conflict in the north. The Bamako peace agreement signed that year failed to fully consider the threat armed groups pose to the centre of the country: the GEM found that nearly half of all extremist attacks in 2017 had occurred in the central provinces of Bamako, Koulikoro, Mopti and Segou. In 2018, the monitor confirmed a further 10 per cent increase in gun attacks, hostage takings and assassinations in these four states, including six attacks on voting stations in Mopti in the lead-up to the presidential elections.

By extending their influence beyond northern Mali, Islamist extremists have also been able to exacerbate age-old intercommunal, ethnic and cultural divisions. More than half of assaults targeting ethnic communities took place in Mopti. Dogon communities were regularly targeted according to the GEM, and on 18 March, Islamist militants with links to Fulani herdsmen carried out a spate of attacks on four villages in the town of Koro, resulting in the deaths of eight Dogon farmers. At least 94 non-combatants from ethnic tribes were killed in 2018, while a further 123 tribespeople from armed militias were killed in clashes with Islamist extremists trying to stoke unrest.

Mali faces conflict provoked by local factors and exacerbated by global jihadi ideology. Seven of the ten militant groups tracked by the GEM had links to al-Qaeda, whose transnational monopolisation strategy was strengthened in 2017 after the formation of Jamaat Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM). The GEM found that the Salafi-jihadi faction Katiba Macina—founded by local Fulani preacher Hamadoun Koufa—was the most active JNIM front group, perpetrating three times as many attacks as other affiliates. Front groups were strategically deployed against selected enemy targets throughout 2018. Katiba Macina led over 60 per cent of violent Islamist extremist activity against Malian security and government targets, while a third of all attacks on the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali were executed by Ansar Dine, another al-Qaeda affiliate.

JNIM was the most lethal militant group active in 2018, responsible for over 85 per cent of all security personnel deaths and nearly 70 per cent of attacks on French troops operating across

the country. While al-Qaeda continues to shape a jihadi movement across the Sahel via JNIM, ISIS's expansion in the same region is proving as significant. Having carried out just a single assault on a market in 2017, ISIS in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) launched 52 attacks throughout 2018 as they bid to establish a foothold in Mali and the Sahel.

At least 394 civilians were killed in Mali from Islamist extremism in 2018. Mali's conflict has become integral to global jihadist strategy, and poses deadly consequences for the country's future and the wider Sahel region. With climate change fuelling competition for resources, policymakers need to understand that both intercommunal and interethnic tensions are at further risk of escalation, creating conditions Islamist extremists can exploit for their cause.

Figure 2.19: Map of Violent Islamist Incidents and Counter-Measures in Mali, 2018
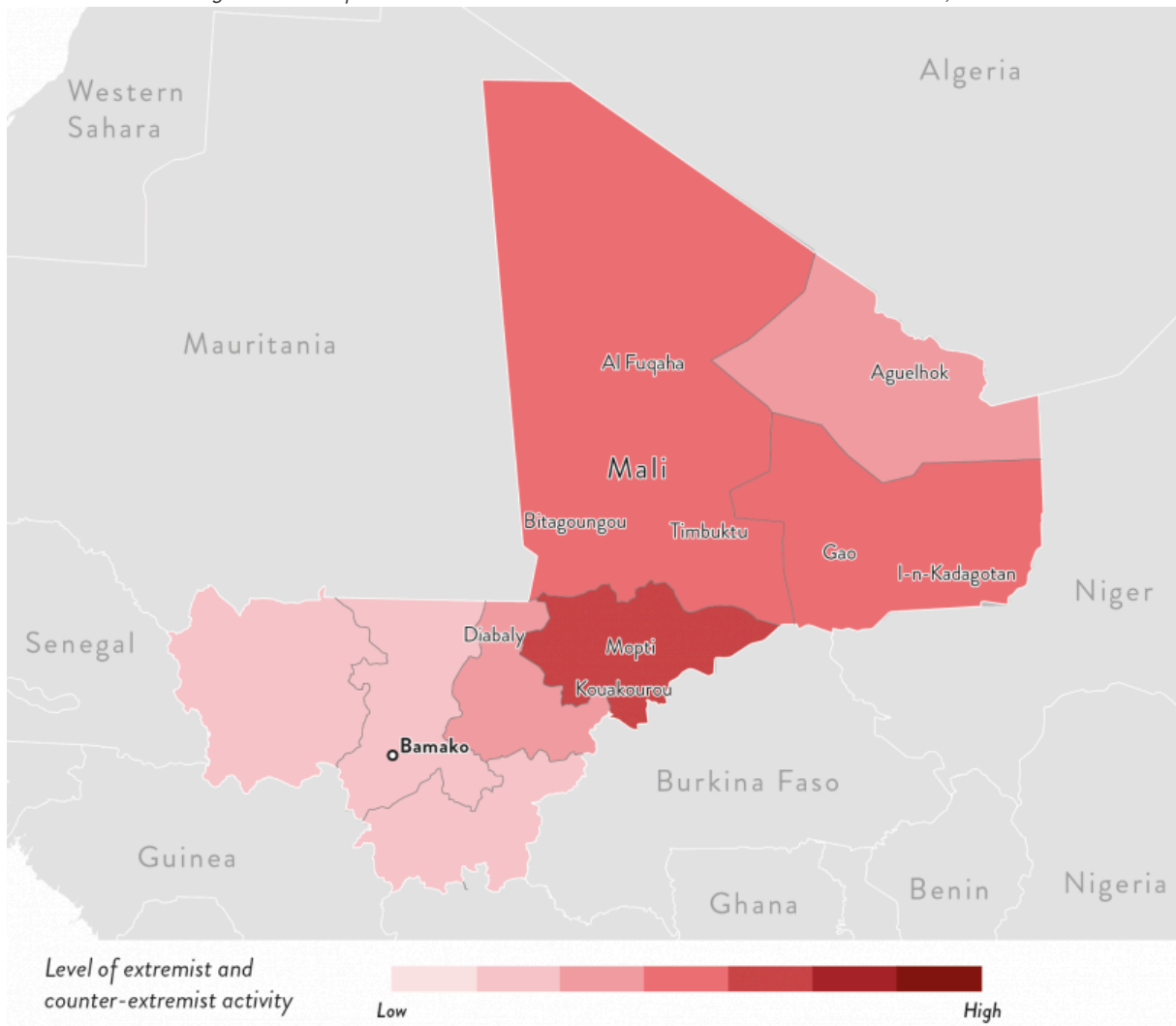

Level of extremist and counter-extremist activity   Low   High

Figure 2.20: Fatalities From Islamist Violence and Counter-Measures in Mali, 2018
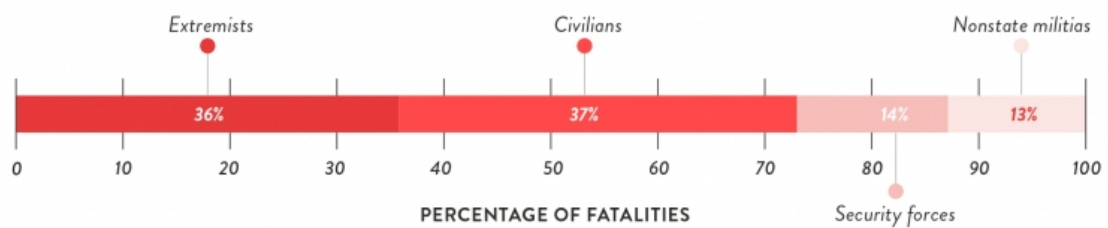
Figure 2.21: The Five Deadliest Islamist Extremist Incidents in Mali, 2018

	Location	Perpetrator	Description
1	Menaka, Menaka	ISIS in Greater Sahara	Attacks on two settlements kill 47 people
2	Menaka, Menaka	ISIS in Greater Sahara	Militants attack two Dawsahak communities, killing 42 people
3	Boni, Mopti	ISIS in Greater Sahara	Landmine planted by militants explodes killing 26 civilians
4	Amalaoulaou, Gao	JNIM	Coordinated attacks kill 25 Tuareg ethnic civilians
5	Menaka, Menaka	ISIS in Greater Sahara	Tuareg ethnic civilian camp attacked by militants, leaving 19 dead

EGYPT

Egypt's campaign against ISIS in the Sinai Peninsula continued in 2018. Following the killing of more than 300 people at a North Sinai mosque in 2017—one of the deadliest terror attacks in the world that year—Egypt's military campaign against the group intensified. The GEM found that Islamist extremist violence claimed 968 lives in Egypt in 2018. ISIS, which carried out the vast majority of Islamist extremist violence in Egypt that year, was not confined to the Sinai region. Attacks were recorded in 11 other provinces, including further south. This constituted a renewed assault on Egypt's tourist sites and the country's Coptic Christian minority.

In February 2018, Egyptian forces launched Comprehensive Operation Sinai against ISIS. Security forces killed at least 614 ISIS militants in the region, 12 per cent of whom died in airstrikes. Over half the violence in Sinai province was concentrated in the city of al-Arish. In May, ISIS released a video of an alleged Israeli strike on a

residential area of North Sinai. The group used the destruction of homes as a recruitment tool, exploiting fraught political tensions. Israel and Egypt have denied reports of Israel's military intervention, preserving cooperation to fight a common enemy.

While 92 per cent of ISIS's activity in the country focused on attacking security forces in Sinai, the group also demonstrated its use of violence to govern and control areas in which it operates. It executed 18 civilians in northern Sinai in 2018, mostly as punishment for alleged spying and collaboration with Egyptian security forces. In January, ISIS released footage of an execution of one of its militants for supporting Hamas in neighbouring Gaza. It accused the Palestinian militant group of apostasy, declaring war against it. Meanwhile, the Hasm Islamist militant group, which was proscribed as a terror organisation by the US in January 2018, was relatively inactive in the year.

The Coptic community was firmly on ISIS's radar throughout 2018. The GEM found that a quarter of ISIS assaults outside the Sinai peninsula were aimed at Copts. Among them were attacks in Giza, Minya and Beni Suef. The deadliest of these occurred in November, when gunmen killed seven Coptic Christian pilgrims in an ambush 160 miles south of Cairo. Copts comprise approximately 10 per cent of Egypt's population, and have been subject to ISIS violence for several years. After the November 2018 attack, crowds of Christians took to the streets in Minya to protest and demand retaliation. ISIS's sectarian assaults have stoked tensions in the Coptic community, which feels increasingly under threat despite government assurances.

In December 2018, an ISIS roadside bomb killed four people, including three Vietnamese tourists, near a bus at the Giza pyramids. Another bombing at this site six months later injured South African tourists. With Egypt relying on tourism for 11 per cent of GDP, this tactic harms the country both economically and in security terms. The group's ability to target Egypt's tourist industry, which has taken time to recover from previous political instability and violent attacks, shows the tendency to exploit security weaknesses to maximise damage. Moreover, religious sites, large public gatherings and tourists remain targets throughout the country.

After nearly ten years, the conflict between Islamists and
Egyptian security forces in North Sinai shows no sign of slowing.
The government's intensifying crackdown on the Egyptian Muslim
Brotherhood adds further complexities, with radicals potentially
splitting from the Brotherhood and resorting to violence. As a first
step, the Egyptian government should halt counterproductive
measures, such as labelling all opposition as terrorism, and facilitate
access for international NGOs and independent researchers to the
conflict-affected areas of northern Sinai.

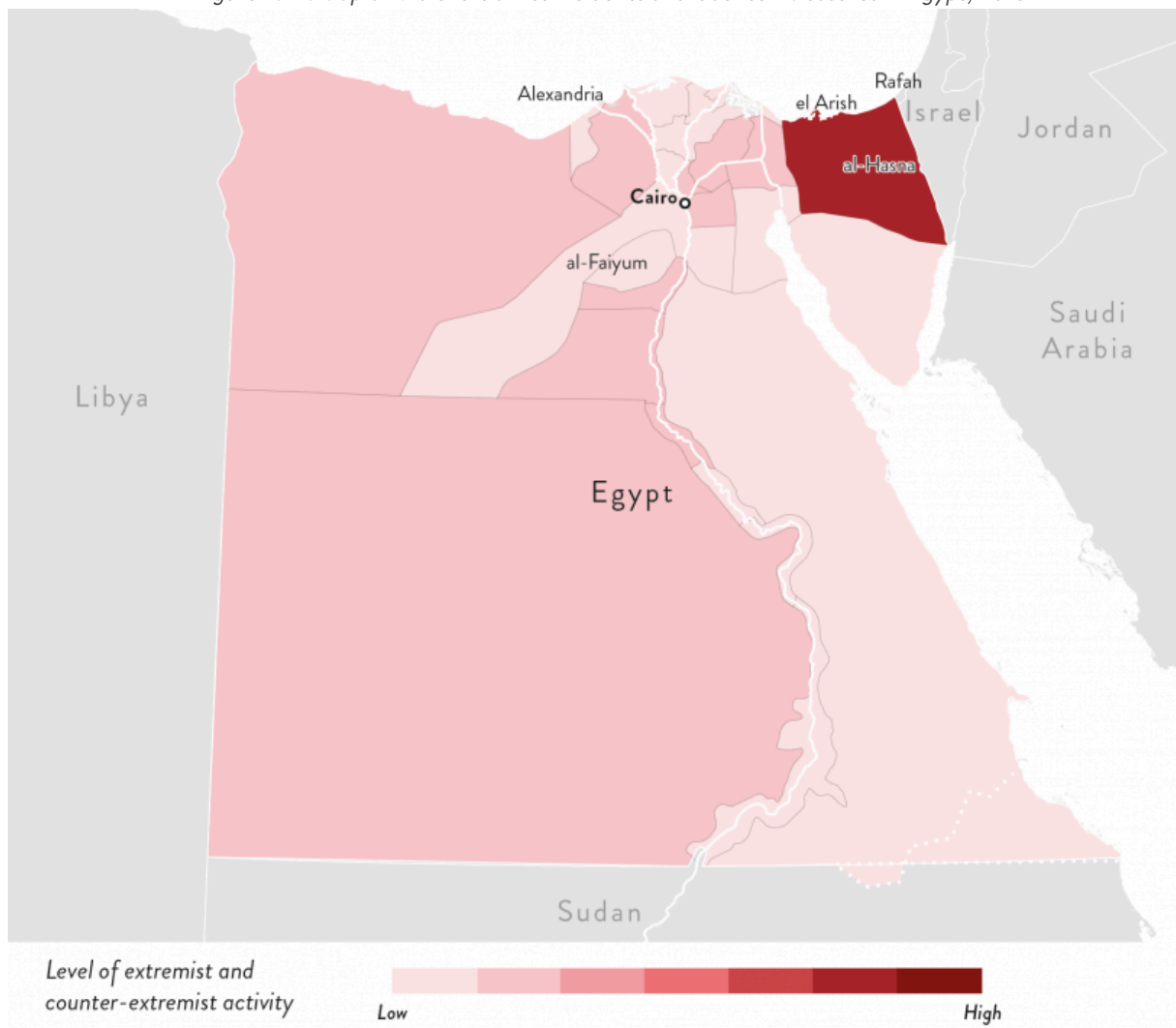*Figure 2.22: Map of Violent Islamist Incidents and Counter-Measures in Egypt, 2018*

Level of extremist and
counter-extremist activity

Low   High

Figure 2.23: Fatalities From Islamist Violence and Counter-Measures in Egypt, 2018
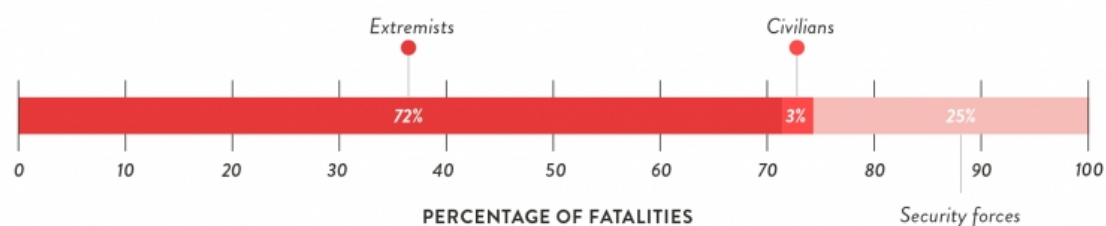
Figure 2.24: The Five Deadliest Islamist Extremist Incidents in Egypt, 2018

	Location	Perpetrator	Description
1	Al-Arish, North Sinai	ISIS in Egypt	11 dead after four suicide bombers attack an army base
2	Al-Arish, North Sinai	ISIS in Egypt	Militants kill 10 Egyptian military and police through several IED explosions
3	Al-Arish, North Sinai	ISIS in Egypt	10 dead following IED explosion planted by militants
4	Al-Arish, North Sinai	ISIS in Egypt	IED attack on armoured personnel carrier kills 10
5	Beni Suef, Beni Suef	ISIS in Egypt	Convoy of buses carrying Coptic Christians attacked by militants, leaving seven dead

LIBYA

Libya's eight-year-long civil war has engendered one of the world's most complex and devastating outbreaks of Islamist militancy, which claimed the lives of more than 424 people in 2018. With Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA), supported by neighbouring Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, directing efforts to capture Tripoli and overthrow the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) led by Fayez al-Sarraj, swathes of Libyan territory risk being exploited by ISIS- and al-Qaeda–linked militants, who are attempting to regain strength in the country under the cover of the civil war.

The loss of ISIS's territorial caliphate in Syria and Iraq in 2017 has resulted in the group going underground and regenerating; the present state of the group's Libyan affiliate reflects a similar situation. In Libya, ISIS lost its stronghold in Sirte, but efforts to finish off the group were not decisive. It is beginning to reconstitute in Libya, with the GEM noting a 7 per cent increase in its violent operations in 2018. Despite ISIS being reduced to an estimated 750 fighters in the country, at least nine provinces across the country witnessed activity by the group during 2018.[17] This resurgence draws parallels to Syria and Iraq, where ISIS remnants are reverting to insurgency tactics. In Libya, political and social fragmentation fuels this activity, helping draw up to 10,000 sympathisers to the cause at the group's peak in 2016.

In 2017, the GEM monitored an increase in ISIS violence toward civilians as the group sought to carve out a governance role. However, territorial setbacks and subsequent reorientation in 2018 prompted a shift in strategy, whereby 69 per cent of all offensives were directed at security and military forces. ISIS targeted Haftar's LNA—which claims to be the sole force combatting Islamist terrorism in the country—in over half these attacks, according to the GEM. With the LNA determined to defeat the GNA and seize power in Libya, stretches of ungoverned space have been left

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17 Jared Malsin and Benoit Faucon, "Islamic State's Deadly Return in Libya Imperils Oil Output", Wall Street Journal, 18 September 2018, https://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-states-deadly-return-in-libya-imperils-oil-output-1537272001.

exposed and open to exploitation by Islamist militants, including ISIS and al-Qaeda affiliates, who are competing against each other as well as the conflicting agendas of the LNA and the GNA.

Aside from the internationally recognised groups, the GEM recorded a further five armed Islamist extremist factions active and vying for territory in Libya during 2018. The lifecycle of these groups exemplifies the complexity of conflict in Libya. Following significant losses to the LNA in May 2018, one jihadist coalition and al-Qaeda affiliate, Shura Council of Mujahadeen in Derna, was dissolved and later re-emerged as the Derna Protection Forces, until it was ultimately defeated in early 2019. Similarly, another al-Qaeda affiliate, Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries (BRSC), was considered militarily defeated in 2017, but the GEM found that over half of all landmine and IED detonations recorded in Libya in 2018 were a result of BRSC activities conducted in 2017; and in April 2019, the BRSC joined the fight against Haftar's LNA, further complicating the UN's efforts to bring peace and stability to the nation.

Haftar's decision to take Tripoli from the GNA in 2019 effectively terminates the UN-brokered Libyan Political Agreement (LPA), which aimed to form a unified government. With Turkey providing logistical support to the GNA, and the UAE and Egypt supporting Haftar's LNA, under the guise of curbing extremism in the region, Libya's descent into a proxy war is inevitable. Policymakers need to understand the paradigm-shifting nature of Haftar's campaigns in Libya, because against a backdrop of insecurity, instability and political turmoil, armed Islamist extremist groups are demonstrating their willingness to fill the void, seeking to implement ideologically motivated forms of governance, and derailing hopes of any lasting cessation of hostilities.

Figure 2.25: Map of Violent Islamist Incidents and Counter-Measures in Libya, 2018
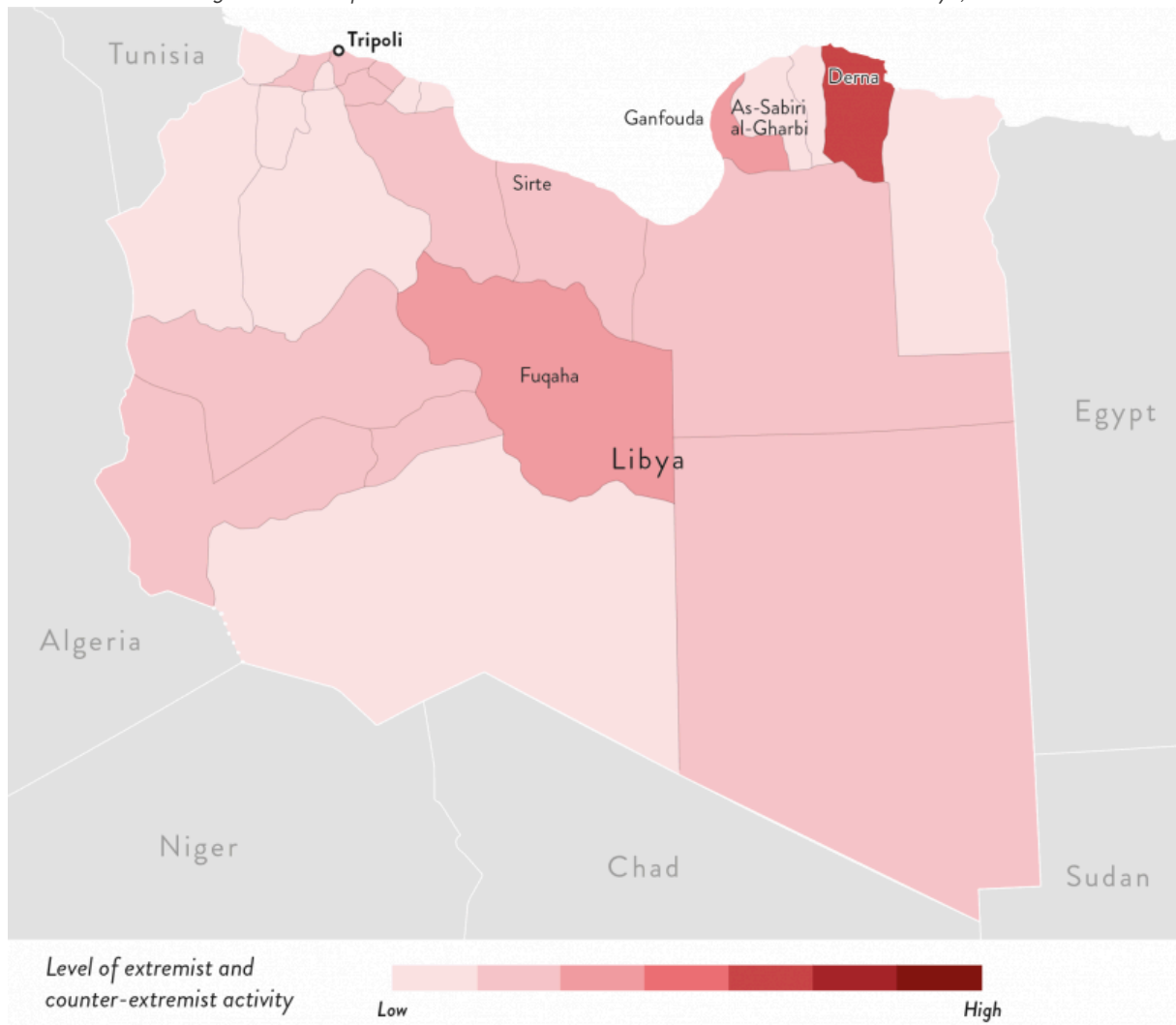

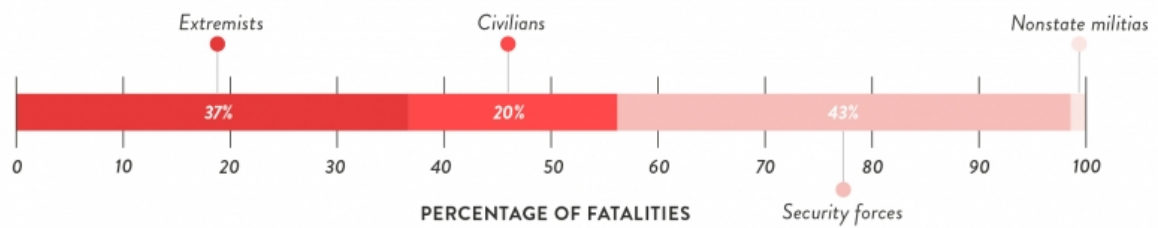*Figure 2.26: Fatalities From Islamist Violence and Counter-Measures in Libya, 2018*

Figure 2.27: The Five Deadliest Islamist Extremist Incidents in Libya, 2018

	Location	Perpetrator	Description
1	Tripoli, West	ISIS in Libya	Two suicide bombers attack an electoral commission headquarters, leaving 16 dead
2	Derna, East	Derna Protection Forces	Gun attacks and a suicide car bomb attack LNA positions, leaving 15 dead
3	Derna, East	Derna Protection Forces	11 LNA forces killed and 19 others injured after clashes with militants
4	Ejdabia, East	ISIS in Libya	Suicide car bomb explodes at LNA checkpoint, leaving nine dead
5	Derna, East	Derna Protection Forces	Civilians killed after IEDs planted by militants explodes

PAKISTAN

While Islamist militancy in Pakistan has declined in recent years, the GEM recorded that jihadi violence and counter-efforts led to at least 376 deaths, 70 per cent of which were civilians. While there was a general downturn in Islamist violence in 2018 compared to 2017, an ISIS-claimed suicide bombing at a political rally in Balochistan in July which killed 149 people and wounded hundreds more was the second deadliest terror attack in the country's history.

ISIS emerged in the country in 2014, when defectors from al-Qaeda and the Taliban joined the "Khorasan" wing of the terror organisation, operating in Pakistan and Afghanistan.[18] In 2018 the group was conducting on average at least one attack per month, targeting Christians, religious leaders, police, political figures and

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18 Center for Strategic & International Studies, "Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K)", https://www.csis.org/programs/transnational-threats-project/terrorism-backgrounders/islamic-state-khorasan-k.

teachers. The GEM found that 83 per cent of ISIS activity in Pakistan in 2018 was confined to Balochistan, Pakistan's poorest province, which has suffered years of separatist, sectarian and Islamist violence. In May 2019, ISIS announced the creation of an official Pakistan wilayah or "province", indicating the significance of this new frontier for the group.[19]

Whereas ISIS is a relative upstart, the well-established Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) continues to destabilise the country. The GEM recorded that 89 per cent of the violence attributed to the TTP occurred in provinces neighbouring the Afghan border, primarily in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. In 2018, attacks perpetrated by the TTP killed 72 civilians and security personnel. The group, which has remained resilient in the border region for almost two decades, directed two-thirds of its violence against military and police targets in 2018, akin to the Afghan Taliban, which also prioritises fighting security forces.

Islamist extremist violence in Pakistan was perpetrated by at least five groups in 2018, according to the GEM. In May, five Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) suicide bombers were killed attempting to attack a government building in Quetta, Balochistan. Meanwhile, al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) was also active in 2018, with an attempted suicide bombing by the group at a checkpoint in Balochistan foiled by security forces. Jamaat ul-Ahrar (JuA), a sectarian organisation that was responsible for the bombing of a Shia mosque in the city of Parachinar in 2017, split into two factions in 2018: militants who desired a campaign focused more clearly on security forces split to form Hizbul Ahrar, which is solely active against police in Karachi.

The complexity of the Islamist militancy in Pakistan is exacerbated by the collaboration between different actors, such as ISIS conducting attacks in alliance with groups such as LeJ and JuA.[20] Fourteen per cent of government offensives killed allied

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19 Robert Postings, "ISIS Announces New India and Pakistan Provinces, Casually Breaking up Khorasan", Defense Post, 15 May 2019, https://thedefensepost.com/2019/05/15/islamic-state-pakistan-province-al-hind/.

20 Kunwar Khuldune Shahid, "ISIS Might Have One Last Escape Route: Pakistan", Diplomat, 7 November 2017, https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/isis-might-have-one-last-escape-route-pakistan/.

militants from multiple groups, with both Lashkar-e-Janghvi and ISIS fighters being killed in an operation in Karachi in January 2018, for example, while in May, TTP and Jamaat ul-Ahrar militants were killed by security forces in Punjab province.

Islamist-inspired violence continued to impact Pakistan's international relations in 2018. In September 2018, the US confirmed it would cut $300 million in aid to Pakistan due to the country's alleged unwillingness to tackle Islamist militancy. In addition, India has long accused Pakistan of harbouring and exporting Islamist violence, including across its borders in Kashmir. As Pakistan grapples with soaring inflation and economic crisis, extremism could precipitate further isolation.

The 2018 elections in Pakistan also saw extremist Islamist factions seek to enter the political mainstream, with groups such as Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) gaining unprecedented traction at the ballot box while also continuing street protests and vigilante action, particularly in defence of the country's notorious blasphemy laws.[21] Decision-makers need to understand the impact of this mainstreaming of populist Islamist extremism in Pakistan, which is contributing to mob violence and creating a space for Islamist violence in the country to extend beyond recognised militant groups.

21 Sib Kaifee, "Rapid Rise of Far-Right TLP Poses Dilemma for Pakistan", Arab News, 2 August 2018, https://www.arabnews.com/node/1350111/world; Asad Hashim, "Tehreek-e-Labbaik: New Far Right Campaigns against 'Blasphemy'", Al Jazeera, 6 July 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/tehreek-labbaik-campaigns-blasphemy-180705154014562.html.

Figure 2.28: Map of Violent Islamist Incidents and Counter-Measures in Pakistan, 2018
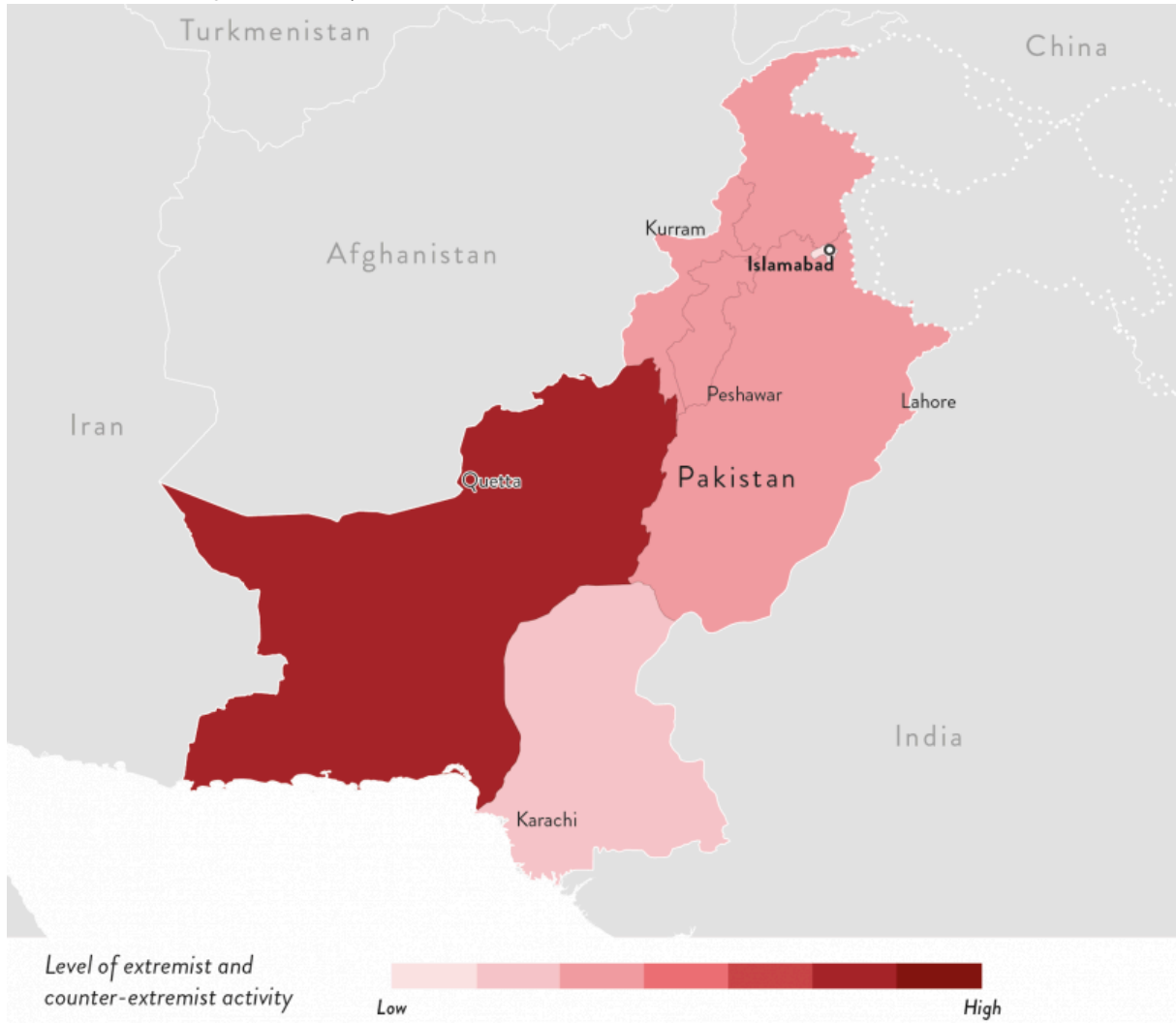
Level of extremist and counter-extremist activity

Low — High

Figure 2.29: Fatalities From Islamist Violence and Counter-Measures in Pakistan, 2018

Extremists

Civilians

16% 70% 14%

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

PERCENTAGE OF FATALITIES

Security forces
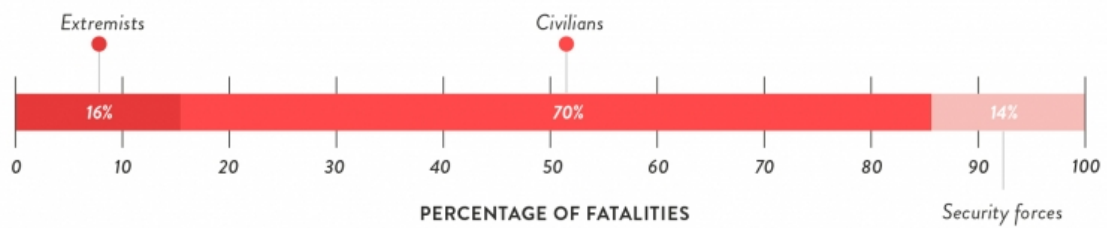
Figure 2.30: The Five Deadliest Islamist Extremist Incidents in Pakistan, 2018

	Location	Perpetrator	Description
1	Mastung, Balochistan	ISIS in Khorasan (Pakistan)	Suicide bombing explodes at ANP political rally, killing 149 people including ANP candidate
2	Kalaya, KP	ISIS in Khorasan (Pakistan)	Suicide bomber kills 34 civilians and injures 56 others
3	Quetta, Balochistan	ISIS in Khorasan (Pakistan)	Suicide bomber explodes at polling station and near school, killing 32
4	Peshawar, Balochistan	Pakistani Taliban	Suicide bomber explodes at ANP politcal rally, killing 22 people including ANP candidate
5	Lahore, Punjab	Pakistani Taliban	Suicide bomber explodes at a large annual congregation, killing 10 people including security forces

SEVEN PLACES TO WATCH

Beyond the ten deadliest countries and traditional conflict zones, this year's Global Extremism Monitor explores geographies where the risk of Islamist extremism is likely to grow. In these places, whether they are home to longer-term Islamist movements or relatively new groups, there is a clear need for measures to prevent and counter extremism. There is also a clear need for policy that builds resilience to extremism. Islamist extremist ideology inspired activity in countries from the Philippines and Bangladesh to Kenya and Mozambique throughout 2018. The fall of ISIS's so-called caliphate in the Levant poses questions to policymakers about jihadi movements globally and the rise of homegrown extremism.

As governments grapple with issues surrounding the movement of Islamist fighters, it is essential for decision-makers to dismantle structures that enable groups to infiltrate and exploit new spaces as well as emboldening pre-existing ones.

PHILIPPINES

In the aftermath of the Battle of Marawi in 2017, the Philippines' President Rodrigo Duterte declared the end of ISIS in the country. However, GEM data confirms the continued presence of violent Islamist extremism in the Philippines, with at least 286 people killed in 2018.

Following the declaration of a caliphate in Iraq and Syria in 2014, several militant groups in the southern Philippines pledged allegiance to ISIS. These groups had previously been involved in separatist activity in the Mindanao archipelago, which is home to most of the country's 6 million Muslims. Prior to the Marawi battle, the ideological bearings of these groups were not fully understood. The main ISIS affiliate, Abu Sayyaf, was mostly concerned with for-profit kidnapping, while the Maute Group operated as a local mafia. Marawi exposed their deadly potential, however. GEM data found that groups deemed affiliates of ISIS carried out 94 per cent of all terrorist attacks in the Philippines throughout the year, accounting for 56 per cent of deaths.

Following events in Marawi, Abu Sayyaf was reduced to a few hundred militants. However, GEM data reveals the group's concentrated presence in the Sulu archipelago, where three-fifths of ISIS-affiliated attacks took place in 2018. Abu Sayyaf exploits remote islands to carry out piracy and provide a bridgehead for foreign fighters entering the Philippines from Indonesia. Estimates suggest there are roughly 100 foreign fighters in the country. The speed with which they entered the conflict in Marawi exposes the significance of the Philippines' porous southern periphery.

The year also saw the country's first suicide attack in over a decade. Extremists in the Philippines have largely avoided suicide bombings in the past, due to a strong cultural aversion to suicidal missions, which are seen as cowardly;[22] 2019 has already seen three suicide bombings, however, all claimed by ISIS. This new wave of suicide attacks shows the growing threat from well-networked extremists in Southeast Asia receiving inspiration and training from ISIS in foreign war zones from Syria to Afghanistan.

Figure 3.1: Deadliest Incidents in the Philippines, 2018

	Location	Extremists Involved	Description
1	Maguindanao, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters	The army launched an assault on a BIFF weapons factory, leading to the deaths of 15 militants and one solider
2	Sulu, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	Abu Sayyaf	An encounter between the army and Abu Sayyaf left two soliders and 10 extremists dead
3	Basilan, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	Abu Sayyaf	Six security personel and four civilians were killed by an IED explosion that also claimed the life of

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22 Kenneth Yeo, "Suicide Bombing: Is this the End of Filipino 'Warrior Culture'?", Diplomat, 12 July 2019, https://thediplomat.com/2019/07/suicide-bombing-is-this-the-end-of-filipino-warrior-culture/.

	Location	Extremists Involved	Description
			the perpetrator
4	Basilan, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	Abu Sayyaf	The army attacked an Abu Sayyaf stronghold, killing nine militants and injuring seven others
5	Cotabato, Soccsksargen	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters	Nine drug suspects who were part of BIFF were killed in a police raid

KASHMIR

Kashmir is on the cusp of a new wave of violent extremism. Islamist militant groups are shifting the narrative of Kashmiri nationalism and anti-Indian sentiment from being an issue of regional concern to one that aligns more closely to the global jihadi cause. As many as 191 Kashmiri youths are reported to have joined local militant outfits including Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Hizbul Mujahideen throughout 2018—over double the number from 2016.[23] New generations are being born into conflict and political uncertainty and in 2018 at least 163 people died from violence involving Islamist extremists.

Nearly half of all attacks recorded by the GEM were conducted by Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), a Pakistan-based Deobandi jihadist group formed in the late 1990s with the goal of separating Kashmir from India. Three grenade attacks were launched by JeM every month on average, according to the GEM, with local officials claiming that jihadist groups are "hiring young schoolboys" to engage in militant activities. In 2019, a suicide bomber killed more than 40 Indian soldiers in Pulwama—a single attack that brought

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23 "191 Kashmiri Youth Joined Militancy in 2018", Economic Times, 4 February 2019, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/191-kashmiri-youths-joined-militancy-in-2018-official/articleshow/67835737.cms?from=mdr.

two nuclear powers, India and Pakistan, to the brink of war. The perpetrator was revealed as a 19-year-old local Kashmiri, disaffected by Indian occupation in the region. He went on to join JeM.[24]

The internationalism of Kashmir's localised conflict is deepening. The GEM found seven Islamist extremist groups active in Kashmir, some allegedly with links to al-Qaeda, who recently called on jihadists in Kashmir to unite.

Nearly a quarter of all Islamist extremist attacks during 2018 targeted Indian state security infrastructure, while government residences, tax offices and pro-Indian political gatherings were also struck. India's revocation in 2019 of Article 370 of its Constitution, which previously accorded Kashmir some autonomy, is also likely to fuel extremist activity in the deadliest flashpoint between India and Pakistan. Also, in 2019, ISIS confirmed the establishment of its first Indian territory in Kashmir. The move is considered a bid to consolidate a lost reputation: ISIS recognises the opportunity to forge local alliances and expand its operations across South Asia.

Figure 3.2: Deadliest Incidents in Kashmir, 2018

	Location	Extremists Involved	Description
1	Shopian, Kashmir	Hizbul Mujahideen	3 soldiers and 13 militants were killed during counter-terror operations
2	Kupwara, Kashmir	Lashkar-e-Taiba	In a shooting, militants killed three soldiers and two policemen while five attackers were killed
3	Pulwama, Kashmir	Jaish-e-Muhammad	In a shootout with police, four militants, one policeman and one soldier were killed, while a further two soldiers

24 Neeraj Chauhan, "Terrorists Using Chinese Grenades sent by Pak: Intel", Hindustan Times, 18 April 2019, https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/terrorists-using-chinese-grenades-sent-by-pak-intel/story-8Bz90lpvHIfq6hKMF4I4VJ.html.

	Location	Extremists Involved	Description
			were injured
4	Shopian, Kashmir	Hizbul Mujahideen	Five militants were killed and two policemen were injured during a gunfight
5	Baramulla, Kashmir	Jaish-e-Muhammad	A bomb attack killed four policemen and wounded two others

MOZAMBIQUE

Mozambique experienced an unprecedented level of Islamist extremist violence in 2018 and, despite government efforts to contain the crisis, the trend shows no sign of slowing. Ansar al-Sunna, known locally as "al-Shabaab", launched an insurgency in 2018. The GEM found that the group's violence resulted in 160 deaths in 2018, a seismic rise in violent activity compared to 2017 where only three people were killed by Islamist extremism. Most of these attacks targeted the civilian population of Cabo Delgado, the Muslim-majority northern province. In an area already suffering high levels of poverty and unemployment, Ansar al-Sunna threatens to instigate the kind of intractable conflict led by other Islamist militants on the continent.

Thirty-eight per cent of Ansar al-Sunna's assaults involved raiding, looting and burning down civilian homes and villages, according to GEM data. Ninety-two per cent of assaults targeted civilians. This is indicative of an emergent group with a violent ideology trying to build a reputation through low-cost tactics designed to maximise impact. In fact, it shares similarities with Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria, which uses violence against civilians to spread fear, maximise damage and pillage resources. Ansar al-Sunna beheaded 18 people throughout 2018, including in May when it kidnapped and executed ten civilians.

Mozambique's emerging Islamist insurgency risks enveloping the north of the country in conflict. This threat was intensified in August 2018, when the former ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi released a speech calling on fighters to deploy across Africa. In June 2019 ISIS claimed responsibility for an attack in Mozambique, as well as in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Following the attacks, ISIS confirmed the establishment of its "Central Africa Province".

Additional grievances make Cabo Delgado fertile ground for Ansar al-Sunna in the long term. Tensions among communities in the province have escalated amid frustration over the distribution of profits from recently discovered gas fields. In 2019, more than 1,200 people died in flooding when Mozambique suffered one of its worst natural disasters of recent times, exacerbating vulnerabilities and developing conditions the group can exploit.

Figure 3.3: Deadliest Incidents in Mozambique, 2018

	Location	Extremists Involved	Description
1	Macomia, Cabo Delgado	al-Shabaab	Fourteen people were killed and a further 12 injured when militants attacked a village, burning many houses
2	Nangade, Cabo Delgado	al-Shabaab	Militants armed with machetes attacked a village on the Tanzanian border, killing 12 and burning scores of houses
3	Palma, Cabo Delgado	al-Shabaab	Militants beheaded ten people in two cities on the same day
4	Macomia, Cabo Delgado	al-Shabaab	In a raid on a village, militants killed seven civilians using machetes and guns, and fled after burning over 160 houses
5	Quissanga, Cabo	al-Shabaab	Fundamentalists attacked a village, killing six and

Location	Extremists Involved	Description
Delgado		burning around 200 houses

KENYA

Several years after the Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi, the country continues to suffer from Islamist extremism. In 2018 the GEM recorded 136 deaths, all of which were attributed to the east African al-Qaeda affiliate, al-Shabaab. Kenya is viewed by the group as a key target for attacks as well as a recruiting ground, with Kenyans comprising the largest contingent of the group's militants from outside Somalia.

Moreover, reports of Kenyan citizens joining international jihadi groups such as ISIS in Yemen, and Ansar al-Sunna in Mozambique, expose the emerging threat originating in the country.[25] Beyond being just a target for al-Shabaab, Kenya is becoming an exporter of extremism.

In 2018 al-Shabaab continued its offensives in the northeastern region bordering Somalia, with attacks concentrated in Mandera, Garissa and Lamu—provinces largely inhabited by ethnic Somali and Muslim populations. Traditionally al-Shabaab has prioritised public targets to pressure Kenyan authorities into withdrawing troops from Somalia, but in 2018 it pursued a more direct offensive against the Kenyan state. Eighty-two per cent of the group's violence targeted security forces, with a quarter of these attacks aimed at police stations or military bases.

The country's education system also suffered from al-Shabaab in 2018. Five teachers were killed in two separate attacks, including in October 2018 when militants raided a school in Mandera, targeting non-Muslim staff. The group had previously warned of

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25 Counter Extremism Project, "Kenya: Extremism and Counter-Extremism", https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/kenya#radicalization_and_foreign_fighters.

consequences for those involved in "secular education" and has attempted to sow intercommunal division in Kenya by targeting Christians.

In the group's claim of responsibility for the DusitD2 Nairobi hotel attack in January 2019, al-Shabaab said it was a response to the US government's decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This attack exposes al-Shabaab's international agenda, which focuses on opposing Western influence and attacks Kenya's ties to the global economy.

With groups beyond al-Shabaab beginning to exploit marginalised communities in Kenya, too, preventative efforts aimed at social cohesion and resilience are vital. Kenya's Islamist extremist problem needs to be internationally addressed to prevent further instability in the country and wider region.

Figure 3.4: Deadliest Incidents in Kenya, 2018

	Location	Extremists Involved	Description
1	Lamu, Lamu	al-Shabaab	A militant raid on an army camp left ten soldiers and three militants dead
2	Mandera South, Mandera	al-Shabaab	Militants planted a roadside IED that destroyed a police car, killing at least ten soldiers
3	Lamu, Lamu	al-Shabaab	An attack by militants on a military base killed ten soldiers, reports on militant casualties range from three to ten
4	Lamu, Lamu	al-Shabaab	Kenyan forces attacked an al-Shabaab hideout, killing ten militants and seizing weapons
5	Tarbaj, Wajir	al-Shabaab	Eight Kenyan security forces were killed when their car hit an IED and

Location	Extremists Involved	Description
		were subsequently ambused by militants

INDONESIA

In May 2018, a string of deadly suicide attacks exposed the growing presence of violent Islamist extremism in Indonesia. Three families, including children as young as nine and Indonesia's first ever female suicide bomber, detonated their belts in packed churches across the city of Surabaya, killing 15 people. Their actions unveiled a deadly strain of homegrown extremism in the country. Across Indonesia, 2018 saw eight provinces affected by Islamist extremist violence, leading to the deaths of 55 people.

The nation's extremist threat has taken on an increasingly global character, with ISIS claiming responsibility for the deadly attacks in Surabaya. ISIS first emerged in Indonesia in 2015, when several local Islamist groups pledged allegiance to its now-deceased leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The Indonesian government refers to ISIS affiliates as Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) and our data reveals that 88 per cent of extremist attacks in the country were claimed by factions linked to ISIS. The level of coordination among these extremists and ISIS is unclear and it appears that JAD operates as an umbrella organisation.[26] The GEM also confirmed the presence of another ISIS affiliate, East Indonesia Mujahideen (MIT), which focused its activity on the island of Sulawesi.

Analysis reveals that 90 per cent of attacks in Indonesia attributed to ISIS affiliates took place after the Surabaya bombings, suggesting a degree of coordination between these factions. More than half of all attacks targeted the police, a symbol of government control, highlighting such groups' ideological concern with what

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26 "JAD: The Extremist Group that Recruits Families to Spread Terror in Indonesia", South China Morning Post, 14 May 2019, https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/2146078/jad-extremist-group-recruits-families-spread-terror.

they see as an inadequate implementation of Islamic law in the world's most populous Muslim-majority state.

The rise of ISIS affiliates in Indonesia has coincided with a steady decline of other domestic groups. Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), the al-Qaeda affiliate responsible for the 2002 Bali bombings that killed more than 200 people, has been decimated by a determined counter-terrorism effort. Given that hundreds of Indonesians are returning from Syria and a bomb plot was foiled in May 2019, policymakers need to be alert to the growing threat from ISIS affiliates in the country.[27]

Figure 3.5: Deadliest Incidents in Indonesia, 2018

	Location	Extremists Involved	Description
1	Surabaya, East Java	Jemaah Ansharut Daulah	A series of suicide bombs targeted churches of the minority Christian population, killing 20
2	Depok, West Java	ISIS	A three-day prison takeover and standoff between inmates convicted of terrorism claimed eight lives
3	Pakanbaru, Riau	Jemaah Ansharut Daulah	Terrorists drove a car into a police headquarters, and stabbed one officer before the attackers were killed by police
4	Surabaya, East Java	Jemaah Ansharut Daulah	A family of five carried out a suicide bombing, killing the attackers and two of their children and injuring ten
5	Sleman, Yogyakarta	Jemaah Ansharut	Indonesian counter-terrorism unit killed three

27 Ahmad Syamsudin and Tia Asmara, "Indonesian Women to Spend 15 Years in Iraqi Prison for Joining Islamic State", Benar News, 28 June 2019, https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/iraq-sentence-06282019125436.html.

Location	Extremists Involved	Description
	Daulah	suspected militants

TUNISIA

A rare success story from the Arab Spring in 2011, Tunisia has become both a target for extremists and a significant source of foreign fighters for extremist groups in Syria and Iraq. Although Islamist activity in Tunisia recorded by the GEM in 2018 is lower than in 2015, when more than over 70 people were killed in three ISIS-claimed attacks, the security situation remains fragile.

At least 28 people were killed due to Islamist extremist violence in 2018, with the GEM recording an average of over two attacks per month. More recently, there are growing concerns about battle-hardened, ideologically motivated ISIS returnees, given that the group received its highest contingent of foreign fighters from the small north African country. Up to 7,000 Tunisians are estimated to have left the country and joined ISIS in Syria, Iraq, and neighbouring Libya, with a further 15,000 prevented from travelling.[28] According to Tunisia's national counter-terrorism commission, an estimated 1,000 Tunisians have already returned to the country from conflict zones overseas, posing a serious security challenge for authorities, as well as placing strain on both the justice system and rehabilitation and reintegration services.[29]

Transnational Salafi-jihadi groups, ISIS and al-Qaeda, both have a footprint in Tunisia. Jund al-Khalifah, ISIS's affiliate in Tunisia, was the most active group in the country in 2018, having launched 12 attacks, prioritising military targets in over 54 per cent of its

28 Andrew McDonnell, "A Community Approach to Jihadis' Rehabilitation in Tunisia", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 27 September 2018, https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/77358.

29 Richard Hall, "As the UK Debates what to Do with Isis Suspects, One Country has Taken back 1,000 'Terrorists'", Independent, 19 February 2019, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-shamima-begum-uk-return-tunisia-terror-suspects-islamic-state-a8786281.html.

offensives. Three weeks after a suicide bombing at a police checkpoint in June 2019, the group shared a video calling for militants to enact further terror in Tunisia, without specifying any targets.

While marginally less active than the country's ISIS elements, al-Qaeda's affiliate in Tunisia, the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade, was more destructive in its operations, killing 11 people in 2018 while carrying out fewer attacks. In contrast to ISIS's activity, the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade targeted civilians in half of its operations, indicating a strategic approach that pursues both state security apparatus and non-combatants similarly. The group was once considered to have been "broken" by the Tunisian government, but the GEM confirms that it remains active and operational.

Figure 3.6: Deadliest Incidents in Tunisia, 2018

	Location	Extremists Involved	Description
1	Ghardimaou, Jendouba	Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade	Militants ambushed border police, using an IED and gunfire, which resulted in three deaths and three wounded
2	Sbiba, Kasserine	Jund al-Khalifa	The Tunisian military carried out an airstrike on a suspected militant base, killing four
3	Feriana, Kasserine	Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade	Two civilians were killed by the explosion of an IED
4	Feriana, Kasserine	Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade	Militants detonated two IEDs targeting a military vehicle, killing two soldiers and injuring ten others
5	Ben Guerdane, Medenine	Jund al-Khalifa	Security forces exchanged gunfire with militants before one detonated a suicide vest

Location	Extremists Involved	Description
		and the other was shot dead

BANGLADESH

The extremist landscape in Bangladesh is dominated by two groups, Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and its offshoot, Neo Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (Neo-JMB). Activities attributed to these militant groups left 17 dead in 2018. While al-Qaeda has an affiliate operating in Bangladesh, Ansarul Islam, JMB remained the most active group in the country in 2018, according to the GEM. JMB's stated ambition is to overthrow the Bangladeshi government and impose its narrow version of Islamic law on the country.

The GEM recorded two attacks on prominent proponents of secularism during 2018. In March 2018, a secular blogger was stabbed while delivering a seminar while a popular writer and publisher, Shahzahan Bachchu, was shot dead by members of JMB in June 2018.

Neo-JMB gained international notoriety following the Holey Artisan Bakery attack in July 2016. Members of Neo-JMB were involved in carrying out the attack, during which they targeted Muslims judged insufficiently devout and foreign nationals. ISIS ultimately claimed responsibility for the attack and authorities have since alleged Neo-JMB to be receiving support from ISIS. Some 40 Bangladeshi nationals also travelled to join ISIS's so-called caliphate in Syria and Iraq.[30]

The close of 2018 saw the appointment of a new leader of JMB. Arrests made around this time yielded information that a series of terror attacks were being planned. While Bangladeshi authorities

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30 Viraj Solanki, "The Increasing Presence of ISIS in South Asia", International Institute for Strategic Studies blog, 1 June 2019, https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2019/06/isis-south-asia.

have downplayed the presence of international Islamist extremist groups in the country, there have been clear efforts to counter the activities of groups like JMB. Of the 17 fatalities recorded by the GEM in 2018 relating to Islamist extremist activity, suspected militants accounted for 14 and came as a direct result of state counter operations. In addition to the threat posed by domestic and international groups, the security situation in Bangladesh has been further complicated by the influx of large numbers of Rohingya Muslim refugees into the country. Though efforts have not yet gained sufficient traction, concerns have been raised about Bangladeshi and foreign groups seeking to exploit the Rohingya crisis and humanitarian situation for recruitment and radicalisation purposes.[31]

Figure 3.7: Deadliest Incidents in Bangladesh, 2018

	Location	Perpetrator	Description
1	Dhaka, Dhaka	JMB	Armed clashes between counter-terrorism police and militants left three JMB fighters dead
2	Chittagong, Chittagong	JMB	Two militants detonated suicide vests during an encounter with police, killing themselves but not injuring others
3	Narsingdi, Dhaka	Neo-JMB	During a clash with police, two suspected neo-JMB militants were killed
4	Chittagong, Chittagong	JMB	In an exchange between militants and police, a grenade explosion killed two JMB fighters
5	Sirajdikhan	JMB	Shahzahan Bachchu, a

31 David Brewster, "The Rohingyas: The Security Dimension of a Deep Humanitarian Crisis", Interpreter, 14 May 2019, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/rohingyas-security-dimension-deep-humanitarian-crisis.

Location	Perpetrator	Description
Upazila, Dhaka		prominent writer and publisher, was killed by two militants on motorcycles

SECTOR IMPACT

By disaggregating the intentions of an attack, the Global Extremism Monitor is able to expose and explore different characteristics of Islamist extremists' intended violence. These groups often target civilians based on the demographics they represent, such as faith or ethnicity. An underlying theme among many of the groups monitored in 2018 is also the systematic targeting of institutions.

This chapter breaks down and explores the assaults on often vulnerable institutions and public targets, in order to better understand how to defeat the scourge of extremist violence. It also emphasises the need for a nuanced approach to counter-extremism, one that is comprehensive enough to safeguard all pillars of society from the threat of violent Islamist extremism.

SECTARIANISM AND RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

Muslims continued to be the biggest victims of Islamist extremism, with 85 per cent of attacks against public targets occurring in Muslim-majority states.[32] Similar to our findings in 2017, Sunni Muslims were the most frequently targeted, with nearly two-thirds of all these attacks taking place in nations with a Sunni majority. While Islamist extremist groups have claimed the collateral killing of Sunni Muslims is acceptable because victims will be welcomed into heaven as martyrs, these groups also adhere to a perverse ideology that condones deliberate campaigns of killings against Sunni Muslims. Militants manipulate the disputed Islamic concept of *takfir*—an act where a Muslim declares another to be a non-believer, thus justifying the use of violence to commit murder of their fellow Sunni Muslims. It is because of this perversion of Islamic theology that Sunnis disproportionately bore the brunt of Islamist extremist violence again in 2018.

Sectarianism and religious persecution perpetrated by Islamist extremist groups continued unabated throughout the year, with

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32 While the monitor cannot ascertain the faith of each and every victim targeted, prominent demographic trends can be drawn from incidents aimed at minority sects and religious groups.

nine countries affected by such violence. Islamist extremist groups have long justified violence against non-Sunni Muslims, whom they see as infidels, drawing on sectarian divides and conflicts that stretch back millennia. 2017 saw an unprecedented level of sectarian violence, with just ten large-scale attacks accounting for 70 per cent of all related fatalities—there were 1,167 deaths from sectarian violence in 2017. This included the ISIS in Sinai attack in Egypt on a Sufi mosque that killed 311 people. In 2018, sectarianism continued to affect civilian populations in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Pakistan, leading to the deaths of 111 civilians.

Shia Muslims continued to be the most persecuted sect from Islamist extremism in 2018. Violence against Shias accounted for over two-thirds of all sectarian attacks and 71 per cent of all sectarian-related deaths. In Afghanistan, ISIS-Khorasan carried out two suicide assaults on Shia mosques, while in Iraq, ISIS continued to exploit tensions between Sunni and Shia communities to inflame unrest and social discord. ISIS launched nine suicide and IED attacks on Iraqi Shia communities—six of which occurred in Baghdad, while in Syria, Tahrir al-Sham continued its purge of Shia communities in a bid to regain territory.

The GEM also noted the persecution of Hazaras, an ethnic group that mostly follows the Shia branch of Islam. In Pakistan, eight members of the Hazara community in Quetta were assassinated by suspected Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) militants, who in 2016 wrote an open letter to the Hazara people, proclaiming that "all Shias are worthy of killing, and the intention is to make Pakistan their graveyard". LeJ were also suspected of assassinating two men in Lahore, both from the Ahmadi sect of Islam, whose communities have long been oppressed globally because of beliefs that contradict mainstream Islamic thinking. The GEM found that Sufi sites were targeted on three occasions, in Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan. While Sufism is not a distinct sect, extremists view this Islamic strain as idolatrous due to its interpretation of scripture and the addition of rituals rooted in mysticism.

Christianity continued to be the most persecuted non-Islamic faith in 2018. Christian civilians, including followers of the Coptic Church, were targeted in seven countries, leading to the deaths of 42 people. Fifty-one per cent of the assaults on those of Christian

faith took place at churches, with the ISIS-linked triple-suicide bombing that killed 20 people at three churches in Surabaya, Indonesia, being the deadliest. Islamist extremists around the world have previously declared Christians as apostates who must be eliminated. Boko Haram have promised to attack "every church" and kill all "citizens of the cross" while ISIS in Egypt has described Coptic Christians as its "favourite prey".

In July 2018, one of the deadliest acts of religious persecution took place in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, when an ISIS-Khorasan suicide bomber detonated his explosives at a gathering of Hindus and Sikhs who were travelling to meet President Ashraf Ghani. ISIS released a statement afterwards claiming that the group were targeted for being "polytheists".

GOVERNMENTS

Twenty-two groups perpetrated assaults on government targets in 2018 and while tactics may differ, these groups were ultimately united in their desire to undermine governance and establish their own form of Islamic law. The GEM documented 196 attacks on government personnel and sites including presidential residencies, ministries and election offices in 2018. Seventeen countries suffered from this violence, including new frontiers such as Mozambique and the Philippines.

These attacks are symbolic of an ideology that condemns secular governance and views government figures and sites as representations of apostasy. Moreover, the weakening of government institutions furthers Islamist extremists' attempt to govern territory and establish themselves as protectors of the land.

Assaults on governments led to 596 deaths, and the targets were diverse, including politicians and civil servants. Members of government were among those attacked, with the most high-profile incident being an assassination attempt in March 2018 on the vehicle carrying Rami Hamdallah, then Prime Minister of the Palestinian National Authority, during a visit to the Gaza Strip. As well as vehicles, government figures were also found to have been

targeted at their official residences. In Mosul, Iraq, ISIS killed three mayors in their homes while in Somalia, al-Shabaab carried out three assassination attempts on government officials residing at hotels.

The GEM also recorded large-scale assaults against government sites in 2018, which killed 187 people. In Kabul, Afghanistan, a suicide assault on the Ministry of Public Works and Housing killed 43 people in December while in Libya, ISIS militants attacked the Higher National Electoral Commission in May. Efforts to disrupt election processes were recorded in Afghanistan, Mali and Iraq, with at least 16 voting stations and electoral offices being destroyed. In April 2018, ISIS issued a statement threatening to target Iraq's parliamentary elections and "all those who participate". This threat later manifested when a suicide bomber attacked a site holding ballot papers. In Afghanistan, 102 civilians were killed in assaults on voting stations by both ISIS-Khorasan and the Taliban.

Fig 4.1: Countries to Suffer Most Attacks on their Government, 2018
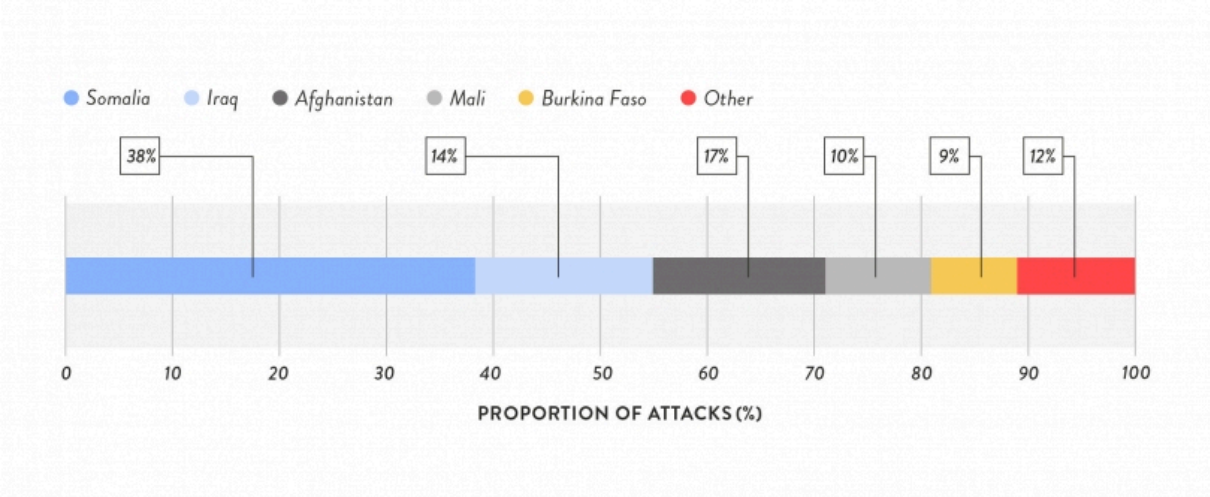
Figure 4.2: Groups Responsible for Attacks against Governments, 2018
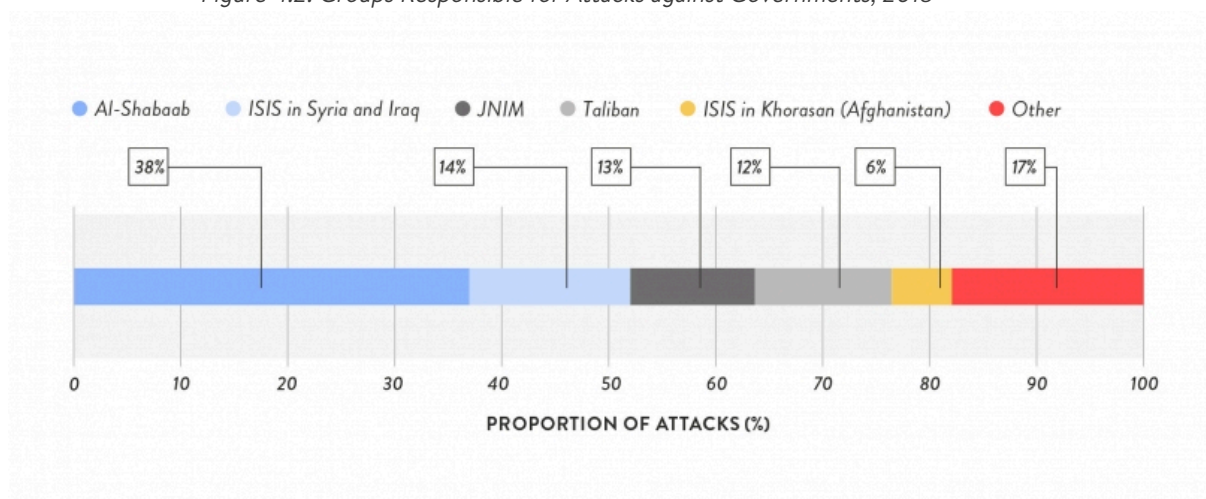
NEWS AND MEDIA

The news and media industry in five countries— Afghanistan, Somalia, Bangladesh, India and Iraq—suffered from violent Islamist extremism in 2018. The GEM recorded eight direct assassination attempts on journalists, media owners and TV employees. Such violence can be attributed to Islamist militant groups' attempt to control the narrative and information flow, and to prevent independent media sources from reporting the realities of conflict and violence. By carrying out these assaults, Islamist extremists also espouse a broader message that denounces democratic structures and undermines freedom of speech.

In Somalia, al-Shabaab assassinated a female journalist in June 2018 and killed four employees of Universal TV in a bombing in December. In Iraq, a war correspondent was attacked in his home by ISIS, while in Bangladesh, militants killed a prominent writer in Dhaka, the second such attack on a journalist in the country. 2018 also saw the assassination of the prominent journalist Shujaat Bukhari in Srinagar, Kashmir; two security personnel were also killed in that attack. Lashkar-e-Taiba, whose stated objective is to introduce an Islamic state in South Asia, was blamed for the assassination.

Beyond direct assassinations, journalists fell victim to other assaults during 2018. Shortly before World Press Freedom Day in

May, nine journalists who had gathered to cover a bombing in Kabul were killed in a suicide blast. ISIS-Khorasan claimed responsibility for the attack, claiming to have "executed apostates".[33] According to the International Federation of Journalists, Afghanistan was the deadliest country for journalists in 2018—the same year that the country's independent media became its second most trusted institution.[34]

Before they became a target of Islamist violence, journalists and reporters were once utilised by extremist groups to convey their messaging and spread terror. Since the advent of the internet, however, Islamist groups have used social media platforms in their branding exercises. In countries where extremists are seeking to control information, it is important that trust in the media industry is not weakened and the relationship between robust, accurate information and civil society is not undermined.

Fig 4.3: Countries to Suffer Most Attacks on their Media Industry, 2018
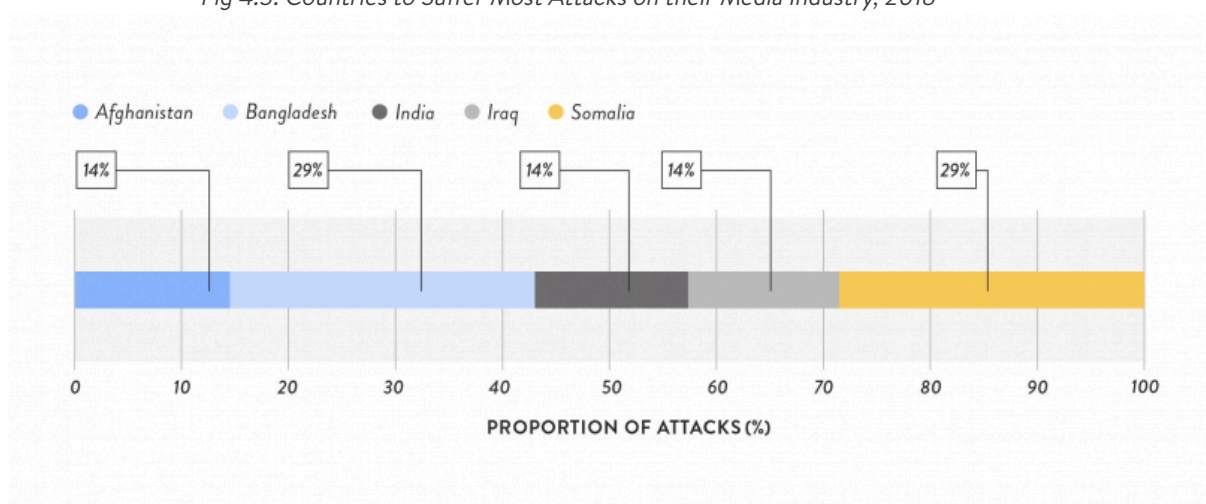
33 Kim Sengupta, "Single Deadliest Day for Afghan Journalists since Taliban Highlights Need for Press Freedom", Independent, 5 May 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/campaigns/voicesindanger/kabul-bombing-attacks-journalists-killed-press-freedom-taliban-afghanistan-a8331191.html.

34 "Journalist Group Says 94 Working in Media Killed in 2018, Topped by Afghanistan", Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 31 December 2018, https://www.rferl.org/a/journalists-killed-afghanistan-us-somalia-pakistan-yemen-syria/29684874.html. "Afghanistan in 2018: A Survey of the Afghan People", Asia Foundation, https://asiafoundation.org/where-we-work/afghanistan/survey/.
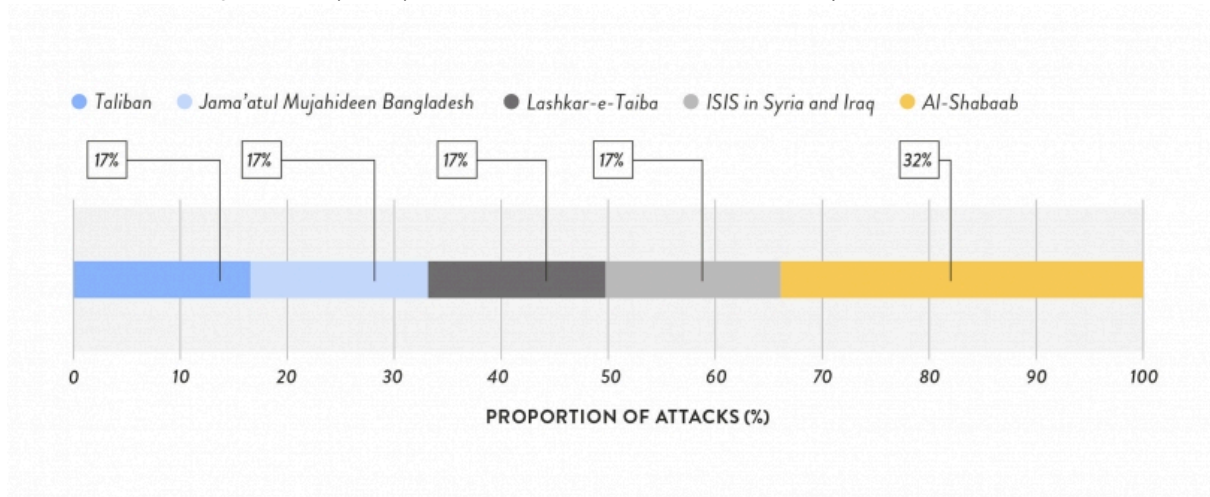
ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Attacks on critical energy infrastructure can leave many citizens lacking food, water and electricity, destabilise the political and economic situation of a country, and have a ripple effect on global markets. The GEM found that Islamist extremists launched ten major attacks targeting critical energy infrastructure in 2018, including oil pipelines, refineries, electricity facilities and a dam, with at least seven countries around the world affected.

The GEM found that the Houthis were responsible for all precision strikes on Saudi Arabia during 2018, launched from neighbouring Yemen and aimed at causing maximum damage. Six of those included transnational ballistic attacks on oil infrastructure belonging to state-owned oil giant Saudi Aramco. In September 2019, a series of drone strikes struck Saudi Aramco, shutting down half its oil production operations—roughly 5 per cent of the world's daily oil production.

The GEM recorded two further attacks in Yemen, with an oil pipeline destroyed in Shabwah and a power station targeted by militants in Abyan. All attacks were attributed to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), while in Mali, al-Qaeda's official branch in the Sahel, JNIM, was responsible for the destruction of facilities at the unfinished Djenné Dam project, in March 2018.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban have employed such subversive tactics to consolidate governance over their areas of control. Militants destroyed an electricity facility in Baghlan in March 2018, and several weeks later they detonated a landmine at an electricity tower, cutting the import of power to Kabul from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. A Taliban spokesman vowed to continue terminating the supply of electricity to entire populations if power in insurgent-controlled areas was not restored.

Attacks on critical energy infrastructure can function to establish Islamist extremists' own legitimacy and acceptance in society. The provision of resources such as clean water and reliable power in towns sympathetic to a group's cause or under its control can signal effective governance in place of failed or damaged state-led alternatives. It can also attract followers and advance the extremists' goal of establishing a "self-sufficient" state governed by a narrow interpretation of Islam.

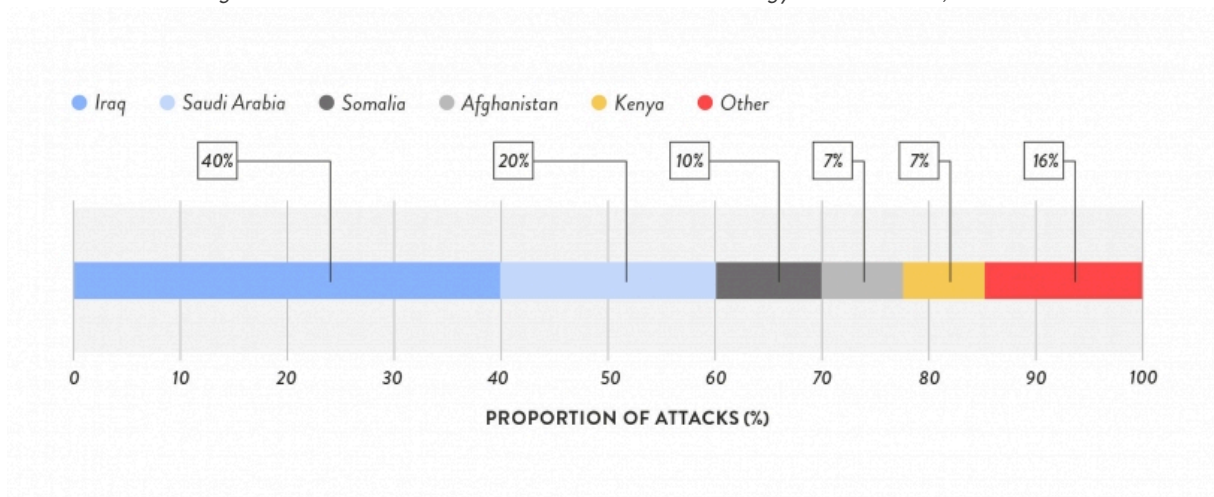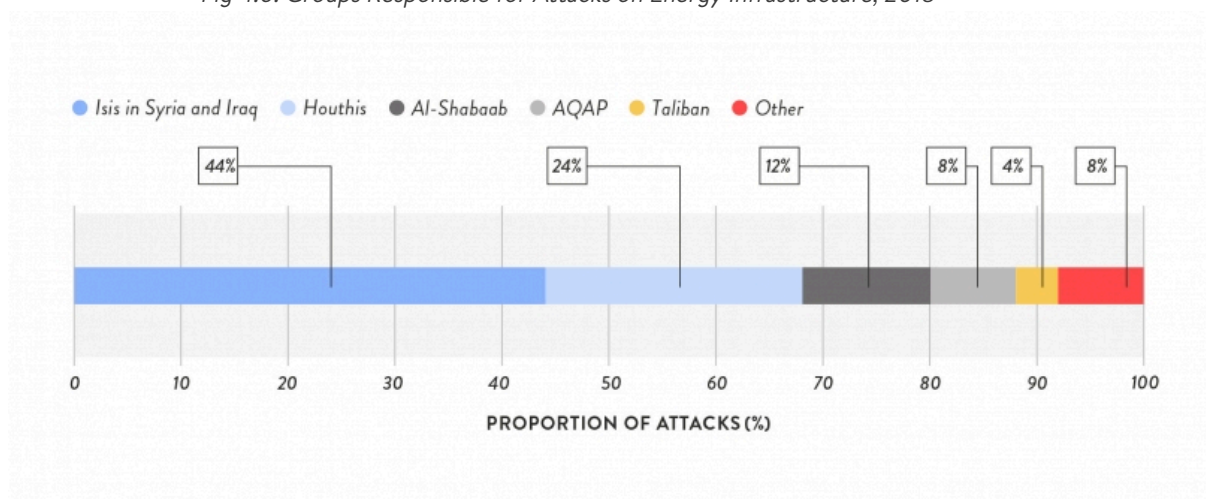*Fig 4.5: Countries to Suffer Most Attacks on their Energy Infrastructure, 2018*

Fig 4.6: Groups Responsible for Attacks on Energy Infrastructure, 2018

EDUCATION

The GEM recorded 40 attacks on educational establishments such as schools, universities and madrassas in 2018, leaving 83 dead. Of these incidents, 70 per cent targeted students, teachers, principals and lecturers. It could be that extremist groups see these targets—facilitators of more Western influenced, secular ideas—as the source of what they believe to be un-Islamic ways of thinking. Extremist groups seek to disrupt the propagation of such teachings through violent attacks on education sites and persons involved in teaching. A raid in October 2018 on a school in Lafoye, Somalia saw al-Shabaab militants specifically target non-Muslim members of staff. Al-Shabaab were the most frequent perpetrators of such violence, with nine attacks in both Somalia and Kenya, two-thirds of which were assassination attempts on teachers and students.

The GEM recorded the destruction or enforced closure of at least 15 schools by militant groups in 2018. This activity was observed in Pakistan, Kenya, Niger, Burkina Faso, Afghanistan, Nigeria, the Philippines, Burkina Faso and Mali. The deadliest such attack in 2018 was the ISIS-claimed suicide bombing of a Kabul education centre in August, leaving 48 civilians dead, many of whom were teachers and students. Both ISIS and the Pakistani Taliban have claimed attacks on schools as payback for government efforts on their territorial strongholds. Following an attack at a school in 2014, a spokesman for the Pakistani Taliban claimed pupils

were a viable target because they were attending government school: "We selected the army's school for the attack because the government is targeting our families and females, [and] we want them to feel our pain."

In February, 110 students were abducted from their school in Yobe, Nigeria by Boko Haram, echoing the kidnapping of girls from Chibok in 2014. That abduction sent shockwaves around the world, put Nigerian government forces under intense pressure and succeeded in projecting the name of Boko Haram far beyond their territorial borders. Attacks such as this, against students, are characteristic of violent Islamist groups, who seek to impose a more puritanical interpretation of Islamic teachings on schools.

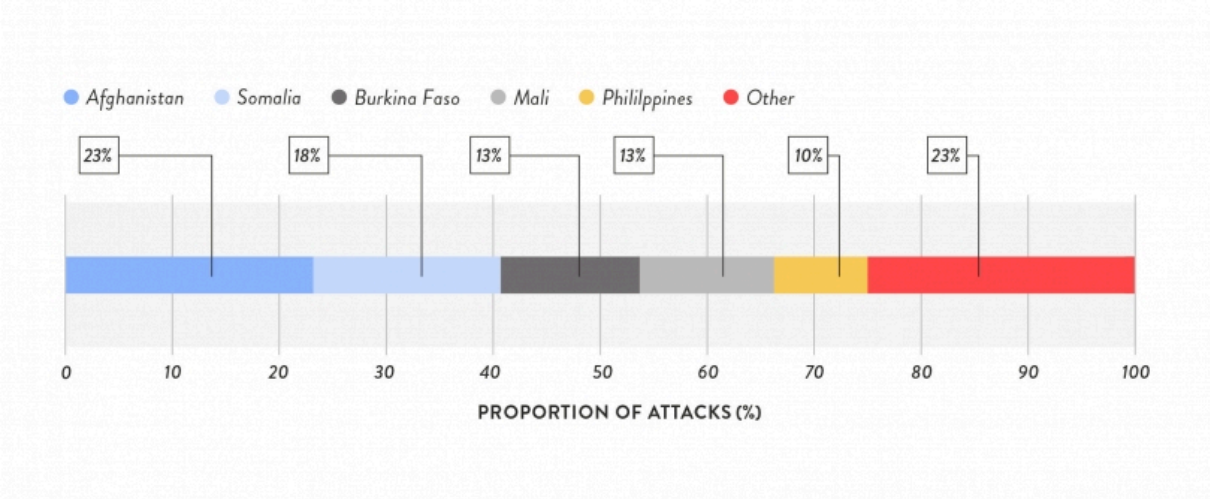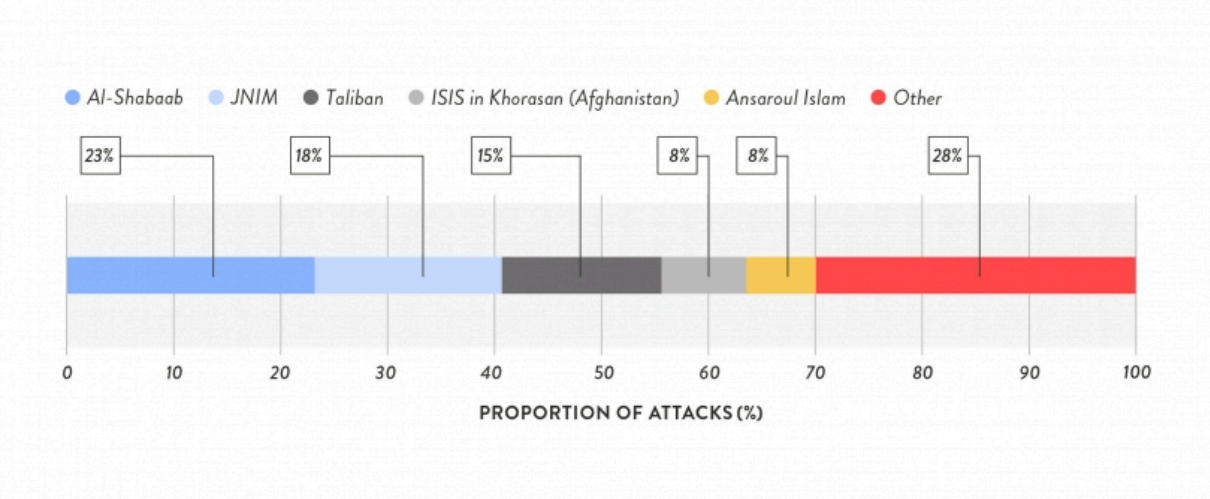*Fig 4.7: Countries to Suffer Most Attacks on their Education System, 2018*

Fig 4.8: Groups Responsible for Attacks on Education Systems, 2018

METHODOLOGY

The Global Extremism Monitor (GEM) has been designed to track:

- attacks and attempted attacks;
- victims (killed and wounded);
- perpetrators (killed and wounded);
- types of violent offensive (large-scale coordinated attacks on armed actors, attacks targeting the public space);
- nature of attacks (including raids, assassinations, sectarian violence and engagement between groups);
- method of attacks;
- number and gender of suicide bombers;
- nature of executions; and
- demographic information of victim(s).

The GEM also looks at the counter-extremism efforts and responses being implemented by governments, including airstrikes, ground operations, ground and air operations, and arrests. The monitor recorded steps taken by non-state actors against extremism. These include, but are not limited to:

- Kurdish peshmerga in Iraq and Syria;
- vigilante groups, for example the Civilian Joint Task Force fighting Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria; and
- tribal and clan factions, working with or alongside multistate coalitions.

SOURCES

The GEM draws information from over 600 English-language news sources that reported on incidents of Islamist extremism throughout 2018. Multiple news sources were used to verify accounts and information for each incident recorded. Additional materials, including reports, briefings and official group material including statements and propaganda, as well as existing data sets, were used to corroborate facts and reporting of incidents.

The GEM's investigation of stories attempted to eliminate as much media bias as possible. The monitor employs multiple news sources to corroborate events and limit the amount of media bias in the events recorded. Consequently, the GEM data are a blend of local and international news sources, which are required to capture local events that often go unreported by the international media.

When verifying accounts, researchers did not take claims of responsibility to be a reliable account of an event. The GEM attempted to ascertain the true story of an event. For example:

- In the reporting of incidents and numbers killed, political agendas or propaganda may obscure the facts, for instance when local security forces wish to inflate death counts of militants killed in operations, or when extremist groups downplay losses to maintain an image of success and strength.
- Attacks that are not Islamist-related may be claimed by groups for media attention.
- In so-called lone-wolf attacks, there is sometimes insufficient corroborated information on the exact direct relationship with a group to verify the extent of lone-wolf activity.
- Numbers of people killed by violent Islamists are often inflated in reports of claims.
- Violent Islamists often fail to report the extent of any damage they have received.

When existing databases were used, all incidents were recoded and categorised according to the methodology designed for primary-source data gathering. When multiple sources were used, all events recorded by the GEM were verified for duplicates.

CODING CRITERIA

After the verification process, each incident and event was recorded singly in a spreadsheet for each country. Events were categorised for:

- date of incident or attack, including for attempted attacks;
- location of incident or attack (including geolocation at provincial

and neighbourhood levels);

- scene of incident or attack (for example, religious institution, school, tourist place, bank, refugee camp, hospital or government building or embassy);
- numbers and details of victims (killed and wounded);
- numbers and details of perpetrators (killed and wounded) at group and individual levels;
- target of violent attack or incident (for example, civilians, military, government, police, non-state militias or vigilantes);
- method of attack (including raids, offensives, assassinations, intergroup engagement, suicide mission and airstrikes);
- tactics for attack (weaponry used, for example landmines, improvised explosive devices, vehicle ramming, stabbing, chemical weapons or drones);
- motive for attack (based on official claims where available, as well as scene and location of attack, details of victims and details of perpetrators), for example religious sectarian (including inter- and intra-sectarian), political and social (based on government or military targets, targeting of local leaders and undermining national security operations), competition and territorial disputes;
- hostage takings and arrests (including state government arrests of terrorist suspects);
- number and gender of suicide bombers, including intercepted bombers; and
- reasons for extremist punishments (for example capital punishments, including executions, stoning and burnings, as well as amputations and lashings), including blasphemy, espionage, fleeing group territory, adultery, sorcery and drug usage.

More than 35,000 events were documented in 2018. The GEM translated these events into thematic data strands and recorded them in a bespoke data set that captures the themes that characterise extremism. The data set was updated every quarter and verified according to the standardised verification process (see below).

DATA CAPTURE ON GROUPS

Tracking and monitoring groups has allowed the GEM to attribute an instigator to an event when such information is missing in news reports and the GEM could establish an instigator from other data recorded, including location analysis. In such cases, instigators are recorded only if there is a high probability of the group's involvement.

For Syria, the GEM designed a specific data set to track and monitor the activities of groups in that country. The monitor captured data on all actors involved in the Syrian conflict, including rebel groups, non-state militias and proxy actors. This was required to better understand the role violent Islamists play and their interaction with an array of actors.

GEOLOCATION

Geocoding for the GEM was conducted at the provincial and neighbourhood levels. The latitude and longitude of each incident was recorded to allow for GIS mapping of activity. Occasionally, the exact geolocation of an incident could not be verified. These typically occurred in conflicts such as that in Syria, and in countries with unclear coordinate data. In such cases, coordinates were attributed to incidents that were recorded in a province matching the activity common to a group's insurgency. If there was a discrepancy in reporting where an incident took place, or if reporting suggested the incident took place along a border, towns were attributed near the disputed area where known activity was taking place, based on the likelihood that the incident was in line with overwhelming trends.

DATA VERIFICATION

A multiphase cleaning and verification process was essential. Inaccurate or contradictory information was flagged in the first phase of data collection. After the initial news coverage of an event

ended, researchers corroborated information from media, government statements and academic sources to confirm details and address discrepancies. Existing data sets that capture armed conflict at the national and global levels were introduced to corroborate GEM capture, address discrepancies in accounts and confirm the absence of gaps in the final data set.

CIVILIANS AS INTENDED TARGETS

When it can be determined, the GEM records the intended target(s) of an attack. In most cases, this is strongly related to the scene and location of an incident or attack and the type of victims (e.g. worshippers, military personnel, government figures, local leaders or humanitarian workers). In some cases, supplementary indicators are used. For example, the GEM has corroborated media reporting with group statements following the claim of an incident.

In addition to recording the numbers of victims per incident, the GEM has also ascribed characteristics when these are indicated in the reporting. For instance, while gathering details to determine types of victims, the GEM data set is designed to be disaggregated according to motive for attack (e.g. sectarian) and method of attack (e.g. suicide mission, offensive). Depending on the event, researchers allocate illustrative and contextual detail to supplement the primary fields of coding. These secondary data points and categories allow for wider analysis after coding, where multiple elements in the data set can be referenced to build a wider picture per incident.

SUICIDE BOMBERS

The GEM captures information on suicide attacks and attempted suicide attacks globally. Beyond recording suicide attacks, the GEM was designed to accommodate the capture of:

- methods of operation: whether a suicide vest or a suicide car bomb was detonated in an attack;
- gender dynamics: whether female or male assailants were

deployed on suicide missions; and

- efficacy: whether the assailant deployed on a suicide mission managed to detonate his or her explosive device. If the assailant was intercepted before self-detonation, the mission was recorded as unsuccessful.

Researchers gathered evidence to determine the existence of any of the above attributes in a suicide attack. Media sources and extremist statements were cross-referenced to better understand how events unfolded and who was involved in the missions.

EXECUTIONS

The GEM captures information on punishments and executions by violent Islamist groups. The fields relating to executions and punishments in the data set were qualitatively rich and drawn from media reporting as well as group self-reporting. Details recorded, when possible, include the accusations made against a person or persons, and the legal verdict(s) applied.

GLOSSARY

Sharia
Islamic law or norms as revealed in the Quran and the practices of the Prophet Mohammad, interpreted and applied by Islamic jurists through multiple schools of thought. Islamist groups often claim to be implementing their interpretation of sharia through their actions.

Caliphate
A form of Islamic governance that emerged after the death of the Prophet Mohammad. The leader, known as the caliph, must be appointed by consultation according to Sunni thought and should represent the interests of the entire Muslim community.

Hadith
A collection of traditions containing sayings of the Prophet

Mohammad, which constitute the major source of guidance for Muslims apart from the Quran.

Haram
Forbidden by Islamic law.

Hudud
A set of punishments derived from a literalist interpretation of Islam.

Islamism
A modern religious-political ideology that requires a dominant role for an interpretation of Islam as state law.

Istishhad
The Islamic concept of martyrdom.

Shirk
Idolatry or polytheism, literally associating others with God.

Salaf
The first three generations of Muslims after the Prophet Mohammad.

Salafi-jihadism
A transnational religious-political ideology based on a belief in violent jihadism and return to the perceived Islam of the Prophet's followers. This is the worldview espoused by groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda.

Takfir
The act of declaring that a fellow Muslim is guilty of apostasy and therefore no longer a Muslim.

Ummah
The global Muslim community.

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