

ISIS Resurgence in the Era of COVID-19

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Abstract : One year after U.S.-led coalition operations liberated ISIS-held territories in Iraq and Syria and killed ISIS core leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS is resurging. Taking a page from its old playbook, the organization is capitalizing on social unrest and a rapidly deteriorating security environment—exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic—to reconstitute in permissive areas of Iraq and Syria. This Short examines ISIS’s pandemic-era ground and information operations through the lens of its state- and nation-making efforts to help analysts and decisionmakers better understand the imminence and scope of the threat. ISIS is rapidly overcoming U.S.-supported counterterrorism gains and, without direct pressure to reverse these advances, is poised for recovery.

Keywords : Terrorism, COVID-19, Islamic State, Instability, Iraq, Syria, Global, Resurgence

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