

Terrorism Monitor

In-depth analysis of the War on Terror

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Islamic State Claims First Operation in Uganda as Rwanda Upgrades its Counter-Terrorism Capacity

Jacob Zenn

On October 7, Uganda announced that its police force had killed a 25-year-old resident of Kampala, Hamid Nsubuga (alias Young Midu). The police had been following him for hours before killing him because intelligence had been obtained exposing Nsubuga's plan to assassinate a politician, whose name the police did not reveal. Nsubuga first came on the security forces' radar in August when he was suspected of participating in planting a bomb at the funeral service of Deputy Inspector General of Police, Lieutenant General Paul Lokech. A search of Nsubuga's house also revealed an arsenal of weapons and ammunition (monitor.co.ug, October 7).

Suspicions that Nsubuga was a member of the Allied Defense Forces (ADF), which has since merged into Islamic State in Central Africa Province (ISCAP),

conveyed that the other suspects in the funeral assassination plot may have been members of the group (monitor.co.ug, October 5). Such suspicions about Nsubuga were also confirmed when the Islamic State (IS) claimed that a "soldier of the Caliphate" conducted a bombing at a police station in Kampala on October 10 ([Twitter.com/@azelin](https://twitter.com/@azelin), October 10). The similarity between the IS claim and Uganda's report of Nsubuga's operation indicates Nsubuga, and thereby the ADF, are communicating with IS.

The operation was not only IS's first ever claim in Uganda, but also represented one of the few terrorist operations in the country. Al-Shabaab's bombings in Kampala during the World Cup in 2010, which killed more than 70 people, was otherwise the largest terrorist attack in the country's history (AlJazeera.com, July 13, 2010). In contrast, IS through ISCAP has claimed responsibility for numerous operations in Congo and Mozambique.

The regionalization of ISCAP, which is exemplified by Nsubuga's attempted operation in Uganda, will

validate Rwandan president Paul Kagame's assertions that ISCAP is a regional threat because it has members from all over East Africa, including Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, Somalia, and Mozambique, as well as some from the Middle East (theeastafrican.co.ke, September 25). Kagame has, in turn, taken the lead in regional counter-terrorism with Rwanda's deployment of 1,000 soldiers to Cabo Delgado province in Mozambique (in order to) dislodge ISCAP from its territorial holdings there. Further, there are reports of Rwanda seeking to obtain Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones, which would further strengthen Rwanda's counter-terrorism capabilities (africaintelligence.com, October 7).

Amid IS's own expansion in East Africa, Rwanda is emerging as its number one foe. The attempted attack by Nsubuga will further serve as vindication for Rwanda that heightened counter-terrorism measures are needed to preserve security in East Africa. The otherwise tiny nation of Rwanda has hit above its weight class when it comes to counter-terrorism.

Jacob Zenn is the Editor of Terrorism Monitor.

Islamic State in Khorasan Province's Anti-Taliban Insurgency Consolidates in Nangarhar

Jacob Zenn

Although the Islamic State in Khorasan Province's (ISKP) main enemy is now the Taliban, the group continues to settle scores against its old enemy: the former U.S.-backed government and its allies. For example, Abdul Rahman Mawin was a human rights activist from Laghman who had been working in Jalalabad city, Nangarhar Province until he was assassinated while driving his car on October 12 (aa.com.tr, October 12). ISKP soon afterward claimed the assassination, accusing Mawin of being loyal to the deposed Afghan government ([Twitter.com/@natsecjeff](https://twitter.com/@natsecjeff), October 13).

Killings in Nangarhar, like those of Mawin, have become commonplace as the province spirals into increasing violence. Just before his assassination, a woman was found shot to death and an ISKP judge was assassinated, with the former presumably by ISKP for violating its sharia codes and the latter presumably by the Taliban (pajhwok.com, October 11). The tit-for-tat violence between ISKP and the Taliban has been escalating in Nangarhar, including with an ISKP roadside bombing that killed Qari Fayaz, who was the Taliban's deputy district governor for Rodat District of Nangarhar ([Twitter.com/@AfghanAnalyst2](https://twitter.com/@AfghanAnalyst2), October 9). The following day Taliban social media accounts indicated that a 500-strong Taliban force would be deployed to Nangarhar to combat ISKP ([Twitter.com/@AfghanAnalyst2](https://twitter.com/@AfghanAnalyst2), October 10).

The escalating conflict in Nangarhar between ISKP and the Taliban comes amid the Taliban's announcement that it will not cooperate with the U.S. to counter ISKP (thehindu.com, October 9). Nevertheless, the Taliban is proving incapable of containing ISKP in Nangarhar. For example, from mid-September to mid-October, ISKP conducted nearly 30 attacks in the region, with virtually all directed against the Taliban, except for one directed against Mawin, representing an expansion to attacking civilians as well ([Twitter.com/@abdsayeddd](https://twitter.com/@abdsayeddd), October 13). In an ironic twist, the Taliban, which had once made U.S. soldiers fearful of venturing out in Afghanistan's rural towns, has now ordered its own fighters to not go out once it becomes dark in Nangarhar for fear of ISKP ambushes ([Twitter.com/@sahibzadaPTM](https://twitter.com/@sahibzadaPTM), October 11).

Beyond Nangarhar, ISKP is also challenging the Taliban more broadly with its narratives. ISKP, for example, claimed a suicide bombing at a mosque in Kunduz, northern Afghanistan on October 8, which killed more than 40 people (aljazeera.com, October 8). The attacker was an Uighur from China, and ISKP pointed out that the Taliban was now cooperating with China (opindia.com, October 9). Not only did this attack expose the Taliban's duplicity for allying with Uighur jihadists' enemy in the Chinese govern-

ment and demonstrate that ISKP could attack the Taliban from Nangarhar, to Kabul, to Kunduz, but it also undermined the Taliban's claims that it could protect Afghan minorities, such as Shias, who worshipped at that mosque in Kunduz. ISKP, moreover, followed with another Shia mosque attack in the Taliban's own heartland of Kandahar only weeks after the Kunduz attack, again killing more than 40 worshippers (aljazeera.com, October 17).

ISKP's attacks against the Taliban in Nangarhar and minorities and civilians elsewhere in Afghanistan are revealing that Taliban control over Kabul remains tenuous. The Taliban is likely to face a growing insurgency from ISKP while its diplomacy with countries like China and embracing 'infidel' Shia minorities as fellow Afghans is an ideological fodder for ISKP to accuse the Taliban itself of being an 'infidel' occupier, much like the U.S. had been. This may be enough for ISKP to recruit more extreme defectors from the Taliban and will embolden ISKP's anti-Taliban insurgency.

Jacob Zenn is the Editor of Terrorism Monitor.

Hijrah to Arakan? The Stunted Start of Rohingya Jihadism in Myanmar

Daniele Garofalo

The precarious and complex situation of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar is optimal for jihadist organizations to exploit for propaganda and to recruit disillusioned Rohingya, as well as to incite Muslims to fight in Myanmar and open a new jihadist front (Terrorism Monitor, November 10, 2017; EER, May 28). Before and after the emergence of a new pro-Islamic State (IS) jihadist group in the country in 2020, al-Qaeda, its affiliates and its allies often published statements or videos in reference to the Rohingya, such as those in 2017 by al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), al-Shabaab, and the Taliban (Terrorism Monitor, November 10, 2017; Al-Kataib, September 7, 2017; Al-Emarah, September 4, 2017).

More recently, in 2021, an al-Qaeda Central *As-Sahab* media agency video and AQIS magazines also referenced the Rohingya (As-Sahab, March 12; AQIS, October 2; AQIS, October 4). [1] [2] These videos, statements, and magazines have exploited the complex situation of Burmese Muslims for propaganda, but there have still not been any detected al-Qaeda or Islamic State (IS) operations conducted in the country in recent years.

The Emergence of Katibah al-Mahdi propaganda

In November 2020, a new jihadist group called *Katibah al-Mahdi fi Bilad al-Arakan* (Brigade of the Mahdi in the Land of Arakan, KMBA) emerged, which through its spokesman, Abu Lut al-Muhajir [3], swore allegiance to IS caliph, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi. The oath was published on the media channels of the new *Arrukn* Media Center and in the first issue of the group's new English-language magazine *Arkan*. [4] To date, the oath has not yet been accepted by IS (or at least no public communication has been officially released by the official IS media) and Rohingya areas have not been elevated to the status of an IS *wilayah* (province). KMBA's use of the term *Katibah* (military unit or brigade) suggests that its operations involved the use of violence and armed struggle, and its explicitly stated goal in its propaganda was to "unite Muslims under the *Wilayah of Arakan*" [5].

The first issue of KMBA's magazine, *Arkan*, in December 2020 was titled "A Call to Hijrah (MEMRI/JTTM, December 28, 2020)." In the magazine's 38 pages, the group promoted jihad and asked Muslims to make *hijrah* (migration) to Myanmar. The group argued that it is obligatory for Muslims to fight in the place where they reside or undertake *hijrah* to transform the "Land of Kufr" into "Dar al-Islam (Land of Islam)," including to Arakan [Rakhine] [6]. The leader and amir of KMBA, Abu Dawud al-Arkani, in a long message further called on all Muslims to migrate to Arakan.

The magazine also featured several short articles and editorials exclusively religious and ideological in nature, and editorials in which the group identified two enemies to be fought in Myanmar:

- Buddhists and Myanmar’s central government, who were accused of repressing and oppressing Muslims; and
- Islamist groups and organizations, who were accused of being oriented towards nationalism.

The second issue of *Arkan* magazine, entitled *Ahsan al-Qasas*, (“The best of Stories”) was published in May 2021 ([MEMRI/JTMM](#), November 5). At 61 pages, it was longer than the first issue and focused more on ideological and religious aspects, including a long editorial written for all those in prison. The editorial addressed issues of arrest, interrogation and torture, provided guidance, techniques, and tips for “winning against interrogation,” and offered advice on how to rejoin one’s “brothers” once released from prison. The group also again listed enemies to fight, but this time it did not refer locally, but rather showed images of the leaders of the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Finally, the group provided a Monero account with a QR code for cryptocurrency donations. All the links of different platforms to follow the *Arrukn* Media Center and announce other forthcoming releases were also provided. [5]

Forecasting Rohingya Militancy

Attempts to create a new war front in Myanmar by al-Qaeda, AQIS and IS have so far been unsuccessful. Even in the past, AQ and IS have failed to induce Rohingya Muslims to affiliate with jihadist networks and wage armed struggle. The recent precarious situation in Myanmar and the ongoing governmental and ethno-religious violence does, however, create conditions for more Rohingya to join KMBA. The group has not yet carried out any military operations or attacks and propaganda stopped in May 2021. The motivation might have been strategic. As stated by the KMBA leader and amir in the first issue of the magazine *Arkan*, the group is still “weak and incapable in many aspects.”

Furthermore, it was argued in both magazines that “jihad cannot be conducted without first building a strong foundation.” In the medium to longer term, KMBA could exploit the vulnerability of Arakan, accessible through Myanmar’s porous borders, as well as collaborate with jihadist groups in nearby parts of South or Southeast Asia. The potential outbreak of a jihadist insurgency in northern Arakan could also

lead to the development of a new and larger front following the experience of the 2017 occupation in Marawi, Philippines.

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Notes

[1] Titled “The Wound of the Rohingya is the Wound of the Islamic Nation” in which al-Qaeda threatens Myanmar and the “criminal Buddhist government”.

[2] AQIS addresses the issue of Myanmar and Rohingya in the May/July 2021 issue of *Nawai Ghazwat al-Hind* on pages 53 and 54 and in the August/September 2021 special issue of *Nawai Ghazwat al-Hind* on page 125.

[3] The message and name of KMBA spokesperson is given on page 25 of the first issue of the magazine *Arkan*.

[4] Media channels viewed by the author on the Telegram and TechHaven platforms (the latter on a website and the Rocket Chat platform).

[5] Arakan is the historical name of the northwestern region of Burma. In the 1990s, the military junta changed the name of Arakan province to Rakhine State (the name of the Rakhine community living in the area). The Rohingya Muslims, who live mainly in the northern part of northwestern Rakhine State, claim to be descended from ancestors who settled in pre-colonial and colonial Arakan.

Pakistan's Peace Talks with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan: Ten Times a Failure?

Abdul Basit

On October 1, in an interview with a Turkish news channel, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan disclosed that his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was in talks with some factions of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). [1] According to Khan, these talks were for the TTP's disarmament, reintegration and commitment to respect and live by Pakistani law (Geo Tv, October 1). He stated, "if successful [the talks] will lead to the government forgiving them and then they [will] become normal citizens." His statement was preceded by similar announcements from the Pakistani President Arif Alvi (Dawn, September 11) and the Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi (Dawn, September 15). The Pakistani government's effort to reach an agreement with TTP comes amid the Afghan Taliban's return to power in Kabul. Reportedly, the Afghan Taliban are mediating between TTP and the Pakistan government (Khama Press, October 2).

However, TTP has rejected the Pakistani government's amnesty offer and vowed to continue its violent struggle until it transforms Pakistan into a Taliban-inspired theocracy or an Islamic Emirate. TTP's spokesman, Muhammad Khurasani, maintained that "amnesty is generally offered to those who commit crimes, but we are quite proud of our [violent] struggle. [In fact], we can pardon the Pakistani government if it pledges to implement Sharia rule in the country (Umar Media, September 17)."

The Afghan Taliban Mediate Pakistan's Outreach to TTP

The Afghan Taliban's return to power and refusal to expel or take action against TTP have compelled the Pakistani government to explore the option of negotiations (Geo Tv, August 28). TTP's hard-hitting statement makes it evident that the Pakistani government is approaching these talks from a position of weakness. Although the purported peace talks seem unlikely to make headway, they would have far-reaching consequences on the hard-won national

consensus to fight extremism and terrorism in Pakistan (Express Tribune, December 16, 2014. [2])

However, this is not the first time Pakistan is trying to reach an agreement with the jihadist groups in the ex-FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) region, which is now merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Between 2004 and 2009, Pakistan entered into nine written and unwritten deals with different jihadist groups (See Table 1). [3] However, none of these nine agreements held or achieved their intended outcomes of peace. On the contrary, these agreements allowed the jihadist groups to buy time to expand their influence in the society and spread their ideological narratives. Furthermore, jihadist groups used these accords to gain political legitimacy and media publicity. The last such effort to reach a pact with TTP was in 2014 when the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz government approached the militant group to give "peace a chance (Dawn, January 29, 2014)." However, the talks collapsed after TTP attacked Karachi's Jinnah International Airport (Express Tribune, June 8, 2014), resulting in Operation Zarb-e-Azb in the North Waziristan tribal district (Dawn, June 15, 2014; Terrorism Monitor, July 14, 2015).

Table 1: Pakistan's Nine Failed Peace Agreements with Jihadist Groups (2004–2009)

No.	Date	Name	Area	Status
1	April 2004	Shakai Agreement	South Waziristan tribal district	Failed
2	February 2005	Sararogha Deal	South Waziristan tribal district	Failed
3	September 2006	Accord with Hafiz Gul's Bahadur Group	North Waziristan tribal district	Failed
4	March 2007	Agreement with Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM)'s Sufi Muhammad	Swat/Malakand Division	Failed
5	April 2007	Wana Peace Agreement with Mullah Nazir Group	South Waziristan tribal district	Failed
6	May 2008	Swat Peace Agreement with TTP's Mullah Fazlullah	Swat district	Failed
7	September 2008	Khyber Deal with Lashkar-e-Islam's Mangal Bagh	Khyber tribal district	Failed
8	2008	Bajaur Agreement with TTP's Maulvi Faqir Muhammad	Bajaur tribal district	Failed
9	2009	Nizam-e-Adal Regulation Act	Swat/Malakand Division	Failed

Why Would the Pakistan Government's Talks with TTP Fail?

Instead of outlining the context, rationale and objective of negotiating with TTP, which is responsible for killing over 80,000 Pakistanis (Express Tribune, March 29, 2015), in the parliament, the PTI government has approached this sensitive internal security issue unilaterally (Geo Tv, October 3). The PTI government is unpopular because of poor governance and mismanagement, resulting in high inflation, unemployment, and poverty. Against this backdrop, its

unilateral approach of talking to TTP has caused an intense backlash from the opposition parties, civil society, intelligentsia, and the mainstream media (Dawn, October 4). At the same time, the military leadership is not in agreement with the PTI government to talk to TTP. [4] Hence, these talks are unlikely to succeed, let alone result in peace.

Furthermore, from TTP's dismissive reaction to the PTI government's peace talks offer, it is evident that the former is approaching the purported negotiations from a position of strength. Even if the government aimed to persuade the more reconcilable groups to divide the TTP and then initiate a military crackdown against the hardline factions, it seems unlikely to succeed now (Dawn, October 1). Since August 2020, various splinter factions of TTP have rejoined the central group under Nur Wali Mehsud's leadership. Thus far, around ten factions have pledged allegiance to Mehsud (Terrorism Monitor, August 13). More recently, on October 6, the Shehryar Mehsud faction also gave its oath of fealty to Mehsud (Umar Media, October 6).

Finally, reintegrating jihadist groups like TTP is not a linear process of surrender with the commitment of renouncing violence, resulting in pardons and reintegration. Instead, it is a complex and lengthy process that requires an elaborate institutional infrastructure and expertise, including reintegration processes, psychological counseling, deradicalization, and a rehabilitation process involving vocational training, formal education, or imparting professional skills. In 2009, the Pakistan Army created three militant rehabilitation schools in Swat as a pilot project to expand them at the national level. [5] However, due to numerous reasons, such as the lack of funding and weak political will, they could not be expanded at the national level (Dawn, September 23, 2015). In the absence of the institutional infrastructure to deradicalize and rehabilitate TTP jihadists, the Pakistani prime minister's remarks of reintegrating militants after the pardon order appear to be quite naive. [6]

Talking with TTP Jihadists: A Hard Sell

Talking to jihadist groups is more complex than secular terrorists or ethnic insurgent groups, given the intangible nature of their demands.[7] Finding common ground between TTP-like jihadist revolutionaries and a status-quo-oriented state, such as Pakistan,

is a tall order. Rather than seeking reforms or changes, jihadist groups like TTP aim to topple the political orders, which they deem "un-Islamic" and "illegal (Pakistan Today, February 21, 2014)." Besides this, TTP, like other jihadist groups, considers its self-righteous worldview and ideological narratives as the "divine" and "absolute truth," rendering their demands rigid and irreconcilable. This leaves hardly any room for political compromises. [8] Hence, reaching common ground with jihadist groups is extremely difficult. The Afghan Taliban's negotiations with the U.S. in Qatar are a case in point because the former used these talks as an opportunity to seek political legitimacy, amplify diplomatic visibility, and gain concessions from the U.S. Likewise, if the Pakistani government's exploratory contacts through the Afghan Taliban result in direct negotiations, TTP would use the opportunity to undermine the Pakistani constitutional order and promote its extremist narrative to gain publicity.

Additionally, jihadist groups are incentive-driven, violent entrepreneurs whose militant activism is almost never abandoned. For instance, while rejecting the PTI government's peace talks offer, TTP maintained, "the condition of giving up the armed struggle is meaningless [for us] (Umar Media, September 17)." Hence, the Pakistani government would need to develop more holistic responses and a long-term institutional approach to overcome the jihadist challenge, particularly when TTP is emboldened after the Afghan Taliban's victory.

The analogy of the Pakistani government's conditional peace talks offer to TTP with the U.S.-Taliban negotiations is also a false parallel. First, the U.S. was an external interventionist power in Afghanistan that struggled to stabilize the country. On the contrary, the Pakistan Army has re-established its writ and control across Pakistan by eliminating "no-go areas," including dismantling the terrorist infrastructure and forcing TTP and its affiliated factions to escape to Afghanistan. In contrast, the U.S. and allied Afghan forces have long struggled to keep the Afghan Taliban's territorial and military gains in check. However, TTP does not have the wherewithal to challenge the Pakistani state's writ like the Afghan Taliban did of the U.S. and allied Afghan government. On the contrary, TTP has a limited footprint in the ex-FATA region and public opinion in Pakistan is hostile to its agenda and goals. Hence, drawing a

parallel of the PTI government's purported outreach to TTP with the US-Taliban talks in Qatar amounts to false equivalence.

Conclusion

The PTI government's imprudent approach to purported peace talks with TTP would likely do more harm than good. On the one hand, it would undermine the fragile but hard-won national consensus to fight the twin threats of extremism and terrorism. On the other hand, it would legitimize the TTP's extremist narrative and allow TTP to spread its influence and clout in Pakistani society. In the past, as many as nine agreements with the jihadist groups failed to achieve their intended goal of peace. The outcome of the PTI government's unilateral outreach to TTP now will not be any different.

Terrorism in Pakistan neither started with the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan nor ended with the U.S. withdrawal. To the contrary, the U.S.-led war on terror has deepened Pakistan's terrorist threat, which is more entrenched and pervasive in society than at any other time in its history. Following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pakistan must take a long view of terrorist and extremist threats to tackle them meaningfully. In the last twenty years, Pakistan's jihadist landscape has evolved significantly, become more complex, and requires equally nuanced and well-thought-out responses.

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Notes

[1] TTP is a conglomerate of more than ten anti-Pakistan militant factions founded in December 2007 in the ex-FATA region in reaction to the Pakistan Army's crackdown on Islamabad's Red Mosque to quash the anti-government uprising by the mosque's students and administration.

[2] The national consensus was forged in the aftermath of the Peshawar schoolchildren and staff mas-

sacre in 2014 by TTP to fight extremism and terrorism. It is enshrined in the National Action Plan, a 20-point counter-terrorism and extremism roadmap.

[3] Daud Khattak, "Reviewing Pakistan's Peace Deals with the Taliban," *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 5, Issue 5 (2012), pp. 11-13.

[4] Author's e-interview with a Pakistani security official, conducted on October 16, 2021.

[5] Abdul Basit, "Countering Violent Extremism: Evaluating Pakistan's Counter-Radicalization and De-radicalization Initiatives," *IPRI Journal*, XV, No. 2 (Summer 2015), pp. 44-68.

[6] Author's e-interview with a Pakistani security official.

[7] Mona Kanwal Sheikh, "What Do Islamists Bring to the Negotiation Table? Religion and the Case of the Pakistani Taliban," *International Negotiations*, Vol. 25 (2020), pp. 1-22.

[8] *Ibid.*

Norway and England Bow-and-Arrow and Political Assassination Attacks Reveal Lone Actor Jihadist Terrorism Trend in Europe

Herbert Maack

On October 13, a man shot eight people with a bow and arrow in Kongsberg, Norway, a town southwest of the capital city, Oslo. Five people were killed, and three others were injured. The suspect, identified as 37-year-old Espen Andersen Bråthen, a Danish citizen born in Norway, was subsequently arrested. Bråthen has claimed to be a convert to Islam, but according to Norway's Islamic community his conversion was based only on his announcement and was therefore not valid. According to press reports Bråthen's confusing behavior was widely known and he was suspected of suffering from mental illness. The Norwegian Police Security Service (PST) was

warned about Bråthen already in 2015. While Bråthen's motivation is under investigation, the crime is being investigated as a terrorism offence ([nrk.no](#), October 15; [Islamisk Råd Norge](#), October 17).

Two days after the October 15 Kongsberg attack, a British Conservative parliamentarian, Sir David Amess, was stabbed to death by a British man of Somali heritage at a constituency meeting in Leigh-on-Sea, England. The arrested perpetrator was later identified as the 25-year old, Ali Harbi Ali. Ali had been referred to the counter-terrorism Prevent scheme some years ago, but was never a formal subject of interest to MI5, the British Internal Security service. The attack is being investigated as a terrorism offense ([BBC](#), October 17).

Both attacks brought back memories of terrorist attacks that Norway and UK had suffered in their recent past. Norwegians were reminded of the 2011 Utøya terrorist attacks perpetrated by Anders Behring Breivik and Britons of the murder of Labor parliament member Jo Cox in 2016, who was stabbed and shot by Thomas Mair, as well as the 2010 stabbing of Labor parliament member, Stephen Timms, by Roshonara Choudhry. At the same time, the Kongsberg and Leigh-on-Sea attacks fit a broader and growing Europe-wide trend specifically in jihadist terrorism.

According to Europol's "EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2021," Europe experienced nearly 60 completed, failed, and foiled terrorist attacks in 2020, with 22 persons killed in terrorist attacks. Jihadist terrorism remained the greatest threat to the European Union, with the number of completed jihadist-motivated attacks increasing since 2019. ([EUROPOL](#), June 22). Lone actors were behind all of the completed attacks and primarily used simple "dual use" means of attack, such as stabbing and vehicle ramming. Some of the lone actors had displayed a combination of extreme ideologies and mental health issues, which were also at play in Kongsberg and Leigh-on-Sea attacks.

This article takes a closer look at the jihadist terrorist attacks in France, Austria, and Switzerland that preceded the latest attacks in Norway and England.

France

In Europe, France has been the hardest hit by jihadist-inspired terrorist attacks. In total, since 2014, terror attacks in France have killed 264 people and injured another 1,200 individuals. Over the past year or so, several jihadist attacks have taken place in France:

- On September 25, 2020, in Paris, Zaheer Hassan Mahmoud, a 25-year-old Pakistani immigrant, stabbed two people outside the former offices of the Charlie Hebdo satirical magazine. Mahmoud was allegedly radicalized by videos of radical preachers and anti-France demonstrations in Pakistan. The 26-year-old had spent the days leading up to his knife attack watching extremist preachers on YouTube and TikTok denouncing France and Charlie Hebdo ([The Straits Times](#), March 24).
- On October 16, 2020, in the Paris suburb of Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, a Russian refugee of Chechen origins, Abdoullakh Abouyevich Anzonov, beheaded Samuel Paty, a history teacher, as 'revenge' for Paty's showing cartoons of Islam's Prophet Mohammed to his students during lessons about freedom of expression. The attack led to widespread shock in France, as it was seen as targeting the country's core values ([SudOest](#), October 21, 2020).
- On October 29, 2020, Brahim Aouissaoui, a 21-year-old Tunisian citizen, killed three people, two women and a man, with a knife at the Notre-Dame Basilica in Nice. Aouissaoui had initially crossed into Italy by boat one month earlier, possibly with the assistance of smugglers ([France24](#), December 7, 2020).
- On April 23, 2021 Jamel Gorchane, a 36-year-old Tunisian citizen, stabbed to death Stephanie Monferme, a police administrative officer, at her police station in Rambouillet,

southwest of Paris. Gorchane had watched Islamic religious videos glorifying acts of jihad just before launching his attack ([LeParisien](#), April 24).

- On May 28, 2021, a radicalized French ex-prisoner, N'Diaga Dieye, who was on a watchlist of potential terrorist threats, stabbed a policewoman inside her station in Chapelle-sur-Erdre, near Nantes, western France, and died following a shoot-out with police. Dieye had been released from prison in March following an eight-year sentence for violent crime and was on a security services register for individuals who might pose a terrorism risk. In addition, Dieye had been diagnosed as severely schizophrenic and was under medical treatment following his release from prison ([LeParisien](#), June 11).

On its website, DGSI, the domestic security intelligence service of France, describes an “endogenous threat” from “individuals radicalized alone, notably on the Internet” and “with greater autonomy vis-à-vis terrorist organizations” ([DGSI](#), June 18). The attacks in France can be divided in three distinct categories: first, targets associated with alleged “insults to the Prophet,” as was most evident in the attacks in Paris in September and October 2020 and as has become a very particular theme for France; second, Christian churches and churchgoers; and, third, police officers.

Another noteworthy aspect has been the change in the profiles of the perpetrators. Several attacks have been conducted by individuals that arrived relatively recently in France. In contrast, in previous years most of the attacks in France were conducted by home-grown jihadists, including the massacres by Islamic State (IS) loyalists in Paris in 2015.

Austria

On November 2, 2020, a dual Austrian-North Macedonian national, 20-year-old Kujtim Fejzula, went on a shooting spree, killing four people at Schwedenplatz in the centre of Vienna and wounding more than

twenty others before Austrian police neutralized him. After the attack, arrests were made in Switzerland and Germany. In Switzerland two men, an 18-year-old and a 24-year-old, were detained because they had met Fejzula in Vienna.

In Germany, authorities continue to investigate two other friends of Fejzula, a 19-year-old and a 25-year-old living in Osnabrück and Kassel. Authorities suspect that both men were aware of the impending attack in Vienna and failed to report the attack. Indeed, both suspects had visited Fejzula in Vienna in July 2020, and had met with other extremists from Austria and Switzerland.

The 25-year-old man has been under investigation for possibly attempting to join IS in Syria. Both are suspected of belonging to a jihadist network called “Lions of the Balkans,” whose membership also include Fejzula. The network also reportedly consists of young men with family connections to the Balkans or the Caucasus, who missed the opportunity to travel and join IS in Syria, but identify with IS and have consumed its propaganda ([Tagesschau](#), November 11, 2020; [Tagesschau](#), July 7).

Switzerland

Switzerland had its first jihadist-inspired terrorist attack on the evening of September 12, 2020, when a Portuguese national was fatally stabbed in a kebab restaurant in Morges. The perpetrator, a Turkish-Swiss dual national only identified as “O.,” was known to the Swiss Federal Intelligence Service (Nachrichtendienst des Bundes, NDB) since 2017 “for the consumption and dissemination of jihadist propaganda” and was under surveillance for possible links to terrorism ([Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland](#), September 14, 2020).

“O.” was arrested in April 2019 and held in pre-trial detention following an arson attack on a petrol station. In the course of investigating the arson attack, the authorities came across “indications of a possible jihadist background” and widened the investigation to include terrorism offences. The perpetrator’s term

of detention lasted for a year and was extended several times, but in July 2020 the court released the suspect from detention. However, “O.” remained subject to various alternative control measures, including a dusk-to-dawn curfew, a requirement to regularly report to the authorities, and a ban on carrying any weapons. These measures did not prevent “O.” from launching the September 2020 attack. While in custody of the Swiss police, “O.” allegedly confessed to having acted “out of vengeance against the Swiss state” and a jihadist motive. (srf.ch, September 18, 2020). As with several other lone actor attacks in France, “O.” had a history of mental illnesses (nzz.ch, September 17, 2020).

On November 24, 2020 another jihadist attack occurred in the southern Swiss city of Lugano, when a 28-year-old woman stabbed and assaulted two other women in a department store. The suspect was known to federal police from an investigation into “jihadist terrorism” in 2017. The woman was stopped at the Turkish-Syrian border on suspicion that she intended to join IS. After her return to Switzerland, the woman had been placed in a psychiatric clinic before carrying out the attack in Lugano (Aargauer Zeitung, November 26, 2020).

Conclusion

Terrorist attacks in Europe are currently dominated by lone actor “low tech” attacks. While these attacks claim a relatively small number of victims, they contribute to a feeling of insecurity. France and to a slightly lesser extent England have both faced this situation already for some time, but Austria, Switzerland and Norway had largely been previously spared from jihadist attacks. Indeed, in France, Austria, and Switzerland the recent attacks have led to legislative motions to bolster counter-terrorism efforts. While hotly debated, these efforts are understandable, as the current lone actor jihadist perpetrators have become harder to trace, with profiles that are blurred between psychiatry, crime, and militancy, as well as inspiration by jihadist propaganda, but without concrete links to terrorist organizations.

In England, where terrorism legislation is already robust, the murder of Sir David Amess has put the spotlight on the security of politicians. It is an interesting question why jihadist terrorists (in contrast to far-right terrorists) acting alone have so seldom targeting politicians. After all, through targeting politicians the political motivation of an attack can be seen more evidently.

The November 2020 Vienna shooting stands out from the largely isolated, mentally ill, and low-tech single perpetrator trend in that it seems Fejzula belonged to a larger, cross-border network. This is a reminder that the threat and sophistication from jihadist terrorists should not be overlooked.

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