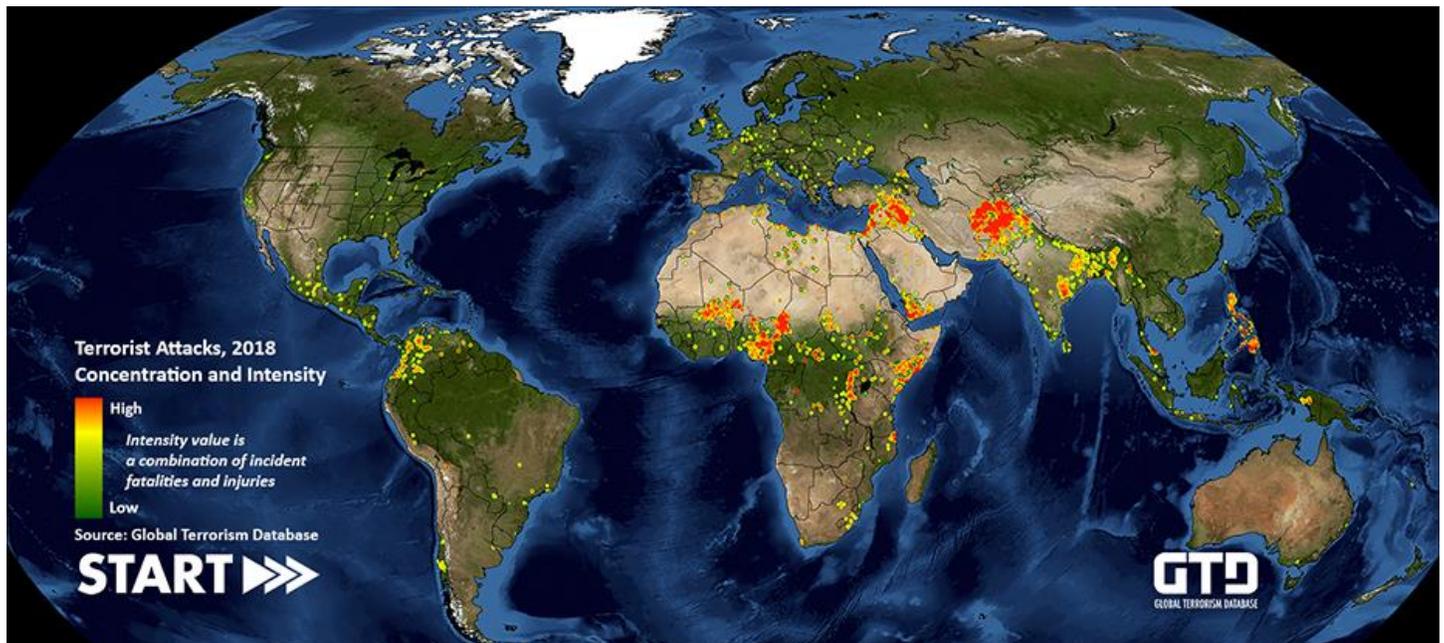# Trends in Global Terrorism: Islamic State's Decline in Iraq and Expanding Global Impact; Fewer Mass Casualty Attacks in Western Europe; Number of Attacks in the United States Highest since 1980s

Terrorist Attacks, 2018
Concentration and Intensity

High

Intensity value is a combination of incident fatalities and injuries

Low

Source: Global Terrorism Database

START ▶▶▶

GTD

OVERVIEW

In 2018, there were more than 9,600 terrorist attacks around the world, which killed more than 22,980 people, including 7,290 perpetrators and 15,690 victims. The patterns described here provide a general overview. We encourage readers to explore the Global Terrorism Database™ and consider contextual information for a comprehensive assessment.[1]

- 2018 was the fourth consecutive year of declining global terrorism since terrorist violence peaked in 2014 at nearly 17,000 attacks and more than 45,000 total deaths. The total number of terrorist attacks worldwide decreased 43% between 2014 and 2018, and the total number of deaths decreased 48%. Regional trends varied substantially.

- Global statistical trends were heavily impacted by patterns of terrorism In Iraq, which suffered more terrorist attacks than any other country each year from 2013 to 2017. The number of terrorist attacks in Iraq decreased 46% between 2017 and 2018 and the number of people killed in terrorist attacks decreased 78%.

- In particular, from the declaration of the caliphate in June 2014 to the liberation of Mosul in July 2017, Islamic State carried out more than 100 terrorist attacks in Iraq and killed more than 500 victims each month, on average. The group's violence in Iraq subsequently decreased dramatically and continued to decline throughout 2018 and early 2019, but remained deadly. More than 650 Islamic State attacks in Iraq killed more than 800 victims and 300 perpetrators in 2018, and caused hundreds of additional casualties in Syria and other locations.[2]

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[1] NB: This report relies on the full Global Terrorism Database. To support comparisons with analysis START has produced for the U.S. State Department's *Country Reports on Terrorism* (2012 – 2017), we reproduced key tables from the Statistical Annex, applying the same restricted GTD inclusion criteria to the 2018 data. These tables are found in an addendum to this report.
[2] Consistent with START's practice of including in the GTD only those attacks that have been reported by at least one high-validity source, these statistics represent those incidents that were reported by independent news outlets. Given the particular limitations of unbiased media coverage in Syria and also Yemen, the data presented here provide conservative estimates of terrorism in these locations.

- While Islamic State declined in Iraq, the group's influence continued to expand geographically. Attacks carried out by Islamic State "core" operatives, affiliated organizations, or unaffiliated individuals who indicated allegiance to the group took place in 34 countries in 2018, bringing the total number of countries that have ever experienced Islamic State-related terrorist attacks to 53. Preliminary data for 2019 indicate that at least three additional countries—Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, and the Netherlands—experienced Islamic State-related attacks, bringing the total number of countries to 56.

- In 2015, 2016, and 2017 there were multiple events in Western European countries in which assailants killed more than five people, including mass casualty attacks carried out by jihadists in Paris, Brussels, Nice, Berlin, Manchester, London, and Barcelona. In 2018, there were nine lethal terrorist attacks in Western Europe. The deadliest of these occurred in December, when an assailant who claimed allegiance to Islamic State attacked civilians at a Christmas market in Strasbourg, France, killing five people and injuring 11 others. The number of terrorist attacks In Western Europe decreased 31% between 2017 and 2018, while the number of deaths decreased 70%.

- In the United States, the number of terrorist attacks remained relatively stable in 2017 and 2018, following an increase from 38 attacks in 2015 to 67 attacks in 2016. Terrorist attacks in the United States killed 45 people (including two perpetrators) in 2018, a 54% decrease compared to the number of deaths in 2017 (largely driven by the October 2017 mass casualty attack in Las Vegas).

- A suicide bombing in Balochistan, Pakistan in July was the deadliest single attack in 2018. Assailants targeted an election rally for Siraj Raisani, who was among the 150 people killed in the attack. More than 180 others were injured. Islamic State-Khorasan claimed responsibility for the attack, and authorities identified the bomber as an Islamic State operative.[3]

- The deadliest series of attacks in 2018 occurred in Bandundu, Democratic Republic of Congo in December. Members of the Batende tribe attacked the Banunu community in four towns in Yumbi territory. The exceptionally violent attacks—which occurred in advance of an intensely disputed national election and contributed to the delay and suppression of voting—were a sudden escalation in a longstanding ethnic rivalry over territory and resources. Some reports indicated that police and military personnel may have been among the attackers. The assailants killed at least 540 people; tactics included arson, decapitation, drowning, maiming, and sexual violence.[4]

TERRORIST ATTACKS AND TOTAL DEATHS WORLDWIDE, BY MONTH, 2012 – 2019 (Q1)

Source: Global Terrorism Database
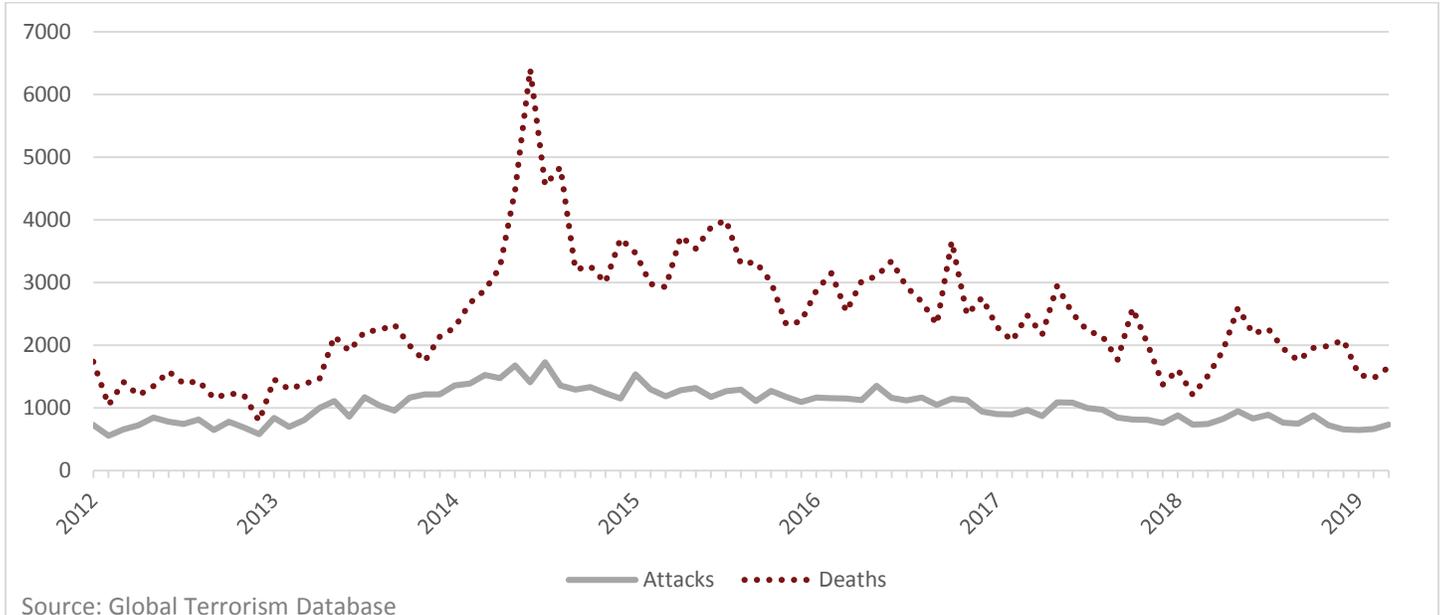
[3] Gannon, K. (2018, August 17). IS deadly new front in Pakistan's decades-old terror war. *Associated Press*. Retrieved from https://www.apnews.com/e5c3dc41cb7b4a058333509a342e34a3

[4] Miles, T. (2019, March 12). More than 500 Banunu killed in attacks by rival ethnic group in DR Congo: U.N. investigation. *Reuters*. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-congo-violence-un/more-than-500-banunu-killed-in-attacks-by-rival-ethnic-group-in-dr-congo-u-n-investigation-idUSKBN1QT148

Schwikowski, M. (2019, March 17). DR Congo: Safety fears surround special Yumbi vote. *DW*. Retrieved from https://www.dw.com/en/dr-congo-safety-fears-surround-special-yumbi-vote/a-47953084

United Nations. (2019, March 12). DR Congo: 'New waves of violence' likely, UN warns, unless State acts to prevent intercommunal reprisals. *UN News*. Retrieved from https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1034511

KEY REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Terrorist violence remained heavily concentrated in certain locations and coincided with other types of political violence. More than half of all attacks took place in five countries: Afghanistan (18%), Iraq (14%), India (9%), Nigeria (7%), and the Philippines (6%). More than half of all deaths took place in two countries: Afghanistan (43%), and Nigeria (11%).

TERRORIST ATTACKS AND TOTAL DEATHS, COUNTRIES WITH MORE THAN 150 ATTACKS, 2018

Country	Total Attacks	% of Total	% Change from 2017	Total Killed*	% of Total	% Change from 2017
Afghanistan	1776	18%	26%	9812	43%	61%
Iraq	1362	14%	-46%	1432	6%	-78%
India	888	9%	-8%	412	2%	-11%
Nigeria	645	7%	33%	2574	11%	43%
Philippines	601	6%	-13%	440	2%	-11%
Somalia	527	5%	-14%	1144	5%	-40%
Pakistan	480	5%	-33%	697	3%	-35%
Yemen	325	3%	43%	829	4%	9%
Cameroon	235	2%	114%	296	1%	21%
Syria	232	2%	-6%	1547	7%	-24%
Colombia	205	2%	72%	132	1%	57%
Thailand	182	2%	2%	69	0%	-4%
Libya	166	2%	-13%	244	1%	-16%
Mali	164	2%	15%	584	3%	61%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	163	2%	14%	993	4%	67%
Worldwide Total	**9607**	**100%**	**-13%**	**22987**	**100%**	**-13%**

*Includes perpetrator deaths
Source: Global Terrorism Database

- Several locations experienced especially large decreases in terrorist violence between 2017 and 2018. These include:
  - Egypt, where the number of terrorist attacks decreased 76% (to 54 in 2018) and the number of deaths decreased 89% (to 98 in 2018).
  - Nepal, where the number of terrorist attacks decreased 60% (to 99 in 2018) and the number of deaths decreased 100% (from 4 in 2017 to 0 in 2018). This followed an isolated increase in mostly non-lethal attacks surrounding critical elections in 2017.[5]
  - Iraq, where the number of terrorist attacks decreased 46% (to 1,362 in 2018) and the number of deaths decreased 78% (to 1,432 in 2018).

- Several locations experienced especially large increases in terrorist violence between 2017 and 2018. These include:
  - Cameroon, where the number of terrorist attacks increased 114% (to 235 in 2018), and the number of deaths increased 21% (to 296 in 2018). Violence erupted after Anglophone separatists declared independence in 2017.[6]
  - Colombia, where the number of terrorist attacks increased 72% (to 205 in 2018) and the number of deaths increased 57% (to 132 in 2018) as the National Liberation Army (ELN) strengthened and peace negotiated between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia in 2016 faltered.[7]
  - Saudi Arabia, where the number of terrorist attacks increased 70% (to 92 in 2018), although the number of deaths decreased 45% (to 17 in 2018).

[5] Bhandari, R. and Schultz, K. (2017, November 25). Violence flares as Nepal heads to landmark elections. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/25/world/asia/nepal-election-violence.html

[6] Inside Cameroon's 100-year old Anglophone conflict. (2019, October 1). *Agence France Presse.* Retrieved from https://www.africanews.com/2019/10/01/inside-cameroon-s-100-year-old-anglophone-conflict/

[7] Moreno, J. and Rios, F. (2019, September 23). Renewed violence in Colombia: A visit to FARC's jungle lair. *Spiegel Online*. Retrieved from https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/farc-preparing-for-renewed-fighting-deep-in-colombian-jungle-a-1286296.html

Toro, F. (2019, July 5). Venezuela's implosion is becoming Colombia's security nightmare. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/07/05/venezuelas-implosion-is-becoming-colombias-security-nightmare/

AFGHANISTAN

Terrorist violence in Afghanistan increased steadily in recent years. The lethality of attacks follow a seasonal pattern coinciding with "fighting season," the Taliban's annual escalation of violence that typically begins around April.[8]
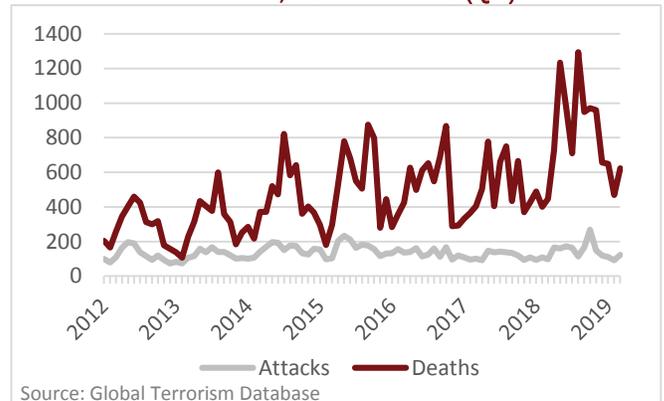
- Terrorist violence in Afghanistan was particularly severe in 2018. There were 1,776 attacks (a 26% increase from 2017), resulting in 9,812 total deaths (a 61% increase from 2017). Due to the nature of the conflict in Afghanistan, an especially large number of the people killed by terrorism were perpetrators of attacks—4,620 in 2018. The increase in the number of perpetrator deaths in Afghanistan in 2018 (60%) was consistent with the increase in the number of victim deaths.

- Terrorist attacks took place in 33 of 34 provinces in Afghanistan in 2018, and were largely concentrated in Ghazni, Faryab, Nangarhar, Kabul, Farah, and Kunduz.

- Information about perpetrators was reported for 77% of all terrorist attacks in Afghanistan in 2018. Of these attacks, 92% were carried out by the Taliban, and 8% were carried out by Islamic State- Khorasan Province.

TERRORIST ATTACKS AND TOTAL DEATHS IN AFGHANISTAN, BY MONTH, 2012 – 2019 (Q1)

Source: Global Terrorism Database

- Terrorist attacks in Afghanistan most frequently targeted the police (36%) and military (21%) as well as private citizens/property (18%) and government targets (12%).

PROVINCES WHERE THE MOST TERRORIST ATTACKS TOOK PLACE IN AFGHANISTAN, 2018

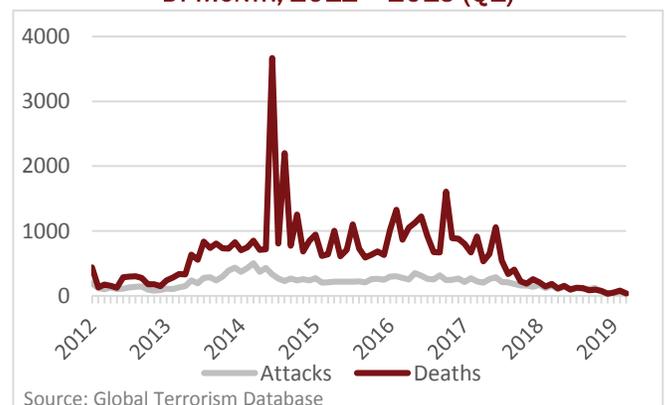| Province	Total Attacks	Total Killed	Perpetrators Killed
Ghazni	169	1259	808
Faryab	147	728	371
Nangarhar	133	518	129
Kabul	133	716	73
Farah	125	1359	775
Kunduz	100	517	230

Source: Global Terrorism Database

- The proportion of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan that were suicide attacks decreased from 9% in 2017 to 6% in 2018, consistent with an overall decrease in the prevalence of suicide terrorism worldwide (8% in 2017 to 4% in 2018).

- The majority of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan in 2018 were either bombings (42%) or armed assaults (30%). However, hostage taking events, particularly kidnappings, increased from 10% of all attacks in 2017 to 15% in 2018. Assailants held hostage or kidnapped more than 1,500 people in terrorist attacks in Afghanistan in 2018. These included 160 hostages in a January 2018 attack that targeted the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul, the abduction of 70 election commission employees in Jawzjan in May, and the abduction of 125 teachers and Education Department staff in Ghazni in October.

IRAQ

Each year from 2013 to 2017, Iraq suffered more terrorist violence than any other country in the world. In 2013, 2014, and 2016 approximately one-third of all deaths due to terrorist attacks worldwide took place in Iraq. In 2015 and 2017, approximately one-quarter of all deaths were in Iraq.

- In 2018, following a lengthy and deadly offensive by the Iraqi government and its allies against Islamic State, terrorism in Iraq decreased dramatically. The number of attacks decreased 65% from a peak of nearly 4,000 in 2014 to fewer than 1,400 in 2018. The number of deaths declined 90% since 2014 when nearly 14,000 people were killed in terrorist attacks, including more than 1,600 perpetrators. In 2018, 1,400 people were killed in terrorist attacks in Iraq, including 340 perpetrators, comprising 6% of all deaths from terrorism worldwide.

TERRORIST ATTACKS AND TOTAL DEATHS IN IRAQ, BY MONTH, 2012 – 2019 (Q1)

Source: Global Terrorism Database

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[8] Price, J. (2013, March 18). Cyclical nature of Afghan fighting may mask deeper trends, experts warn. *McClatchy Newspapers*. Retrieved from https://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/article24746842.html

PROVINCES WHERE THE MOST TERRORIST ATTACKS TOOK PLACE IN IRAQ, 2014 – 2018

Province	Total Attacks	Total Killed	Perpetrators Killed
Baghdad	3503	7153	246
Al Anbar	2398	9417	3308
Saladin	2307	7349	2201
Nineveh	1850	11553	3691
Diyala	1818	3180	304
Kirkuk	1055	1963	416

Source: Global Terrorism Database

- From 2014 through 2018, terrorism in Iraq was concentrated in Baghdad, Al Anbar, Saladin, Nineveh, and Diyala. In Baghdad, the number of terrorist attacks began to decline dramatically in 2017, when there were just over 400 attacks that killed more than 400 people, compared to more than 1,000 attacks killing more than 2,100 people in 2016.

- In 2017, violence in Nineveh severely increased as Islamic State assailants responded to Iraqi security forces' efforts to retake control of Mosul. There were more than 700 terrorist attacks in Nineveh, killing more than 3,500 people, including 1,500 perpetrators. The following year, violence declined sharply in Nineveh—there were 138 attacks that killed 328 people, including 135 perpetrators in 2018. Although the effort to liberate Mosul was ultimately successful, the impact of terrorism and other types of violence was devastating for the city and its residents.[9]

- For several years, there were numerous mass-casualty terrorist attacks in Iraq. For example, between 2014 and 2016 there were at least 100 attacks each year in which assailants killed more than 10 victims. In 2017, there were 64 such attacks, and in 2018 there were six.

- Sources identified a specific perpetrator group in 49% of all attacks in Iraq in 2018, 97% of which were attributed to Islamic State. Ten attacks were attributed to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), all but one targeting Turkish personnel in Iraq.

- Private citizens and property remained the most frequently targeted by terrorist attacks in Iraq in 2018 comprising 41% of all attacks. Additionally, 20% of all attacks were against military targets, and 13% targeted police. Government and business targets each made up 8% of all attacks.

- From 2015 to 2017, 13% of all terrorist attacks in Iraq were suicide attacks. This figured decreased to 5% in 2018. In general, the proportion of attacks that were bombings decreased from 87% in 2016 to 71% in 2018, while the proportion of armed assaults increased from 5% to 13% of all attacks during the same period.

TERRORIST ATTACKS IN WHICH MORE THAN 10 VICTIMS WERE KILLED IN IRAQ, 2014 – 2018

Source: Global Terrorism Database

- Islamic State kidnapped or held hostage tens of thousands of people in Iraq since 2014. Although the number of people kidnapped or held hostage in terrorist attacks in Iraq declined sharply, from more than 10,000 in 2014 to 221 in 2018, thousands remain missing.[10]

- Finally, the only type of attack in Iraq that increased in 2018 was assassination. The number of assassinations and attempted assassinations in Iraq essentially doubled, from approximately 50 in 2016 and 2017 to 99 in 2018 (the intended target was killed in 49 attacks). These assassinations targeted politicians (e.g., mayors, judges, and council members), private citizens (e.g., political candidates, tribal/village chiefs), military and police leadership, and journalists.

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[9] Lafta, R., Cetorelli, V., and Burnham, G. (2018). Living in Mosul during the time of ISIS and the military liberation: results from a 40-cluster household survey. *Conflict and Health, 12*(31), Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-018-0167-8 United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Report on the protection of civilians in the context of the Ninewa operations and the retaking of Mosul City, 17 October 2016 –10 July 2017. Retrieved from http://www.uniraq.org/images/factsheets_reports/Mosul_report%20170ct2016-10Jul201731%20October_2017.pdf

[10] Dozier, K. and Tavakolian, N. (2019, May 23). They were children when they were kidnapped by ISIS and forced to fight. What happens now that they're home? *Time.* Retrieved from https://time.com/longform/isis-child-soldiers-yezidi/

The number of terrorist attacks and the number of people killed in terrorist attacks in Nigeria increased in 2018 for the first time in four years, following a steady decline from extremely high levels of terrorist violence in 2014.

- In 2018, there were 645 terrorist attacks in Nigeria, a 33% increase from 2017. There were 2,574 people—victims and perpetrators—killed in these attacks, a 43% increase from 2017. However, most of this increase was driven by victim deaths, which increased 63% from 2017. In 2018, 291 perpetrators were killed in attacks in Nigeria, down from 422 the previous year.

- Unlike Afghanistan and Iraq, where terrorist conflicts have been dominated by single perpetrator organizations, there are several regional conflicts in Nigeria. Perpetrators were identified in 81% of attacks in Nigeria in 2018.

TERRORIST ATTACKS AND TOTAL DEATHS IN NIGERIA, BY MONTH, 2012 – 2019 (Q1)

Source: Global Terrorism Database

  - Fulani extremists—active in 15 states but most frequently in Benue, Plateau, and Taraba—continued to engage in violent conflict over land resources. While not a formal organization, Fulani extremists were the most active and deadly perpetrators of terrorism in Nigeria in 2018. They carried out 299 attacks that killed 1,162 people in Nigeria, in addition to attacks in Central African Republic, Ghana, and Mali.

  - Boko Haram—including the Shekau faction and al-Barnawi's Islamic State-West Africa Province—was active in six Nigerian states in 2018, most frequently in Borno.[11] Boko Haram carried out more than 200 attacks, resulting in 1,095 deaths (including 254 perpetrator deaths), as well as deadly attacks in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.

  - Various groups have long engaged in violence rooted in conflict over natural resources in the Niger Delta region. Although there was a wave of attacks by Niger Delta extremist groups in 2016, and two attacks in 2017, none were reported in 2018 following talks between President Buhari and the militants.[12] Niger Delta extremists have threatened to resume violence on multiple occasions in 2019, but to date they have not done so.[13]

- Patterns of terrorist tactics also shifted in 2018. While the number of attacks overall increased, they were most frequently armed assaults, a tactic used by both Fulani extremists and Boko Haram.

  - The number of bombings—a tactic not typically used by Fulani militants, but usually the work of Boko Haram or Niger Delta extremist groups—declined sharply, from more than 150 in 2017 to fewer than 90 in 2018. Despite this decline, several hundred people were killed in bombing attacks in Nigeria in 2018.

  - The number of people kidnapped or held hostage by Boko Haram in Nigeria nearly doubled from 2017 (174 victims) to 2018 (346 victims). In particular, Boko Haram's pattern of large-scale kidnappings continued in 2018. Among the attacks with the most kidnap victims was one in February in which more than 100 people, mostly students, were abducted from the Government Girls Science and Technology College in Dapchi. Five students died, and nearly all of the remaining students were released the following month. One student from Dapchi, Leah Sharibu, remained in captivity, as do 112 of the students who were kidnapped by Boko Haram from the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok in April 2014.[14]

  - Nigeria continued to experience many attacks that were coordinated across multiple locations. In 2018, more than one-third (35%) of all terrorist attacks in Nigeria were part of coordinated events, compared to 17% worldwide. While this tactic was previously a hallmark of Boko Haram, in 2018 more than two-thirds (72%) of the coordinated attacks in Nigeria were carried out by Fulani extremists.

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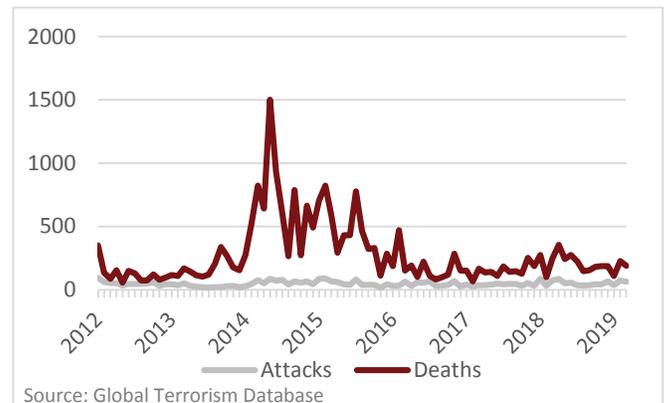
[11] Because Nigerian authorities and media sources do not consistently differentiate between Boko Haram's Shekau faction and ISIS-West Africa's al-Barnawi faction, their activity remained grouped together in the GTD. Whenever a specific faction is noted, GTD analysts record it in the *group subname* (*gsubname*) field in the database. In 2018, 45 attacks (464 total deaths) were attributed to al-Barnawi faction and 13 attacks (38 total deaths) were attributed to Shekau faction. For the remaining attacks, no faction was specified in source documents.

[12] Carsten, P. and Akwagyiram, A. (2019, February 14). Nigeria 'Delta Avengers' militants vow to cripple economy if Buhari re-elected. *Reuters*. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-election-oil/nigeria-delta-avengers-militants-vow-to-cripple-economy-if-buhari-re-elected-idUSKCN1Q31GH

[13] Onyibe, P. (2019, September 11). RDNA threatens to resume bombing Niger Delta oil installations. *New Telegraph*. Retrieved from https://www.newtelegraphng.com/2019/09/rnda-threatens-to-resume-bombing-niger-delta-oil-installations-if/

[14] Egbe, R. (2019, October 5). Chibok abduction: BBOG marks 2,000 days, demands girls' release. *The Nation*. Retrieved from https://thenationonlineng.net/chibok-abduction-bbog-marks-2000-days-demands-girls-release/

WESTERN EUROPE

In recent years, Western Europe has experienced relatively continuous occurrence of terrorist attacks—approximately 20 each month, on average. Most of these attacks were non-lethal, with a number of critical exceptions.

- In 2015, 2016, and 2017 there were multiple events in Western European countries in which assailants killed more than five people, including mass casualty attacks carried out by jihadists in Paris, Brussels, Nice, Berlin, Manchester, London, and Barcelona. Terrorist assailants killed more than 400 people in Western Europe during this period.

- The number of terrorist attacks In Western Europe decreased 31% between 2017 and 2018, while the number of deaths decreased 70%.

- In 2018, there were nine lethal terrorist attacks in Western Europe. The deadliest of these occurred in December, when an assailant who claimed allegiance to Islamic State attacked civilians at a Christmas market in Strasbourg, France, killing five people and injuring 11 others.

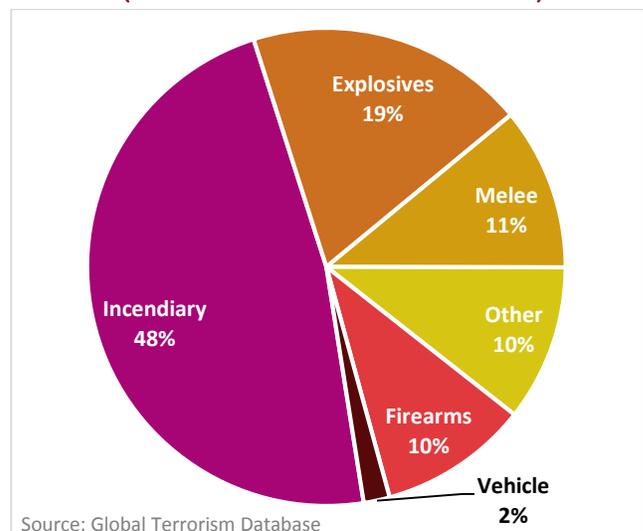### TERRORIST ATTACKS AND TOTAL DEATHS IN WESTERN EUROPE, BY MONTH, 2012 – 2019 (Q1)

Source: Global Terrorism Database
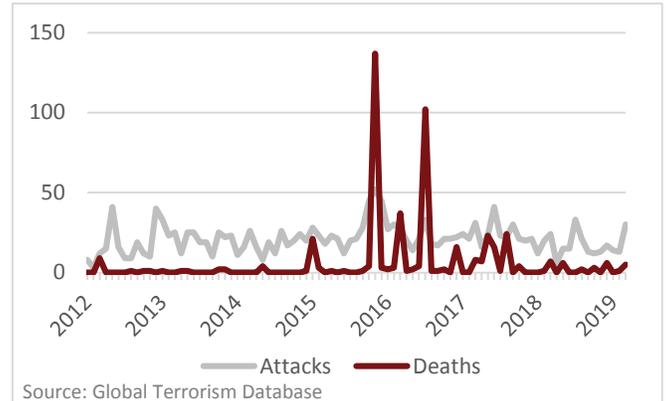
TERRORISM IN WESTERN EUROPE, BY COUNTRY, 2018

Country	Total Attacks	Total Killed	Perpetrators Killed
United Kingdom	100	2	0
Greece	27	3	0
Germany	22	0	0
Italy	14	0	0
France	13	13	2
Netherlands	6	1	1
Ireland	5	0	0
Sweden	5	0	0
Belgium	3	4	1
Spain	2	1	1
Austria	1	1	1
Denmark	1	0	0
Finland	1	0	0
Switzerland	1	0	0
Total	201	25	6

Source: Global Terrorism Database

- Approximately half of all attacks in Western Europe in 2018 took place in the United Kingdom, 85 of which were in Northern Ireland. Most of these involved explosives or incendiary weapons and caused no injuries. In two attacks, civilians were shot and killed. One was attributed to the Irish National Liberation Army and the other to Arm na Poblachta' (Army of the Republic).

- There were at least 25 attacks in Western Europe in 2018 in which assailants, who were often unidentified, targeted places of worship and affiliated religious institutions causing property damage but no casualties. The targets included mosques and churches, two Sikh temples, and one Jewish organization. Also, there were 15 attacks in which assailants targeted civilians based on their race, religion, or immigration status. For example, in February a man who claimed to be frustrated with Germany's immigration policy stabbed and injured three refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria in Heilbronn.
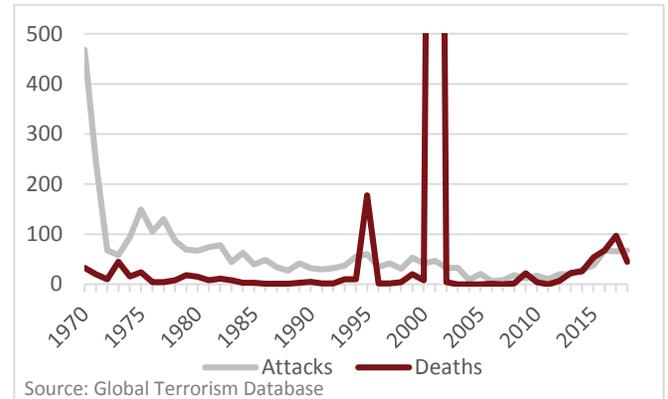
- Terrorist attacks by jihadi-inspired extremists took place in four Western European countries in 2018: France (5 attacks; 10 victims and 2 assailants killed), Germany (3 attacks), Belgium (2 attacks; 3 victims and 1 assailant killed), and the United Kingdom (1 attack).

- More than half of all attacks in Western Europe in 2018 (55%) involved incendiary weapons, which made up 48% of all weapons used. These attacks caused property damage, but no casualties. Likewise, 43 attacks involved explosive devices, all of which were non-lethal as well. In 6 of the 9 attacks in which victims were killed, the lethal weapon was a firearm. In 3 it was a knife.

WEAPONS USED IN TERRORIST ATTACKS IN WESTERN EUROPE, 2018 (PERCENTAGE OF ALL WEAPONS USED)

Explosives 19%
Melee 11%
Other 10%
Incendiary 48%
Firearms 10%
Vehicle 2%

Source: Global Terrorism Database

UNITED STATES

For the third consecutive year, there were more than 65 terrorist attacks in the United States in 2018, a figure previously not exceeded since 1982. Terrorism in the United States killed 45 people (including two perpetrators) in 2018, a 54% decrease compared to the number of deaths in 2017 (largely driven by the October 2017 mass casualty attack in Las Vegas).[15]

- There were six lethal terrorist attacks in the United States in 2018, excluding one attack in which only the perpetrator died, compared to 18 in 2017. Although terrorism in the United States is ideologically and geographically diverse, all six lethal attacks shared in common far-right ideological elements including primarily white supremacy and in at least two cases, male supremacy.

  – Two of the three deadliest attacks in the United States in 2018 were school shootings. In February, an assailant shot and killed 17 people and injured 17 others at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. In May, an assailant shot and killed 10 people and injured 13 others at Santa Fe High School in Santa Fe, Texas. The GTD does not include all school shooting attacks. These two school shooting attacks were included in the database, and designated "doubt terrorism proper" because there were indications of ideological motivations (in particular, neo-Nazi and white supremacist messaging), as well as possible personal motivations (the victims were known to the assailants).

TERRORIST ATTACKS AND TOTAL DEATHS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1970 – 2018

Source: Global Terrorism Database

  – In October, an assailant shot and killed eleven people and injured six others at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The assailant reportedly shouted "all Jews must die" and had a history of anti-Semitic rhetoric on social media.

  – In October, a white supremacist shot and killed two African American shoppers at a grocery store in Jeffersontown, Kentucky, after unsuccessfully attempting to enter a predominantly African American church.

  – In November, an incel extremist shot six women, killing two, in a Tallahassee yoga studio.

  – In March, a teenager who held white supremacist and Islamist views stabbed his friends dozens of times in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, killing one, reportedly because they "made fun of his Muslim faith."[16]

TERRORISM IN THE UNITED STATES BY IDEOLOGY, 2000 – 2018

Source: Global Terrorism Database
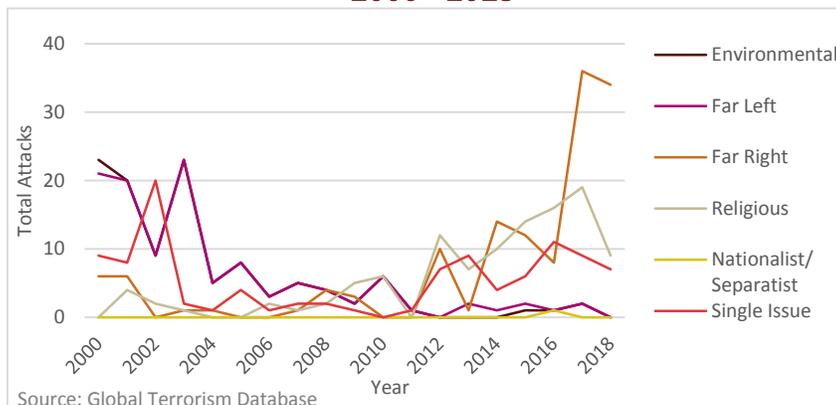
- The number of attacks motivated by far-right ideological goals steadily increased since 2007, including sharp increases in 2012, in 2014, and in 2017, when there were more than 35 such attacks in the United States. More than half (55%) of the far-right terrorist attacks since 2000 did not cause any casualties. However, 10 attacks carried out by far-right extremists resulted in more than 10 people injured or killed—in California (1), Florida (1), Louisiana (1), Nevada (1), Oregon (1), Pennsylvania (2), Texas (1), Virginia (1), and Wisconsin (1). They targeted business, religious and educational institutions, and private citizens.

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[15] Law enforcement records from the Las Vegas Metro Police Department include two witnesses reports stating that the assailant made references indicating a political goal shortly before the attack in Las Vegas— in particular that "somebody has to wake up the American public and get them to arm themselves" because the United States government would "confiscate guns." While not addressing or refuting these accounts, the Federal Bureau of Investigation Behavioral Analysis Unit ultimately determined that "there was no single or clear motivating factor" for the attack. Due to this conflicting information, we included the attack in the GTD and classified it as "doubt terrorism proper." For more information about this decision: Miller, E. (2018, December 7). Global Terrorism Database Coding Notes: Las Vegas 2017. *START*. Retrieved from https://www.start.umd.edu/news/global-terrorism-database-coding-notes-las-vegas-2017

[16] Wang, A. (2018, March 22). A teen with former neo-Nazi ties claims his 'Muslim faith' led him to stab three, police say. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2018/03/22/a-teen-with-former-neo-nazi-ties-claims-his-muslim-faith-led-him-to-stab-three-police-say/

- Since 2000, the most commonly used weapon in terrorist attacks has been incendiaries—arson. More than 250 terrorist attacks in the United States involved incendiary weapons, typically targeting unoccupied businesses, religious institutions, and private property. These attacks rarely caused death or injury, but resulted in more than $177 million in property damage.
- With the exception of the September 11th attacks, the deadliest weapons used in terrorist attacks were firearms. Perpetrators used firearms in more than 120 terrorist attacks in the United States between 2000 and 2018, killing more than 300 people and injuring more than 1,100. In contrast, during the same period assailants used explosives in 105 terrorist attacks, killing fewer than five people and injuring approximately 350 others.

PERPETRATORS

Information on the perpetrator of the attack was reported for 64% of all attacks worldwide in 2017. In 90 attacks, the individual perpetrator or perpetrators were identified, but they were not known to be affiliated with a particular group or organization. This represents a decline in the number of attacks carried out by unaffiliated individuals, down from 102 in 2017. The lethality of attacks carried out by unaffiliated individuals also decreased, from more than 200 victims killed in 2016 to 85 in 2018.

- In 2018, 320 groups and organizations carried out terrorist attacks worldwide, fewer than the 372 groups and organizations identified as perpetrators of terrorist attacks in 2017. The perpetrator groups responsible for the most attacks in 2018 are shown in the table below.

PERPETRATOR GROUPS RESPONSIBLE FOR MORE THAN 100 TERRORIST ATTACKS, 2018

| Perpetrator Group	Total Attacks	Change from 2017	Total Killed*	Change from 2017
Taliban	1266	40%	8508	73%
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)	735	-45%	2221	-69%
Al-Shabaab	493	-14%	1149	-39%
Fulani extremists	304	285%	1188	245%
New People's Army (NPA)	283	-22%	188	-6%
Maoists/ Communist Party of India - Maoist (CPI-Maoist)	268	-15%	189	-15%
Houthi extremists (Ansar Allah)	267	68%	659	48%
Boko Haram	243	-29%	1327	-16%
Islamic State- Khorasan Province	155	-21%	1203	-8%
Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)	122	-23%	136	-28%
National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN)	121	95%	106	126%
Separatists (Cameroon)	112	1767%	150	1150%

*Includes perpetrator deaths
Source: Global Terrorism Database

- The Taliban in Afghanistan was responsible for more terrorist attacks in 2018 than any other group by a wide margin, and those attacks resulted in more deaths than the next seven deadliest perpetrator groups combined. Between 2017 and 2018, the number of terrorist attacks carried out by the Taliban increased 40% and the total number of deaths increased 73%.

- Aside from the Taliban, several of the perpetrator groups that significantly increased their terrorist violence in 2018 were more loosely organized or decentralized movements rather than formally structured organizations. These included Fulani extremists active primarily in Nigeria, Houthi extremists in Yemen, and Anglophone separatists in Cameroon. The number of attacks carried out by Fulani extremists increased 285% and the number of deaths increased 245%. Likewise, the number of attacks carried out by Houthis increased 68% and the number of deaths increased 48%. Perhaps most dramatically, violence carried out by Anglophone separatists in Cameroon increased from a few attacks in 2017 to more than 100 attacks and 150 people killed in 2018.

- Islamic State and affiliated groups were among those whose terrorist violence decreased in 2018. These include Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (attacks decreased 45% and deaths decreased 69%), as well as Boko Haram (attacks decreased 29% and deaths decreased 16%), and Islamic State-Khorasan Province (attacks decreased 21% and deaths decreased 8%). However, these groups remained very deadly and their attacks resulted in thousands of casualties in

locations around the world. Attacks by Islamic State operatives in Iraq and Syria killed more than 1,500 victims in 2018. The group also claimed responsibility for deadly attacks in Iran, the Philippines, and Tajikistan.

- When considering perpetrator group patterns, it is important to note how groups and organizations evolve over time, often breaking into factions and splinters, sharing members, changing names and aliases, locations and personnel, and forming mergers, alliances, and "franchises." As a result, groups are a problematic unit of analysis that can lead to shortsighted inferences.

- Combining perpetrator organizations, groups, and individuals with shared goals into "movements" helps capture broader, long-term patterns of perpetrator activity. For example, GTD researchers organized the perpetrators associated with the Islamic State movement and al Qaida movement for the purpose of comparison.[17]

    - The graph below indicates the number of countries each year that experienced a terrorist attack carried out by a group or individual affiliated with the broader al Qaida movement (in gray) or Islamic State movement (in red), as well as the cumulative number of countries each movement has impacted. The fact that Islamic State evolved from al Qaida in Iraq partly explains their more rapid expansion, but we also note that the number of countries impacted by Islamic State-related terrorism continued to expand beyond the dissolution of the caliphate.

    - As violence perpetrated by Islamic State operatives decreased in Iraq, the broader movement continued to expand geographically. Attacks carried out by Islamic State predecessors, "core" operatives, affiliated organizations, or unaffiliated individuals who indicated allegiance to Islamic State took place in 34 countries in 2018, bringing the total number of countries that have ever experienced Islamic State-related terrorist attacks to 53. At least three additional countries—Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, and the Netherlands—experienced Islamic State-related attacks in 2019, bringing the total number of countries to 56.

GEOGRAPHIC REACH OF AL QAIDA- AND ISLAMIC STATE-RELATED TERRORISM, 1981 – 2019 (Q1)
(INCLUDES PREDECESSORS, "CORE," AFFILIATED GROUPS, AND INSPIRED INDIVIDUALS)
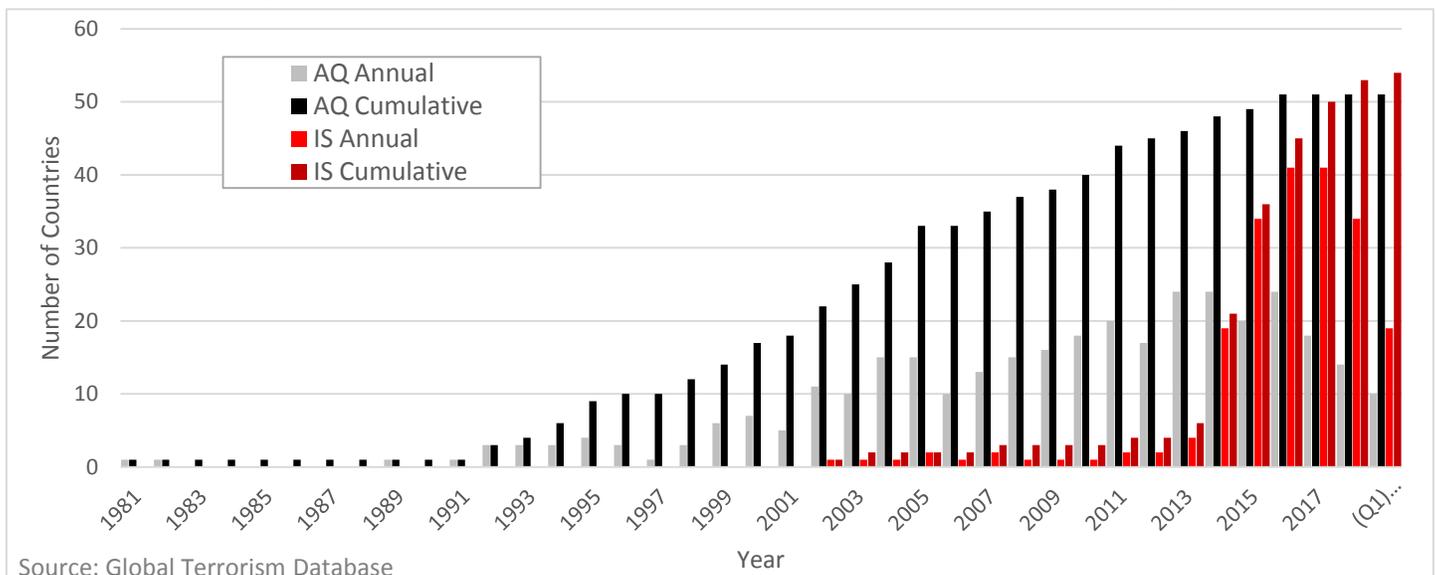
Source: Global Terrorism Database

ADDENDUM: STATISTICAL ANNEX DATA

Readers familiar with the U.S. State Department's *Country Reports on Terrorism* may recall that START provided the "Statistical Annex" for that report each year from 2012 through 2017. For consistency with the definition of terrorism established in the U.S. Code, we used a restricted application of the GTD's inclusion criteria for the analysis in the Statistical Annex.

Despite a productive partnership with our colleagues at the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism, in 2018 the State Department did not award START a contract to continue providing data and analysis for the Statistical Annex. Although the *Country Reports on Terrorism*, which is due to Congress each April, has not yet been published by the State Department for 2018, we recognize that any data analysis it may include would not be consistent or comparable with previous years' analysis produced by START. To support analytical continuity we have re-produced several key tables using the restricted Statistical Annex version of the GTD. The following tables exclude any attacks that do not meet all three GTD inclusion criteria, and any attacks that were classified as "doubt terrorism proper" by GTD analysts.

Table 1: Terrorist attacks and casualties worldwide by month, 2018

Month	Total Attacks*	Total Deaths*	Total Injured*	Kidnapped/ Hostages
January	689	1231	1563	445
February	576	859	986	405
March	586	1093	1036	198
April	666	1421	1399	233
May	772	2079	1922	318
June	614	1430	1389	251
July	711	1676	2085	335
August	602	1356	870	464
September	599	1337	1297	579
October	702	1313	1317	1222
November	533	1138	1072	561
December	514	1018	821	466
Total	**7564**	**15951**	**15757**	**5477**

*Includes perpetrators
Source: Global Terrorism Database (Statistical Annex Dataset)

Table 2: Ten countries with the most terrorist attacks, 2018

Country	Total Attacks		Total Deaths*		Deaths per Attack*		Total Injured*		Injured per Attack		Kidnapped/ Hostages	
	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017
Afghanistan	1443	1168	7379	4653	5.47	4.21	6514	5010	5.12	4.61	1362	835
Iraq	1130	1988	1054	4348	0.97	2.31	1723	4179	1.62	2.23	203	2005
India	750	867	350	384	0.48	0.45	541	602	0.75	0.72	247	223
Nigeria	562	411	2040	1532	3.98	4.04	772	852	2.03	2.64	445	245
Philippines	424	486	297	326	0.71	0.69	343	297	0.83	0.64	55	409
Pakistan	368	576	540	852	1.49	1.51	1018	1830	2.85	3.27	23	107
Somalia	286	372	646	1470	2.55	4.18	638	1100	2.63	3.25	238	286
Yemen	228	142	302	379	1.64	2.94	328	418	1.96	3.45	333	107
Cameroon	203	92	208	214	1.28	2.46	180	238	1.22	2.94	335	77
Colombia	166	102	96	59	0.60	0.58	129	95	0.82	0.94	60	79
Worldwide	**7564**	**8695**	**15951**	**18859**	**2.25**	**2.28**	**15757**	**19624**	**2.34**	**2.44**	**5477**	**9016**

*Includes perpetrators
Source: Global Terrorism Database (Statistical Annex Dataset)

Table 3: Five perpetrator groups with the most attacks worldwide, 2018

Perpetrator Group	Total Attacks 2018	2017	Total Deaths* 2018	2017	Total Injured* 2018	2017	Kidnapped/ Hostages 2018	2017
Taliban	987	710	6214	3669	4064	3218	1285	722
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)**	543	909	1358	4438	1302	3379	909	2225
Fulani extremists	297	76	1168	331	234	60	73	44
Al-Shabaab	260	355	637	1467	591	1066	235	316
Maoists/Communist Party of India - Maoist (CPI-Maoist)	248	295	175	205	154	213	135	124

* Includes perpetrators
** Excludes attacks attributed to branches of ISIS or ISIS-inspired individuals
Source: Global Terrorism Database (Statistical Annex Dataset)

Table 4: Targets of terrorist attacks worldwide, 2017-2018

Target Type	Number of Targets 2018	2017
Private Citizens & Property	3147	3552
Police	1623	1604
Government (General)	977	932
Business	604	803
Military	385	456
Religious Figures/Institutions	251	231
Educational Institution	185	171
Terrorists/Non-State Militia	153	161
Transportation	140	151
Utilities	140	159
Journalists & Media	105	131
Government (Diplomatic)	89	96
Violent Political Party	83	149
NGO	47	56
Telecommunication	40	33
Airports & Aircraft	21	12
Maritime	21	15
Food or Water Supply	14	11
Other	14	7
Tourists	13	18
Abortion Related	1	1
Total	8053	8749

Source: Global Terrorism Database (Statistical Annex Dataset)

The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the author and should not be interpreted as representing the official views or policies of the United States Government or any other funding agency.

Erin Miller is the primary author of this report. Please direct questions to eemiller@umd.edu.

The data presented here are drawn from START's Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and reports from news media. The GTD contains information on more than 190,000 terrorist attacks that occurred around the world since 1970. For more information about the GTD, visit www.start.umd.edu/gtd.