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Breaking the Glass Ceiling? Female Participation in Militant Organizations in Islamic State Affiliates in Southeast Asia

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ABSTRACT

Prior research on female participation in militant organizations explores organizational and individual factors that influence women's recruitment, and the roles women fulfill. However, most research focuses either on transnational organizations or local militant groups. Within this study, we explore how linkages with transnational groups shape female participation within their overseas affiliate organizations. We employ an original dataset of female militants arrested or killed between 2014 and 2019 in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia, accounting for organizational affiliation. Overall, we find that female participation in militant groups increased between 2015 and 2017, with most of the increase associated with the Islamic State. While most women with an Islamic State association assumed non-combat roles, more than a third assumed combatant roles, indicating the influence of country-level and regional dynamics. Based on our data, female combatants with an Islamic State association served exclusively as either suicide attackers or conducted bombings, diverging from the varied roles assumed by women combatants in other groups in the region. Overall, our findings highlight how the nature of transnational organizations can combine with the local dynamics of their affiliate groups to produce unique trends in the local female militant landscape.

KEYWORDS

Southeast Asia; Islamic state; female militancy; terrorism; insurgency

In December 2016, Indonesian elite law enforcement, Detachment 88, arrested twenty-seven-year-old Dian Yulia Novi in her home on suspicion of plotting a suicide attack during a changing of the guard ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Jakarta, Indonesia.[1] Novi was poised to become Indonesia's first female suicide bomber,[2] stating a desire to "carry out a martyrdom operation ever since she started learning about the Islamic State in 2015 through social media."[3] Recruited online, Novi had connections to several notable Indonesian Islamic State militants, including Bahrun Naim, who instructed her to launch the suicide attack, and Mohammad Nur Solihin, whom she met and married during the planning of the attack.[4]

Novi was raised in Badung, a populous municipality outside of Denpasar, a gateway to much of the tourism in Bali, in a conservative Muslim household. She held jobs as a migrant worker in Singapore and Taiwan, where her long hours left her with limited time to socialize.[5] Turning to social media for companionship,[6] Novi began to engage with participants in online forums by discussing jihad and martyrdom.[7] In the course of about a year, Novi went from curious observer to actively taking steps to become a suicide bomber, despite reservations about the religiosity of the tactic.[8] More specifically, the coordinator of the Presidential Palace attack, Bahrun Naim, "suggested using a female suicide bomber

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Supplemental data for this article can be accessed on the publisher's website.

instead [of a male one] to avoid detection."[9] Novi's case prompts several questions, but most importantly—was her case an isolated event or is it indicative of broader trends of female militancy in Southeast Asia and Islamic State's role within it?

The literature on female participation in terrorism is replete with examinations of the roles of women who participate in different capacities within terrorist organizations, ranging from fund raising and recruitment to conducting attacks. However, most of this research focuses on local—or parent—organizations. More specifically, while many studies explore the roles and motivations of women's participation in the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (IS-Central[10]) a systematic analysis of women's roles, both combatant and noncombatant, in affiliated terrorist groups operating in external countries (outside of Iraq and Syria) remains relatively unexplored.

As Novi's case demonstrates, this is a significant gap in knowledge, as an increasing number of women outside of Iraq and Syria operate in the name of Islamic State (IS). Although the existing literature on Islamic State's female members in Iraq and Syria provides useful insights, the extent to which these findings extend to women participants who join transnational jihadist groups in their home countries remains unknown. This article seeks to fill this gap in the literature by providing an exploratory analysis of female participation in militant groups in Southeast Asia, with or without affiliations with the Islamic State, which can be used for subsequent theory building on this topic. A key goal of this paper is to uncover important trends in the data on female militants with regard to women's participation in transnational violent organizations' overseas affiliates—a phenomenon which has thus far been understudied.

Focusing on women linked to militant organizations across three countries in Southeast Asia (Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia),[11] we explore the following overarching question: what has been the impact of the Islamic State on female participation in militant organizations in the region?In this study, "IS-Central" is used to refer to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The term "IS-linked" is used to identify individuals who were associated with the Islamic State in one of the following ways; (a) through a local Islamic State affiliate group in the Philippines, Indonesia, and/or Malaysia (i.e. groups that pledged allegiance to IS-Central and whose pledges were accepted by IS-Central, such as Jamaah Ansharut Daulah in Indonesia and factions of the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines),[12] *or* (b) individuals who were associated with the Islamic State but not necessarily through a local group. In contrast, we use "non-IS linked" to denote individuals who were reported to belong to a local group (in the Philippines, Indonesia, and/or Malaysia) that is not known to have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (for e.g. New People's Army in the Philippines).[13]

To answer the above question, we assess regional and country-level trends in female participation in militancy in Southeast Asia, accounting for their affiliation with the Islamic State, between 2014 and 2019 in terms of number of participants and the type of roles adopted. This approach provides three insights; (a) it highlights changes in trends in overall levels of women's participation in militancy in Southeast Asia including the proportion associated with Islamic State, (b) it allows a comparison of IS-linked women's roles in Southeast Asia to those generally observed in IS-Central, and finally (c) it provides insights into how IS-linked women's roles vary among the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. As we discuss in detail later, the role of female combatants in Southeast Asian Islamic State affiliates is distinct in that, while IS-Central has done little to encourage women adopting combat roles, there is a local history of women taking on such roles in some Southeast Asian countries.[14] Interestingly, this contrasts with other Islamic State affiliates, such as the Islamic State Khorasan in Afghanistan and Pakistan (ISK), which has seen few women in combatant roles. This suggests that while a parent group's ideology and practices (e.g. IS-Central) is likely to shape the structure and goals of its global affiliates, the local militant landscape plays an important role in the specific configuration of the affiliate's strategies and recruitment.

To explore the impact of the Islamic State on female participation in militant organizations in Southeast Asia, we compiled an original dataset of female militants in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia using open-source data to examine all cases of female militants arrested or killed with links to the Islamic State or its affiliates, as well as those linked to other local groups in this region who were arrested or killed between January 2014 and July 2019. By "female militants" we refer to all women who

are involved in any type of role within a militant organization, whether this is in a direct combat role or a support role such as assisting in recruitment or fundraising. Based on the general nature and magnitude of women's participation in Islamic State-Central, we test three hypotheses. First, we expect that IS-Central's targeted recruitment of women will result in an overall increase in IS-linked women in Southeast Asia with country-level variation. Second, given IS-Central's general tendency to recruit women in passive roles, we expect a larger proportion of IS-linked women in Southeast Asia to be involved in passive rather than active roles. Finally, based on IS-Central's general use of suicide attacks as a tactic and arguably the permissibility of women to serve as suicide attackers rather than fighters,[15] when necessary, we expect a larger proportion of IS-linked female combatants in Southeast Asia to be involved in suicide attacks than non-IS-linked women.

Overall, we find that that the number of women associated with militant groups who were arrested or killed in the three countries steadily increased between 2015 and 2017, amounting to a total of 115 women across the years (2015–2019): as expected, the majority of these (60–80 percent) consisted of IS-linked women. Regionally, IS-linked women assumed a narrower variety of roles compared to the non-IS linked female militants per our dataset. We also find that women's roles do not entirely conform to the roles assumed by IS-Central women, which have tended to be primarily noncombatant, as such finding mixed support for our second hypothesis. Across the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia, without accounting for group affiliation, most women indeed did participate in noncombatant roles; out of the eighty women whose roles were known, fifty-three were reported to be in noncombatant roles. For women specifically associated with the Islamic State, even though the majority of them assumed noncombatant roles, about 33 percent of them participated in combatant roles, which deviates considerably from the largely noncombatant roles adopted by women affiliated with IS-Central. Collectively, this suggests that in addition to transnational dynamics, local factors exert a notable influence on the specific role composition of women participants within Islamic State's global affiliates. When employing women as combatants, we find that IS-linked women are primarily used as suicide attackers whereas non-IS women are used as fighters, providing support for our third hypothesis (although this may vary for women not captured in our dataset, which consists of arrested or killed female participants). As such, while the roles of Southeast Asian women do not necessarily conform to how women have generally participated in IS-Central (i.e., Islamic State in Iraq and Syria), it appears that its tactical choices have influenced regional ones. Overall, our findings show that the arrival of the Islamic State in the region has played an important role in the rising number of women militants in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia, and shaping the specific tactics used by female combatants in the region. However, differences in the roles of IS-linked women across the region indicate that in addition to the influence of the IS-Central, country-level factors are also important in shaping female militancy across the Southeast Asian region. Our findings highlight the importance of examining female militancy in the context of preexisting local insurgent organizations. Doing so helps illuminate why female participants associated with the Islamic State may undertake distinct roles in different countries, and why these role patterns may differ from the ones of women in IS-Central.

What we know about female participation in militant organizations

Existing work on women in political violence and terrorism has focused on the individual (demographics, motivation, radicalization, recruitment) and organizational (ideology, size, age, roles) drivers shaping how, why and when women participate in militancy. We draw on this literature to outline the roles women have assumed in militant organizations, and their potential motivations to participate, especially in the context of the Islamic State.

Motivations and roles

Women who participate in terrorist and insurgent organizations assume a variety of roles as combatants and noncombatants. Women have joined local movements or traveled overseas to support

militant organizations globally, ranging from the Tamil Tigers, Al Qaeda, to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.[16] Many studies, such as those by Spencer, Patel and Von Knop, suggest that women are perceived to be most useful to terrorist groups' survival when operating as noncombatants in traditional roles that support male combatants.[17] In practice this means that women operate in the capacity of wife and mother to help raise the next generation of male combatants.[18] Increasingly, not only do women act as educators and supporters of men, they also contribute to the survival of militant organizations by facilitating propaganda, recruitment, logistics, and fundraising. Some argue that female noncombatants are widely used as recruiters both in propaganda videos and to shame men into fighting jihad.[19] Case studies by Bloom, Loken and Zelenz, and Jacques and Taylor point to an array of reasons that women join militant organizations, including personal grievances, religious or ideological motivations, and/or political reasons.[20] Often, these are difficult to generalize across cases, as they can be context dependent. The variety of motivations of women to participate in different militant movements suggests that structural settings matter: the environment and circumstances within which women exist are likely to shape their desire to join militancy. If society fails to offer women social justice or socioeconomic opportunities, they are likely to explore other avenues. Supporting this line of the argument, several studies, such as a recent work by Jahanbani and Willis, among others, have found that higher levels of women's social rights have a negative impact on female participation[21] whereas recent research by Asal and Jadoon finds that high unemployment levels within the female labor force can be conducive to the prevalence of female fighters.[22]

The literature on women's motivations for joining the Islamic State predominantly focuses on western European women traveling to Iraq and Syria. For example, Cook and Vale uncover a wide array of reasons for joining, ranging from personal grievances to being committed to the goal of creating a Caliphate to seeking adventure.[23] As such there is no single profile that fits a female Islamic State members: Patel's research included accounts of women joining for religious reasons or social justice, rationales that align with those of men.[24] Though specific motives differ between studies, each concludes that, unless forced to join (i.e. kidnapping, blackmail, etc.), women who join Islamic State and other groups do so out of their own volition.

Women's roles within the Islamic State have been fairly limited. At the beginning of 2015, the al-Khansaa Brigade, an all-female militia within IS-Central, published a manual that included guidelines for women's behavior, such as appropriate clothing and the specific circumstances when they can leave the house, as opposed to mobilizing the group's female constituents to wage active jihad.[25] As a part of the caliphate, the women of IS-Central assumed various professional roles in different branches, contributing to areas such as tax collection, intelligence, and policing.[26] Women associated with the Islamic State outside of Iraq and Syria have participated in activities such as fundraising and recruitment of other women. For example, the Islamic State "Bushra Network" was discovered in Lahore in December 2015, whereby Bushra Cheema was found to have relocated herself and twenty others to Syria.[27] One domain in which women associated with the Islamic State have been particularly active is in the dissemination of propaganda and recruitment. This is perhaps unsurprising given studies like Manrique et al.'s which find that women tend to have greater network connectivity than their male counterparts.[28] This is evident in both print and online media. Printed publications are not only at times disseminated by women, such as the aforementioned manifesto from the Al-Khansa Brigade, but also feature stories about women's issues in publications such as the English-language *Dabiq* and French-language *Dar al-Islam* magazines.[29] Women have also served as disseminators of information and recruiters through several online venues, including online classes,[30] online campaigns,[31] and social media.[32] Stories about women associated with the Islamic State, written allegedly by women, in either print or online media, can serve as recruiting tools as other women "may feel a kinship and camaraderie" with them.[33]

Beyond Iraq and Syria though, women associated with Islamic State affiliates have been reported to be involved in suicide attacks. For example, the first female suicide bomber in Bangladesh emerged in December 2016 and was associated with a group with Islamic State links.[34] Additionally, Islamic State's West African affiliate, Boko Haram, stands out as a prominent organization that has employed

women extensively to conduct attacks. A recent study by Warner and Matfess finds that between 2011 and 2017, over half of the group's bombers were women; arguably the group recognized the effectiveness of using new actors (i.e. women and children as bombers) in amplifying the group's lethality.[35] In sharp contrast though, other Islamic State affiliates, such ISK in Afghanistan and Pakistan, have seen minimal participation by women in combat roles.

Additionally, there were several reports of IS-linked women across Southeast Asia who participated in both passive and active roles. These have ranged from facilitators to attackers and recruiters, among other roles. In Indonesia, suicide attacks perpetrated by entire families, including women and children, "have been explained by the family wanting to go to paradise together."[36] In the Philippines, Karen Aizha Hamidon crafted an online persona that recruited members and facilitated virtual militant networks. Through her activities, she rallied militants in several countries across Southeast and South Asia and across the globe to the United States.[37]

There clearly exists an organizational barrier to female agency once individuals join a terrorist group, as women typically have little choice in their organizational roles. The question of agency is relevant when considering the pathways through which women are initially recruited into militant organizations, such as whether they joined willingly or were coerced. The roles women ultimately have within an organization, once recruited, are likely to be determined by the organizational leaders who determine how best to use their skill set, and whether to assign female recruits combatant or noncombatant roles.

Organizational factors

The strategic and tactical benefits for militant organizations help us understand why organizations may seek out women in various roles, ranging from combat to fundraising and recruitment. Indeed, employing women in active or passive roles can improve groups' operational efficiency by expanding their human capital and increasing the range of targets as well as perpetrators. Increasingly, some violent organizations have drawn attention to what is conventionally seen as a rare phenomenon—women as combatants. Among others, the Black Tigers of the Tamil Tigers, Chechen Black Widows, Boko Haram, Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Al-Aqsa Martyrs, Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), and Al Qaeda (post-2005) have deployed female suicide attackers. Generally, using women in roles such as suicide attackers provide significant operational benefits, such as increased lethality,[38] easier access to targets,[39] and increased media attention.[40] These perceived benefits are predicated on groups' assumptions that most people view suicide attackers or terrorists through a gendered lens: they assume suicide attackers or terrorists are generally men.[41]

Various attributes of violent organizations, such as ideology, size, and structure shape militant organizations' demand for female recruits. More specifically, larger and older groups can increase female participation, as can espousing a gender-inclusive ideology.[42] Numerous studies, such as Thomas and Bond's, indicate that a group's ideology plays an important role in attracting female recruits; for example the Marxist ideologies of Central American groups such as Sandinista and Zapatista tend to attract women members."[43]

Due to the potential operational advantages tied to the use of female operatives, some jihadist organizations, initially viewed as reluctant to engage women in combat roles, began to shift their practices. For example, Van Knopargued that women in Al Qaeda adhered to a gender-specific interpretation of "female jihad" comprised of supporting males, teaching children, and facilitating operations for maintaining the survival of terrorist organizations.[44] Yet, post 2005, Al Qaeda in Iraq claimed several suicide attacks conducted by women and also began to actively recruit female suicide attacks.[45] Other scholars like Patel and Lahoud have argued that the Islamic State defines a woman's jihad as being in the home: women can only be combatants under specific circumstances and if authorized by the organization.[46] However, it may be more ideologically permissible for women to become suicide bombers than combatants because they will not be fighting alongside men.[47] Overall, while most of the above mentioned scholars acknowledge the operational benefits attained from

female suicide attackers, they simultaneously note that organizational restrictions limit the number of female combatants that are actually deployed.

Why has the ideology of Islamic State appealed to women all around the world if it sees their role primarily as domestic? Biswas and Deylami argue that rather than viewing Islamic State women recruits as victims vulnerable to extremist pulls, the Islamic State has used its ideology to attract women to join its ranks.[48] Through its propaganda materials, the Islamic State has appealed to women using concepts of empowerment, and as key players in shaping the global caliphate. Push factors include the perception of the ummah under attack, the desire to support a bigger cause, and alienation in the West. Thus, the Islamic State's narrative, which conceptualized the ideal role for women in traditional terminology, has sought to appeal to them by emphasizing their role in creating the global caliphate. It is possible though that some women joined the Islamic State with the hope or intention of fulfilling more militant roles. For example, Peresin and Cervone as well as Hoyle et. al. argue that some of the expectations of Western women who joined Islamic State seemed to diverge from the roles Islamic State's leadership assigned them, as reflected in their social media accounts.[49] Similarly, Saltman and Smith argue that women's training in the use of arms or carrying weapons for self-protection indicated their interest in combat activities.[50] Overall, this opens up the possibility that perhaps women joined Islamic State hoping for opportunities to engage in combat activities in addition to support roles.

It is important to briefly highlight the debate in the literature regarding the roles of women in the Islamic State. In their respective works, Winter and Margolin and Gan et al. argue that female roles may be changing in IS-Central following a significant loss of territory that has necessitated the mobilization of any and all able-bodied Muslims to maintain the survival of the organization.[51] The argument is predicated on a shift in rhetoric from IS-Central in 2016–2017. While previous articulations forbade women from actively participating as combatants, an editorial in the December 2016 issue of IS-Central's al-Naba called for women to act as conventional combatants if defensive circumstances demanded it.[52] (al-Naba is Islamic State's weekly Arabic language newsletter, distributed through Telegram and other social media sites, which it uses to claim attacks or make general announcements regarding battles or to issue ideological guidance.) In the next year, the same newsletter published an article titled "The Obligation on Women to Engage the Enemy in Jihad" in October 2017.[53] It stipulated that women should "engage in jihad on behalf of the caliphate," a norm that was reiterated several times in subsequent issues.[54] In early 2018, a video was released by the group that for the first time depicted a woman in combat along with men.[55] Observers like Winter contend this changing rhetoric is partially responsible for the 2018 Surabaya attack and has set the foundation for increased female combatants in the future.[56] Moreover, Winter also points to Abdullah Azzam's views on the matter; Azzam—a founding member of Al Qaeda and a Palestinian Islamic scholar—expressed that it was permissible for female Muslims to engage in combat when it was a *defensive* jihad.[57]

Overall though, despite limited rhetorical shift that appears to sanction women's participation in combat roles, the lack of evidence of women combatants in Iraq and Syria suggests that in actuality, women associated with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria have assumed support rather than combat roles. Scholars such as Nelly Lahoud have questioned the veracity of the video mentioned above, given the subjugated depictions of women in Islamic State publications and Islamic State's general prohibition of women from active combat roles. Rather, it is a call "for all Muslims to translate their religious commitment into tangible sacrifice, and martyrdom operations would be the most desirable."[58] This has led to an overall consensus in the literature that the rhetoric did not carry any weight or have any implications on the ground. However, at the very least, the rhetoric does indicate the possibility that IS-Central did not view women's participation in active roles as "forbidden" per se even if it was not actively pursued.

Against the backdrop of the lack of Islamic State-affiliated women in combat roles in Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, it may be surprising that some studies of the Islamic State in Southeast Asia (for e.g. see Zakuan and Schulze) indicate that female IS militants have fulfilled a variety of roles, including those of suicide attackers and fighters, as well as recruiters, and facilitators.[59] Interestingly though, other affiliates of Islamic State, such as one of its most dangerous affiliates—ISK in Afghanistan and Pakistan—have yet to see women in active roles. Taken together, the variation in women's involvement in active roles in

different Islamic State affiliates suggests that IS-Central's overall stance or lack of use of female combatants does not completely explain whether women become active combatants or suicide attackers in its affiliates. In other words, women's specific roles in Islamic State affiliates may not be rooted in top-down explanations, but rather be influenced by local regional dynamics. In countries where Islamist jihad has been a male-dominated phenomenon for decades, the shift toward women picking up arms and participating in active jihad is likely to be a slow development.

What do the above insights imply for the case of Islamic State-affiliated women in Southeast Asia? On one hand, given that there were no observed trends of women in active roles in Iraq and Syria, we could expect a similar trend in Southeast Asia. On the other hand, there is a possibility that outside of Iraq and Syria, country-level dynamics and local sociopolitical dimensions are the more dominant influences on trends in female militancy within Islamic State's affiliates. Islamic State affiliates often rely on the preexisting militant infrastructure in a local environment, such as alliances with local groups, to set up shop.[60] As such, due to the reliance on local resources, we could expect Islamic State to adopt some of the local "flavor," rather than replicate its activities from Iraq and Syria. Some countries in Southeast Asia in particular have a history of female participation in militancy as both fighters and recruiters. For example, in the siege of Zamboanga in the Philippines in 2013, there were accounts of Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) female snipers.[61] In Indonesia, wives of senior leaders in Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT) assumed combatant roles and participated in shooting andhandling explosives.[62] At the same time, women have also worked as recruiters and fundraisers for militant organizations in Southeast Asia. For example, while Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) did not permit women to fill combat roles, they were active in recruitment, fundraising, and networks and producing propaganda.[63]

Overall, these specific examples indicate precedence for active female participation in the Southeast Asian militant landscape. In theory, the influence exerted by the sociocultural militant context of an Islamic State affiliate could potentially influence the permissibility of Islamic State female fighters outside of Iraq and Syria and explain divergences from women's roles in Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Overall, we expect that both factors may combine to influence the employment of female combatants within IS affiliates in Southeast Asia. On one hand, the reluctance of IS-Central to use women in combatant roles in Iraq and Syria is likely to influence the overall composition of women participation in their global affiliates. On the other hand, because Islamic State affiliates draw on local resources and recruits, and because IS-Central does not specifically forbid female combatants, the roles women adopt in IS-affiliates are likely to be shaped by the local militant landscape, leading to at least some level of divergence.

Overall, most of the literature on women in terrorism and militancy focuses on the roles that females fulfill within a central, or parent, terrorist organization—especially with regard to groups like the Islamic State and Al Qaeda. However, the increase of external groups affiliated with terrorist organizations requires a different perspective to understand the roles that women fill within these groups. Affiliated groups, whether they are preexisting insurgent factions that have pledged allegiance to the IS-Central (e.g. Tehrik-e-Taliban breakaway factions to the Islamic State in 2014) or a new cell set up by IS-Central (e.g. small IS cells in Indonesia), have different structural and organizational constraints, which means they may align with their parent group in some ways while deviating in other ways. By examining the magnitude and nature of female participation in three countries in Southeast Asia (Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia), this study sheds light on how the arrival of Islamic State in the region generally affected female militancy across the three countries and the degree to which the general contours of women's roles and tactics conform or deviate from those found in IS-Central.

The case of Islamic State in Southeast Asia

Recent studies and media reports have consistently noted the growing concern over the rise of women's participation in regional jihad in Southeast Asia, and the links with Islamic State. In their study of the demographic characteristics of Southeast Asian militants, Gartenstein-Ross et al. note increasing levels of participation of women in jihadist roles.[64] Their data reflects variation in the type

of roles assumed by Southeast Asian women: Indonesian women have generally tended to assume more active roles, whereas Filipino and Malaysian women have assumed more passive ones.[65] Further, Zakuan and Nahdohdin et al. observe differences in attack and arrest trends in different Southeast Asian countries.[66] The questions that emerge from the aforementioned studies are the following: what are the trends in female participation in IS-linked and non-IS linked militancy within the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia, and how have the structural environments within each society shaped their numbers, roles, and tactics? Additionally, to what extent do IS-linked women's roles and tactics in Southeast Asia conform to those observed in IS-Central?

Although our study generally presents a first-cut exploratory analysis of the data, relying on descriptive analysisto identify high-level trends, we develop three broad hypotheses to test based on past scholarly insights and IS-Central's efforts to recruit women. In general, we expect that the arrival of Islamic State in Southeast Asia and the organization's call to Muslim women to support the Caliphate and fulfill their duty of jihad provided women with the motivation to support the movement of the Caliphate—similar to how it did for women who migrated to Iraq and Syria to support the cause. However, we do not expect the increase to be uniform across all three countries but to be shaped by domestic structural constraints and opportunities. As such, we expect to find unequal levels of increases in IS-linked female participation in militant organizations across the three countries. This leads us to our first hypothesis:

H1: Given IS-Central's targeted recruitment of women, we expect that Islamic State' influence will result in an overall increase in female participation in militant organizations across the region with country-level variation.

In terms of roles assumed by women, we expect that generally, women affiliated with Islamic State in Southeast Asia will predominantly assume passive roles, in line with IS-Central's view on the permissibility of female combatants during defensive jihad (as discussed in the previous sections). Per this view, even though females have been encouraged to engage in combat during specific circumstances, generally they are called upon to act as the supporters and facilitators of jihad rather than serve on the frontline. As such, we test the following hypothesis:

H2: Given IS-Central's general tendency to recruit women in passive roles, we expect a larger proportion of IS-linked women in Southeast Asia to be involved in passive rather than active roles.

While IS-affiliated women are largely expected to conform to passive roles, we do expect to find some deviation from the traditional roles assumed by IS-Central women. This may bedue to the difference in the organizational structure of IS-Central versus its affiliates in Southeast Asia: while IS-Central was structured as a bureaucratic entity with territory, its affiliates have generally been deeply shaped by the characteristics of local conflicts, culture, and political environment. The influence of local dynamics means that IS-linked Southeast Asian women may have more leeway to assume combatant roles, compared to their IS-Central counterparts. However, despite some degree of deviation (i.e. where IS-linked women in Southeast Asia opt to assume combat roles), we expect the tactics employed by these women will be influenced by IS-Central's choice of tactics, such as the use of suicide attacks. In particular, we expect suicide attacks to be a pervasive tactic in the context of IS-linked female combatants in Southeast Asia specifically because, as outlined by Nelly Lahoud, jihadist ideologues do not necessarily object to the use of women as suicide bombers since women can carry out these missions independently without mixing with men on the battlefield.[67] As such, we expect that compared to women combatants belonging to other non-IS Southeast Asian groups, women in IS-linked groups in combat roles will engage in suicide attacks more frequently. Based on this, we test the following hypothesis:

H3: For women involved in combat roles, a larger proportion of IS-linked female combatants will be in involved in suicide attacks than non-IS-linked women in Southeast Asia.

Data and coding

To test these hypotheses, we conduct a quantitative analysis of the roles of female militants arrested in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia.[68] In addition to exploring regional- and country-level trends, we also compare the characteristics of IS-linked female militants with those of non-IS linked female militants. Doing so not only provides us with an overview of female participation in militant organizations across the region, but also how the Islamic State has shaped female participation both across the region and within countries. We constructed an original events dataset by coding open-source information on women either captured or killed in the three Southeast Asian countries between January 2014 and July 2019.[69] We relied primarily on NexisUni searches to collect media reports on such arrests and deaths, supplemented by Google searches and academic sources to fill in missing demographic data.[70] Once we collected raw event data for the time period between January 2014 and July 2019 using NexisUni and other open-source materials, we created individual-level entries in our dataset, where we coded multiple variables in relation to each arrest or death of a female militant in the three countries. These variables included characteristics such as group affiliation, age, nationality, education, and role type (e.g., whether the individual was involved in an attempted or successful attack; or was arrested for recruitment or dissemination of propaganda). We provide details on these variables and our coding approach in Appendix E. Once we completed the data collection and coding process, we analyzed the data across the universe of cases and tested our hypotheses using descriptive statistics.

Overall, our dataset consists of 115 observations of IS-linked and non-IS-linked female militants from the Philippines (59), Indonesia (28), and Malaysia (28). As mentioned above, the term "IS-linked" is used to identify individuals who were associated with the Islamic State through a local Islamic State affiliate group *or* individuals who were associated with the Islamic State but not necessarily through a local group. In contrast, we use "non-IS linked" to denote individuals who were reported to belong to a local group (in the Philippines, Indonesia, and/or Malaysia) that is not known to have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (e.g., New People's Army in the Philippines).[71]

We coded two categories of variables: personal demographic information and militant group-level information (see Appendix E (a) for more details on our coding approach). Table 2 shows a breakdown of the three categories and includes names of both IS-linked and non-IS-linked groups, in addition to a count of individual militants per category. We also noted individuals' role (combatant versus noncombatant) and role type (leader, propaganda, financier, spokesperson, political instructor, facilitator, recruiter).[72] Given the prominence of family-led attacks in the region, we also included a variable to determine whether individuals who conducted attacks did so individually or with one or more family members.[73]

Key findings

In the following sections we present our key findings of the overarching trends of female participation in militant organizations across the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia between January 2014 and July 2019. In doing so, we highlight differences between IS and non-IS linked women across the region as a whole, and also highlight key similarities and differences among the three countries. We discuss our findings in the context of each country's domestic sociopolitical characteristics as well as the broader environment across the region.

Table 1[74] shows that the total number of females either arrested or killed across the three countries between 2014 and 2019 amounted to a total of 115 women. The numbers presented in the table include all female militants regardless of their specific affiliation. As the table shows, the total number of female militants rose consistently between 2015 and 2017, peaking in the year 2017. Interestingly, the number of female militants in Indonesia and Malaysia fell in 2017 as they increased in the Philippines. In general, the number of female militants is almost double the magnitude in the Philippines compared to Indonesia and Malaysia.

Table 1. Total women in militant organizations by country by year.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Indonesia	3	3	6	3	9	4	28
Malaysia	8	3	7	3	6	1	28
Philippines	10	3	4	26	12	4	59
Total	**21**	**9**	**17**	**34**	**27**	**9**	**115**

Table 2. Other affiliations.

Link to Islamic State (IS)	Other Group Affiliation	Number of Female Participants
Exclusively IS	(Not applicable)	37
IS Affiliate	Abu Sayyaf Group (Philippines)[a]	9
IS Affiliate	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (Philippines)[b]	1
IS Affiliate	Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (Indonesia)	15
IS Affiliate	Maute Group (Philippines)	17
IS Affiliate	Mujahidin Indonesian Timur (Indonesia)	5
IS Affiliate	Jemmah Islamiyah (Indonesia)	7
Non-IS Affiliate	CPP-NPA Communist Party of the Philippines–New People's Army (Philippines)	22
Non-IS Affiliate	National Democratic Front of the Philippines (Philippines)	1
Unknown		1
Total		**115**

[a]Only Isnilon Hapilon's and Hatib Hakan Sawadjaan's factions of Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) are IS-linked. In three cases, there was insufficient information to make the determination which faction of ASG the women belonged to. Based on the location of these arrests, the authors made the decision to count these three cases as linked to an IS-affiliated ASG faction. However, in the event that this is not the case, the overall findings of the paper remain unaffected.
[b]Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters {BIFF} here refers specifically to Abu Torayfe's IS-linked faction.

Overall trends

In the following section, we review regional[75] and country-level trends for the female militants in the dataset. Our discussion starts broadly, looking at female militants by country and year (Table 1),[76] combat categories over time (Figure 1), affiliations with other groups (Table 2) and over time (Figure 2). We review militants' combat categories and affiliation over time (Figure 3), and their organizational role regionally (Figure 4). Finally, we consider their attack tactics by region and country (Figure 5a and 5b).

The inflated number of female militants arrested in the Philippines in 2017 is likely attributable to the Battle of Marawi. An operation by the Philippine government to capture Isnilon Hapilon, the then-leader of the IS-affiliated Abu Sayyaf Group's (ASG) Basilan faction, culminated in a battle between IS-affiliated groups and Philippine government forces in Marawi City, which lasted from May to October 2017.[77] Per our dataset, nineteen of twenty-six female militants arrested in the Philippines were linked to Islamic State, and twelve were arrested within the timeframe of the Battle of Marawi. Given these data, it appears plausible that the increase of female combatants identified was a result of this battle, many of them likely from IS-Central or elsewhere in the region. Most notably, Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), the most prominent IS affiliate in neighboring Indonesia, sent fighters to support IS-affiliated Philippine groups during the battle, indicating some form of inter-state networks between IS affiliates in Southeast Asia.[78] Not only were female combatants in the siege, but they also served traditional noncombatant roles such as providing food and medicine to participating militants.

Figure 1 provides a regional view of the breakdown of female militants by their role; more specifically whether they were reported to be in an active role (as a combatant or attacker) or a passive role (noncombatant). As we see in Figure 1, across the region, most women participated in noncombatant roles: out of the eighty women whose roles were known, fifty-three were reported to be in noncombatant roles, while the remainder were in combatant roles (about 34 percent). Notably, there appears to be a considerable increase in the percentage of females in combatant roles in 2018, when they made up about 66 percent of all women captured and arrested in that year (18 out of 27).

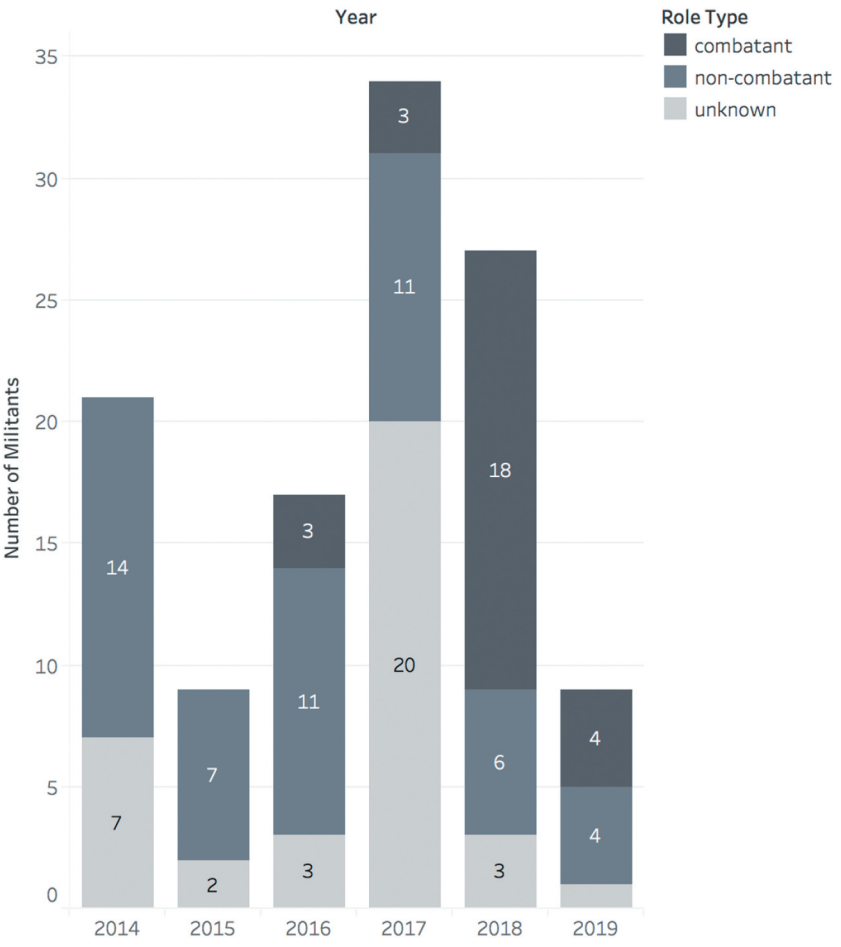


Figure 1. Regional—categories of women's roles in militant groups over time.

This is in striking contrast with 2014 and 2015, when no females arrested or killed were reported to be in combatant roles. When we take all years into account, we observe a general trend where female participation in militant organizations is shifting toward more combatant than noncombatant roles.

The general shift toward combatant roles appears to be largely driven by IS-linked women (see Figure 4 discussed further below). There are several regional and overall trends that help explain the increase of women combatant roles in Islamic State's Southeast Asian affiliates. Firstly, IS-Central suffered several territorial losses in Iraq and Syria from the end of 2017 into 2018: it retained only five percent of its territory as of December 2017.[79] Therefore, IS-Central may have generally directed more fighters to its global affiliates, including those in Southeast Asia, than in the past. Relatedly, it was around late 2016 and 2017 that Islamic State leadership began to shift its position on appropriate roles for females, permitting more women to become combatants.[80] While this shift certainly did not appear to change the role of Islamic State-affiliated women in Iraq and Syria, it is difficult to rule out entirely that this may have impacted women's participation in Islamic State's affiliates that may have perceived it as a sanctioning of women's active participation.[81] In the Philippines, the Battle of Marawi ended in October 2017, resulting in the deaths of as many as 1,000 people, most of them militants.[82] In the aftermath of the siege, many IS affiliates entered a rebuilding period due to the demise of many of their members and some key leaders such as Hapilon of ASG and Abdullah and Omar Maute of the Maute

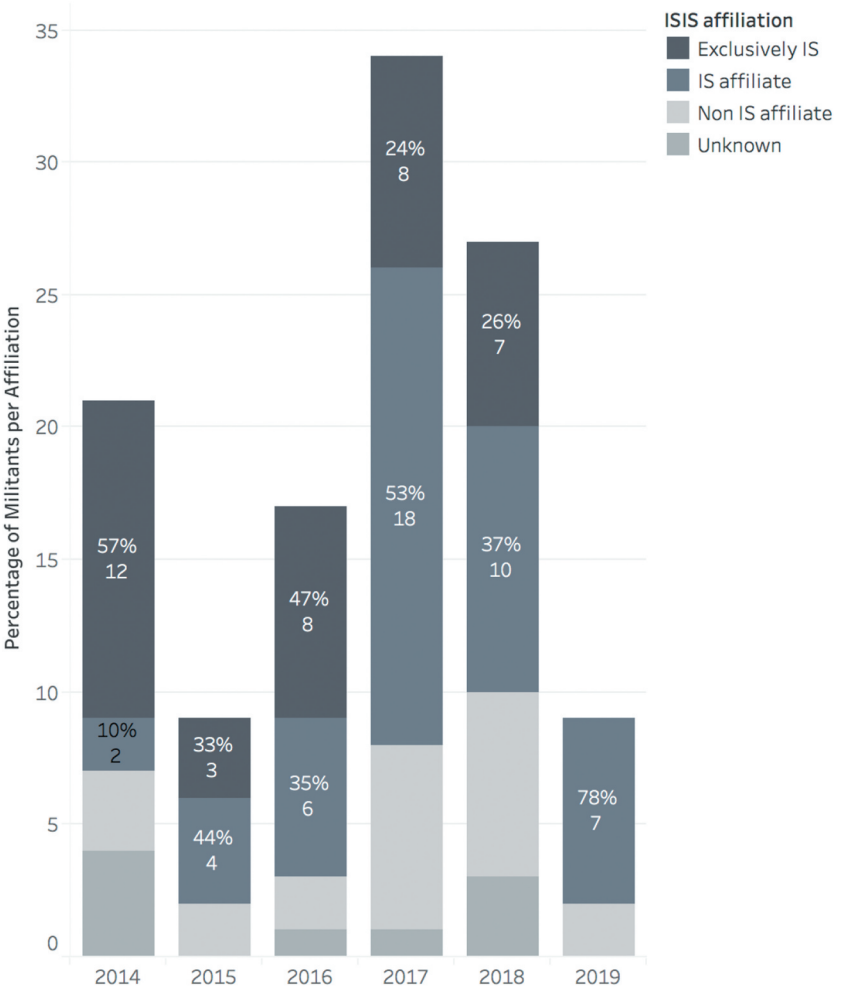


Figure 2. Regional—female militants by affiliation over time.

Group.[83] It is possible that local IS affiliates may have recruited more female combatants out of necessity; many militant groups turn to female recruits when their numbers are depleted.[84]

Our dataset shows that the highest number of female participation in militant groups in Indonesia was in the year 2018; out of a total of twenty-eight female participants across all years, nine of these were recorded in 2018 (about 32 percent). The May Surabaya bombings of that year were a critical development in the country's jihadist tradition, as it was the first attack which involved women and children.[85] It may be that this was the culmination of increased female militant activity since the Islamic State's thawing toward women fighters. Alternatively, it could be that the attacks motivated female militants to take up arms.

Finally, in Malaysia, the number of female militants peaked at the onset of our data—2014—at about eight out of a total of twenty-eight and rose again in 2016 to seven. More broadly speaking, recruitment moved into the virtual realm at least in part due to Malaysia's restrictions on public gatherings.[86] In addition, Malaysia, like Indonesia, benefitted from the actions of several key individuals, including Muhammad Wanndy Muhammad Jedi.[87] Moreover, 2014 marked the initial push for Malaysians to join Katibah Nusantara, an Indonesian-Malaysian contingent of Islamic State in Syria. The group "presented the opportunity to join other Malay speakers in pursuit of jihad in a foreign land," although reportedly Malaysian militants were initially hesitant of fighting under Indonesian

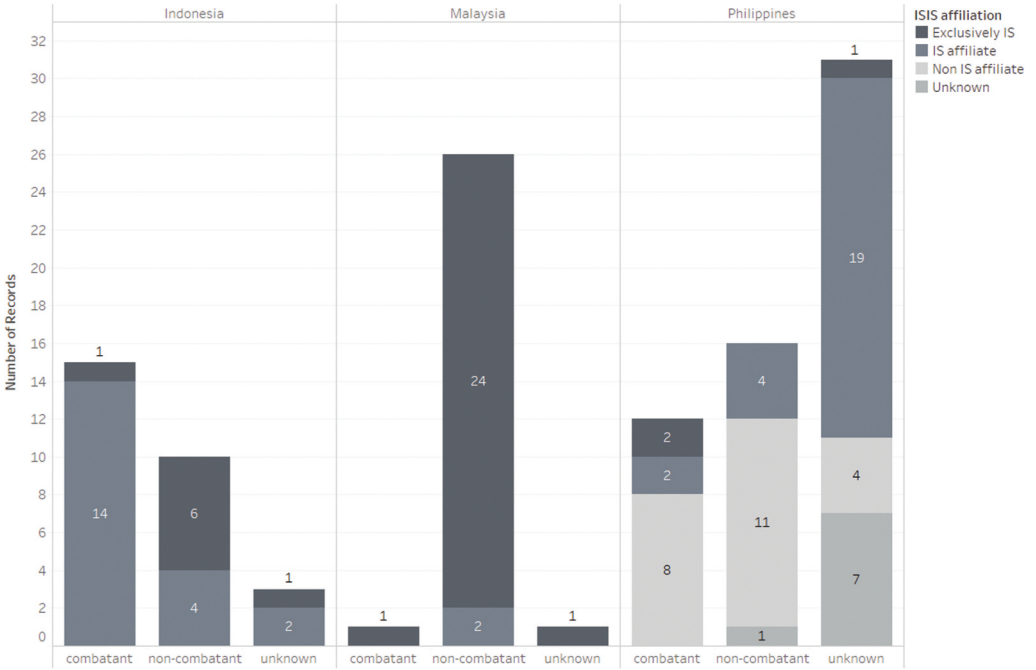


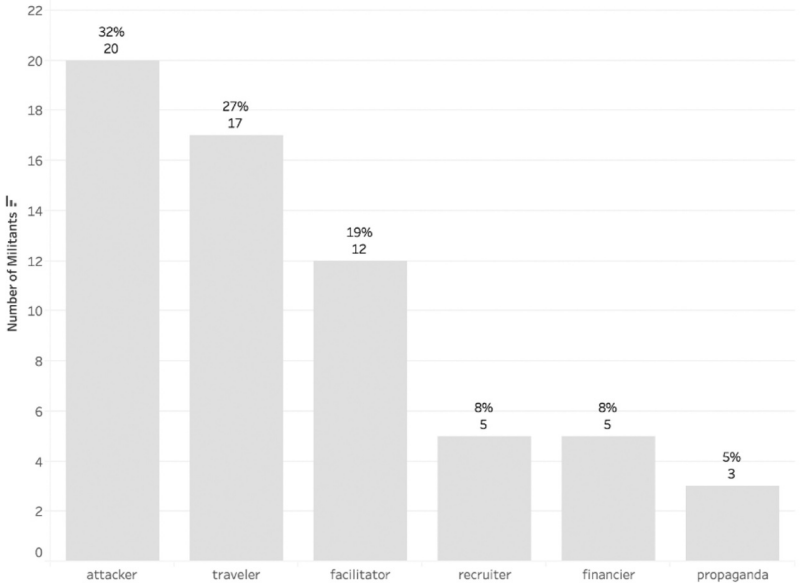
Figure 3. By country: Category and affiliation of female militants.

leadership.[88] This, together with the featuring of two Malaysian militants in a widely-circulated Islamic State propaganda videos in that year, could have facilitated heightened Malaysian Islamist sentiment toward the Islamic State.

To assess how the arrival of IS-Central influenced overall female participation in militant organizations in Southeast Asia and its influence on moving women toward combatant roles, we coded whether these female militants had any organizational affiliation with Islamic State (either exclusively or through a local affiliate group). This allowed us to explore links between organizational affiliations of all female militants and compare trends across countries. In Table 2, we list the total number of female militants, which were categorized as "exclusively IS," IS affiliate or non-IS affiliate across the region between January 2014 and July 2019. Each affiliate group is discussed briefly in Appendix F.

Figure 2 presents the organizational affiliation of women overall each year per three categories: those linked exclusively to IS (with no reported link to any other group), those linked to local IS affiliates, and those linked to non-affiliates. Women linked with IS, exclusively or through an affiliate, made up a large proportion of all female militants in a given year, providing support for hypothesis 1. In general the data suggests that Islamic State's influence resulted in an overall increase in female participation in militant organizations, given that the majority of female militants in our data have an Islamic State affiliation (91 out of 115) were affiliated with Islamic State. The combined percentage of IS-linked female combatants ranged between 63 percent to 82 percent, peaking in 2017 at 82 percent. Interestingly, in 2017 most IS-linked women were connected to Islamic State via local affiliates. This contrasts sharply with 2014, where 57 percent of all IS-linked women were reported to be exclusively linked to Islamic State rather than through affiliates. This makes sense since 2014 was the beginning of the peak of Islamic State's territorial control in Iraq and Syria and when foreign fighters made hijrah to be a part of the physical caliphate.[89] By 2017 however IS' territorial control became tenuous.[90] The Battle of Marawi, which lasted from May to October 2017, likely caused an upsurge in the numbers of militants arrested. Per our dataset, twelve of thirteen female militants arrested within the timeframe of the conflict were members of the Maute Group, the group which initially seized the city of Marawi.[91]

(a) Roles of women with IS affiliation (excluding unknown category)



(b) Roles of women with non-IS affiliation (excluding unknown)

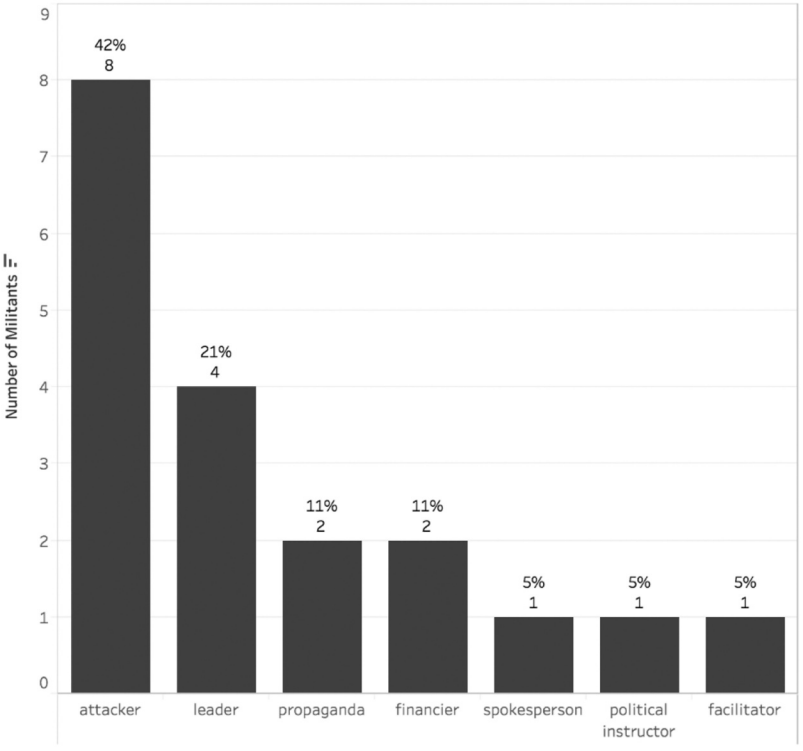


Figure 4. Regional—specific roles of IS and non-IS affiliated female militants. (a) Roles of women with IS affiliation (excluding unknown category). (b) Roles of women with non-IS affiliation (excluding unknown).

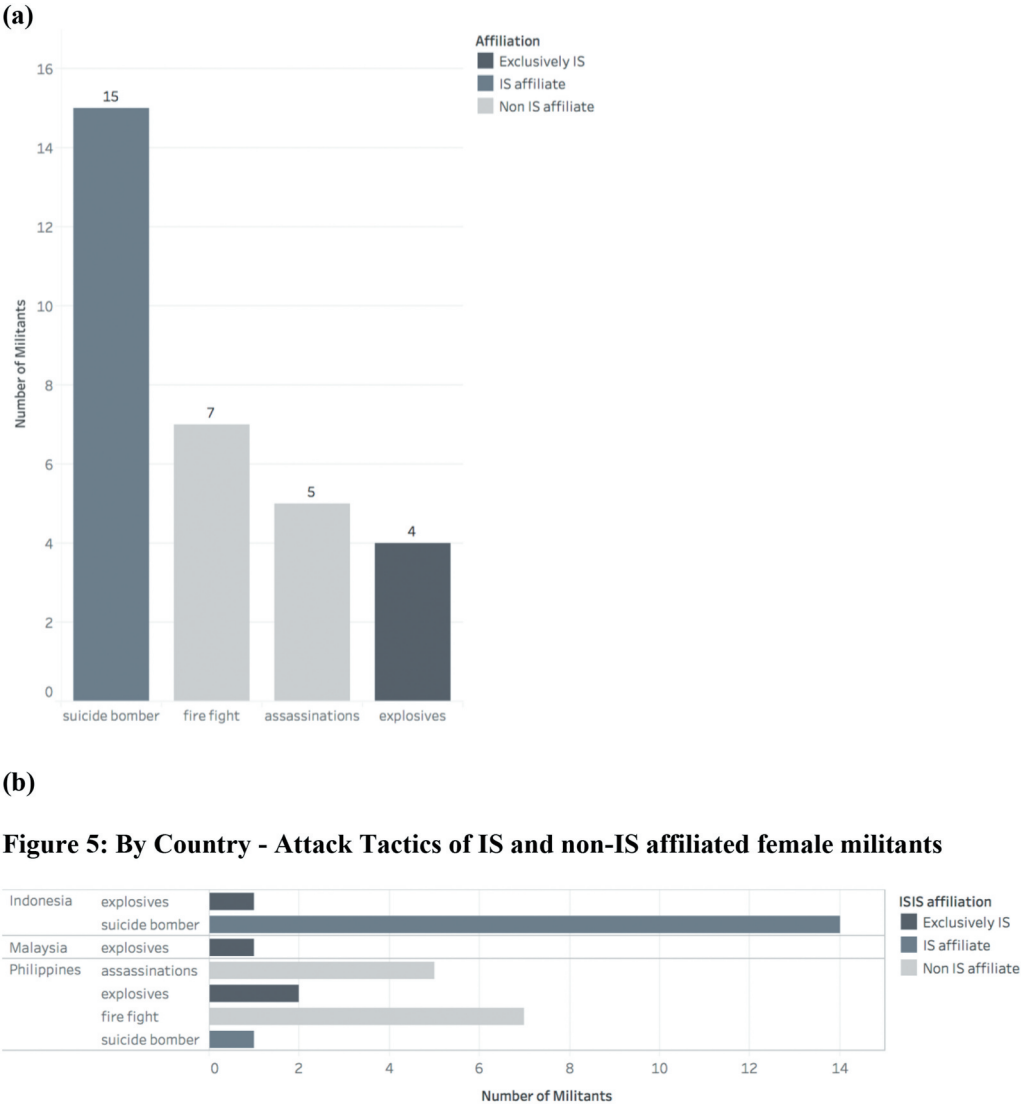


Figure 5: By Country - Attack Tactics of IS and non-IS affiliated female militants

Figure 5. (a) Regional—attack tactics of IS and non-IS affiliated female militants. (b) By country—attack tactics of IS and non-IS affiliated female militants.

The previously mentioned call to action for female militants in al-Naba coincides with a distinction in women's roles between January 2014 to September 2017 and October 2017 to July 2019: only four IS-linked female militants were attackers in the former period while there were sixteen in the latter.

In Figure 3, we show the organizational links of female militants, accounting for both country and the role type, which allows us to assess whether most IS-linked participation in militant organizations and trends in combatant versus noncombatant participation are driven by any particular country. Overall, in our data of IS-affiliated women, we were only able to ascertain the role type of sixty women. Of these, 66 percent (40 out of 60) were reported to be in non-combat roles whereas the remainder assumed a combatant role. Although the high number of unknowns in this dimension introduces some uncertainty, based on the data available, our findings provide some support for hypothesis 2—that a majority of IS-linked women will assume more supportive than active roles. Having said that, our data also shows that about 33 percent of IS-linked women assumed combatant roles, which

represents a notable deviation from the largely support roles assumed by women of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

Figure 3 also provides some insights regarding country-level variation. In terms of countries, Malaysia had the largest proportion of exclusively-IS female militants with a total of twenty-six out of twenty-eight, followed by Indonesia. Interestingly, Malaysia's exclusively-IS female militants are predominantly in noncombatant roles. Similarly, while exclusively-IS women are much fewer in Indonesia compared to Malaysia, 75 percent of them were also reported to be in the noncombatant category. Intriguingly, in Indonesia, of the twenty women connected to Islamic State through a local affiliate in Indonesia, 70 percent were reported to be combatants. Thus, considering both countries, it appears that where women were exclusively associated with Islamic State and not local affiliates, they opted for noncombatant roles in line with Islamic State's general stance toward women's roles. In the Philippines, many female militants fell into the unknown category, especially those cases which were linked to local IS affiliate groups, due to a lack of details in reporting. However, where we had information, there seemed to be an even number of female militants falling into both the combatant and noncombatant categories, regardless of organizational links.

Thus, returning to the question about whether IS-linked participation in militant organizations and trends in combatant versus noncombatant roles are driven by any one country, we find that Indonesia has played a substantial role in shifting overall female participation towards combatant roles, especially through IS-linked women. In other words, Indonesian female militants have tended to be more active in conducting attacks (even serving as suicide attackers), versus participating in more passive activities such as recruitment or fundraising, compared to female militants in other countries.

What explains the opposing trends observed in IS-linked women in Indonesia and Malaysia, in terms of the difference in magnitude in the combatant and noncombatant categories? One potential explanation is that where individual women were influenced purely by Islamic State ideology instead of a local affiliate's ideology, they have adopted more passive roles—in line with the roles women have generally adopted within IS-Central.

In Indonesia, women historically served in more traditional roles in jihadist organizations, such as wives, mothers, and teachers.[92] With this, it may be that militarizing female involvement in jihadist organizations in Indonesia had a lower threshold than elsewhere. Once the Islamic State made allowances for female combatants, it could follow that females were drawn to the religious and social prestige of martyrdom, not only for themselves but also for their families. After the al-Naba articles in 2017, there are some instances of entire families committing suicide attacks together.[93] While this is not to say that these are causal, but the apparent trend is notable.

Additionally, like Wanndy in Malaysia, Bahrun Naim was a linchpin in recruiting female militants to Islamic State, including influential individuals like the illustrative case of Novi. Further, the May 2018 Surabaya bombings were a crucial deviation from Indonesia's traditional jihadist narrative about females, as they were the first attacks involving women and children.[94] Not only does this indicate a normalization in the Indonesian jihadist landscape, but it may be that other groups and female combatants were similarly motivated.

At first glance, the tendency for Malaysian female militants to be noncombatants is puzzling given traditional egalitarianism and progressive interpretations of Islam due to the country's cultural and political composition.[95] However, growing intolerance in the country toward non-Muslim Malays may have created fertile recruitment ground for groups like Islamic State that have espoused traditional roles for women.[96] Therefore, it is within a climate of increasing religious conservativism that Malaysian women are being recruited by Islamic State, most often in traditional noncombatant roles.

Variation in specific roles of IS and non-IS linked women

In this section, we compare the specific roles adopted by female militants linked to IS and non-IS organizations to assess whether there is a qualitative difference rooted in organizational affiliation. We also assess whether our data provides support for our third hypothesis that IS-linked women will act as

suicide attackers more frequently than non-IS linked women across the region. Figure 4(a) shows the specific roles adopted by female militants who were linked to Islamic State (exclusively or through an affiliate), whereas Figure 4(b) depicts the roles adopted by female militants with no reported link to Islamic State. Overall, we note that women linked to non-IS groups hold a wider variety of roles, including management-level and leadership roles such as political instructors, leaders, and spokespersons. In contrast, female militants linked to Islamic State are either engaged in logistics and fundraising or operate as attackers: a large number of IS-linked women were also reported to be "travelers" where their specific intended role was not clear.

Variation in specific tactics used by IS and non-IS female combatants

For both IS and non-IS linked female militants, we found that a significant proportion operated as attackers (see Figure 4(a) and 4(b)). Upon further comparison of the "attacker" categories, we find strong support for hypothesis 3: the data shows a clear division in the use of tactics by IS-linked and non-IS linked female combatants. As shown in Figure 5(a), our dataset indicates that women associated with the Islamic State in combat roles exclusively either served as suicide bombers or conducted bombings, whereas women combatants not associated with the Islamic State were involved in firefights or assassinations. It is of course possible that women operatives who have not been captured by our dataset were employed in other roles. For example, Unaesah Rahmah, writes that MIT, one of the Indonesian IS-affiliated groups, has used women fighters to fight against the police since early 2015.[97] In Figure 5(b), which provides a breakdown of the data by country, we note that IS-linked female suicide bombers were arrested or captured in either Indonesia or the Philippines.

Non-IS linked female combatants are exclusive to the Philippines, while most IS-linked female combatants operate in Indonesia. However, there are some cases of IS-linked female combatants in the Philippines. Our dataset captured four IS-linked militants in the Philippines involved in potential suicide attacks and eight non-IS linked militants in the Philippines who exclusively conducted firefights or assassinations. This indicates a sharp distinction between IS-linked and non-IS linked female militant tactics and suggests that a female militant's group affiliation serves as a better indicator of their combat tactics. Outside the Philippines, female combatants were linked to IS either exclusively or through affiliate groups. In all these cases, female combatants were either arrested prior to conducting a suicide attack or successfully conducted suicide attacks. All female militants involved in the Surabaya attacks in Indonesia, for instance, either detonated their own explosive device or were physically located in an explosive-ridden vehicle.

Based on our dataset, it is strikingly clear that while Islamic State ideology does result in female adopting more passive roles in general, where they do operate as attackers, they tend to use Islamic State's trademark tactics such as suicide bombing. This is in line with scholars who argue that although the Islamic State's ideology defines women's jihad as being at home, they can serve as combatants under certain circumstances, particularly as suicide bombers.[98]

Conclusion

Our results provide a first systematic look at the topography of female participation in militant organizations and the impact of the Islamic State's arrival in Southeast Asia. Our data shows that between 2014 and 2019, 115 female militants linked with the Islamic State or its local affiliates were arrested or killed in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia, with the highest number of female militants between the years of 2015 and 2017. Further, most female militants in the region between 2015 and 2017 (60–80 percent) were linked to IS, suggesting that the influence of Islamic State has increased the overall magnitude of female participation in militant organizations in the region. As with other regions, the vast majority of these militants served in noncombatant roles. However, our data shows that female militants in Southeast Asia are increasingly participating as combatants: in 2018, 66 percent of female militants killed and arrested were combatants whereas there were no such militants in 2014 and 2015. This trend aligns with the shift in IS-

Central's views about women in combat and its 2017 call for women to wage jihad, with no distinction between combatant and noncombatant roles, even though this shift in rhetoric had no discernable effect on women assuming combat roles in Iraq and Syria.[99] As Peresin and Cervone argue, even though the Islamic State restricted women participants to largely non-combat roles in Iraq and Syria, this could be different in other places where women are unable to travel but keen to engage in violent acts.[100] Furthermore, this pattern is particularly interesting because it demonstrates that while IS-Central's tendency to employ women in noncombat roles is generally reflected in its Southeast Asian affiliates, it also appears that certain regional and country level dynamics appear to have expanded the roles women assumed in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. In the case of Indonesia, Marcoes argues that Indonesian women's motivations to join jihadist organizations like the Islamic State or its affiliates could range from including being attracted to supporting the ideological goal of a caliphate, and/or even to improve their status in a patriarchal society.[101]

Perhaps the most profound influence of Islamic State in Southeast Asia is in regard to bombings, as women associated with Islamic State in our dataset tended to serve as suicide bombers or participated in bombings, while their non-IS linked counterparts participated in firefights or assassinations. The patterns evident in our dataset are also consistent with regional events such as the Battle of Marawi in the Philippines, which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of militants, most of them men. This suggests that, at least in Southeast Asia, the emergence of Islamic State and local groups' allegiance to Islamic State has had a profound impact on female participation in militant organizations: not only are more women becoming involved in violent organizations, they are increasingly becoming combatants.

While we find some general trends about female participation in militant organizations across Southeast Asia, we also find some disparity between the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia, the three countries in the region with the most Islamic State activity. Overall, the number of female militants in the Philippines is almost double that in Indonesia and Malaysia combined. This disparity is quite noticeable from 2016 to 2017, when the number of female militants in the latter two countries declined while the number in the Philippines increased six-fold. This may be in part attributable to the Battle of Marawi and the attempt to establish Mindanao as the epicenter of an Islamic State caliphate in Southeast Asia.[102] Furthermore, the nature of female participation is different across these three countries. In Malaysia, female militants are more likely to be linked to Islamic State, albeit mostly as noncombatants. The female militant landscape in Indonesia is more complex: women associated exclusively with Islamic State are more likely to be noncombatants whereas women associated with local groups are more likely to participate as combatants. The picture of female participation in the Philippines is less clear, with most militants in the unknown category due to lack of information in news reporting. However, for the female militants on which we had information, organizational affiliation appeared to have little impact on the types of roles women filled.

Overall, our analysis suggests that Islamic State has facilitated a shift in female participation in militant organizations in Southeast Asia, where women are not only increasingly becoming involved in militant organizations but also serving as combatants. However, the emergence of Islamic State does not automatically lead to this pattern of female militancy. In other locations with an Islamic State presence like Afghanistan and Pakistan, women's involvement remains limited in terms of their numbers and roles. Therefore, local dynamics also influence female participation in militant organizations as local affiliates adapt IS ideology to their local environment. Our exploratory analysis yields important findings about women's participation in the affiliates of transnational global terrorist groups, which pave the way for two strands of research. Our analysis can be used to conduct further case study analysis of the Islamic State as well as Al Qaeda's affiliates around the world, to identify the specific local factors at the country level which interact with the ideologies of transnational terrorist groups to create unique roles for women within affiliate groups. For example, further analysis could shed light on how the Islamic State's overseas affiliates have adapted IS-Central's ideology in their propaganda for local recruitment. Relatedly, our findings can also be used as a building block for developing a more expansive and generalized theoretical typology of when, why, and how women's roles in the Islamic State's or Al Qaeda's global affiliates differ or align with the roles of women in the parent group or central organization.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Notes

1. Charlie Campbell, "ISIS Suicide Bomber Dian Yulia Novi Talks Jihad," *Time*, March 3, 2017, https://time.com/4689714/indonesia-isis-terrorism-jihad-extremism-dian-yulia-novi-fpi/; and R. Kim Cragin and Ari Weil, "'Virtual Planners' in the Arsenal of Islamic State External Operations," *Orbis* 62, no. 2 (February 17, 2018), https://www.fpri.org/article/2018/04/virtual-planners-in-the-arsenal-of-islamic-state-external-operations/.
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8. Firdaus, "The Making of a Female ISIS Bomber."
9. Cragin and Weil, "Virtual Planners," 308.
10. We use the term IS-Central to refer to Islamic State in Iraq and Syria to differentiate it from its global affiliates.
11. We focus on Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines as they have the highest levels of IS-linked attacks and affiliates in the region. More information about the militant landscape in these countries can be found in Appendix F.
12. In our dataset, these include factions of the Abu Sayyaf Group, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, Jamaah Ansharut Daulah, Maute Group, and the Mujahideen Indonesian Timur.
13. In our dataset, these include the Communist Party of the Philippines—New People's Army and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines.
14. Zakuan, "Radicalization of Women in ISIS in Malaysia"; Schulze, "The Surabaya Bombings and the Evolution of the Jihadi Threat in Indonesia."
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