

COVID-19 and terrorism: Assessing the short and long-term impacts of terrorism

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A new report authored by Pool Re and Cranfield University's Andrew Silke, Professor of Terrorism, Risk and Resilience, reveals how the COVID-19 pandemic is already having a significant impact on terrorism around the world.

The report, 'COVID-19 and terrorism: assessing the short-and long-term impact' reveals:

- There is a mixed picture on the level of attacks in the short-term—lockdown measures will tend to inhibit attacks but terrorist propaganda calling for attacks (while authorities are distracted, etc.) will incite some incidents.
- Much propaganda—and particularly that connected to far-right extremism—is focusing on conspiracy theories connected to COVID-19 and this has already inspired plots and attacks.
- Islamist extremist propaganda is focusing more on the vulnerability of government opponents distracted by the pandemic and the opportunity this presents for attacks.
- There is a significant current increase in online extremist activity, raising the risk of increasing short-to-medium term radicalisation.
- There are strong long-term concerns that states weakened by the serious economic consequences of the pandemic will be more vulnerable to the emergence/resurgence of terrorist groups in many parts of the world.

Launching the report, Andrew Silke Pool Re and Cranfield University's Professor of Terrorism, Risk and Resilience, said: "The pandemic is likely to have a mixed impact on terrorism trends in the short term. While lockdown measures may represent obstacles to terrorists to carry out real-world attacks, many terrorist groups have also flagged that the pandemic has left government and security resources being severely stretched.

"As a result, the ability of government, intelligence and law enforcement agencies to focus on traditional priorities such as counterterrorism has been undermined."

Commenting on CBRN weapons, Professor Silke continues: "One genuine concern is that COVID-19 may lead to a resurgence in interest among terrorists for using chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons. Historically, a range of terrorist movements have been interested in bioterrorism though there have been very few successful attacks by terrorists using biological weapons. While serious obstacles certainly remain, the huge impact of COVID-19 may re-ignite some interest in biological weapons."

Pool Re's Chief Resilience Officer, Ed Butler said: "This report is very timely and worth digesting at a time when we are quite rightly focussed on the near-term issues and human and economic devastation being caused by this global [pandemic](#). However, Pool Re's core purpose remains the provision of [terrorism](#) reinsurance and we need to continue to understand the contemporary terrorist threats as well as horizon scan the future landscape. Pool Re's strategic relationship with Cranfield University underpins the importance we attach to collaborating with academia in understanding and mitigating against catastrophic perils."

More information: COVID–19 and terrorism: assessing the short-and long-term impacts: www.poolre.co.uk/solutions/ris ... nd-terrorism-

[report/](#)

Provided by Cranfield University

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