

Rise of Islamic State in Af-Pak Region: Pakistan's Counterterrorism Policy

Musarat Amin

Associate Professor, Pakistan Air Force (PAF), Air War College Institute, Faisal Base Karachi, Pakistan.

Email: drmusarat12@gmail.com

Rizwan Naseer

D.S. (Research) PAF Air War College Institute, Faisal Base Karachi, Pakistan.

Email: multirizz@gmail.com

Saleem Raza

D.S. (Research) PAF Air War College Institute, Faisal Base Karachi, Pakistan.

Email: saleemraza021@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

Pakistan became a terrorist attraction because of better hiding place as Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) were governed under Frontier Crimes Regulations , Baluchistan and Karachi remained in chaos .After the war against terrorism Taliban and Al-Qaeda's infrastructure was destroyed but that vacuum was quickly filled by the Islamic State (Daesh).The Islamic State emerged as more deadly terrorist network with a unconventional approach to recruit ,plot and attack , other splinter groups in Pakistan bandwagoned with the Islamic State. This paper analyses the emergence of Islamic state in Pakistan and its nexus with Al-Qaeda as a struggle to establish Islamic State of Khorasan in the Afg-Pak region. The paper also highlights financial resources of terrorist groups and poorly managed madrassa reforms under the 'National Action Plan'. It also recommends that relying solely on kinetic means may not yield desired results in counterterrorism but softer approach of deradicalization and countering violent extremism is equally effective. This paper focusses on pre-Taliban's Afghanistan.

Key Words: Islamic State of Khorasan, Taliban, Madrassa Reforms, National Action Plan, Caliphate

Terrorists' Destination, Why Pakistan?

Pakistan's military dictator General Zia ul Haq in 1984 through a controversial referendum made a failed attempt to Islamize an already Islamic country with 97% Muslim population by enforcing his own interpretation of *Nizam-e-Mustafa* (Rule of the Prophet Muhammad). That was the beginning of extremism in Pakistani society which later turned violent and generated terrorism with international implications.

Pakistan became a preferable land of hiding for militant and terrorist groups during the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (1996-2001) because of the convenience to commute via 2,430 kilometer long porous Pak-Afghan border and poor writ of

the Pakistani government in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) which had been governed under Frontier Crime Regulation (FCR) not the constitution of Pakistan 1973. Pakistan's state law was not enacted in FATA, therefore, Taliban and Al-Qaeda fighters after the US invasion of Afghanistan (2001) moved to FATA for recruiting and sending reinforcements against US troops. From that time on FATA became ripe for Jihadists to hide and operate within Pakistan and across the border. Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, the mastermind of 9/11 and the kingpin of Al-Qaeda was arrested in Pakistan in 2003. Al-Qaeda's top leader Osama bin Laden hid in Abbottabad and was killed by U.S. Navy SEALs in May, 2011 during operation Neptune Spear. Mullah Akhter Mansour, Taliban's leader was killed in Baluchistan by a US drone strike in May, 2016. Pakistan military claimed to arrest over 300 militants of Islamic State (Daesh) including local leadership of the terrorist group (IANS, 2016). According to *South Asia Terrorism Portal* there are about 12 domestic and 32 transnational terrorist organizations in Pakistan, though after Pakistan's war against terrorists in FATA many of them have lost their presence in Pakistan. The U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson during his visit to Pakistan in November, 2017 shared a list of 20 terrorist groups operating in Pakistan (The Times of India, 2017). These terrorist groups are involved in attacks on U.S. troops and within Pakistan. Pakistan is known to have thousands of unregulated madrassas and a pro-Taliban clergy which is continuous source of recruitment and funding for terrorist organizations. Jamia Hafsa (a madrassa, part of Lal Masjid in Islamabad) students in 2015 via a video message appealed to the Islamic State (Daesh) chief Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi to avenge the 2007 military operation on Lal Masjid Islamabad in which more than 100 people were killed (Qarar, 2015). Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD), a banned militant organization by United Nations, recently launched a political party Milli Muslim League (MML) which reflects that militants can enter even mainstream politics in Pakistan (Noor Zahid, 2018). FATA has been the area with many safe haven of terrorists. Pakistan army under the leadership of Pervez Musharaf initiated military operation in FATA.

Pakistan army's first Operation *Al-Mizan* in 2002 against terrorists in FATA, destroyed their hideouts but it was for the first time in the history of Pakistan that army entered that ungoverned area, therefore due to poor information of militant hideouts, tactics and hard terrain, army sustained heavy casualties and tried to resolve it through 'peace deal' with local militants (Fair, 2009). Pakistan army and militants reached *Shakai Agreement* to end fight. Militants in FATA were borrowing time through peace deals to move to other safe areas to reorganize and combat against Pakistan military.

Pakistan army launched more than dozen minor and major operations in FATA but most recent and powerful were *Zarb-e-Azb* (2014) which literally means sharp and cutting strike and *Radd-ul-Fasad* (2017) means elimination of discord. As a consequence of military operations in FATA, Taliban and their affiliated groups were on the run therefore, the Islamic State found a chance to enter into Pakistan. The Islamic State operated different from Taliban, therefore it

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was not limited to FATA. Islamic State established infrastructure in Karachi, Baluchistan and eventually expanded to other parts of Pakistan. Islamic State entered Pakistan in 2014 when Taliban-Al-Qaeda network became weak as a consequence of war against terrorism. Pakistan's war against terrorism continues even today but its main focus is within urban areas of Punjab and Karachi to avoid major terrorist incidents in capital cities whereas its control is loosening in FATA again. A faction of Taliban under the guise of peace committee has made comeback in Wana, South Waziristan Agency which declared Taliban styled Sharia (DAWN, 2017). Perpetual recruitment of operatives by terrorist organizations is a major challenge for government to deal with. Majority of the terrorist organizations use religion as umbrella to amass support from masses in religious societies. Another factor that wins hearts and minds of commoners is the welfare trusts that these organizations run with charity. According to South Asian Terrorism Portal about four prominent welfare trusts run by extremist organization (Al-Rashid Trust, Al-Akhter Trust, Rabita Trust and Ummah Tamir-e-nau) are extensively providing welfare services in Pakistan. When government fails to provide medical care, food, clothing especially in calamity hit areas, these organizations come up with all possible support for the victims by providing them food, shelter, clothing and medication. Such acts of kindness ingrain soft image among common masses and some of the aid recipient in future would join it as a member. That is how they continue perpetual volunteering for their so called welfare tasks. Terrorist organizations would end up in few months if they stop using religion as a tool, because of the religion they get donations and volunteers to continue their terrorist activities. Existence of Al-Qaeda and IS (Islamic State) hinges on finance and operatives coming from sympathizers (Swetnam, 2001). Religious terrorism does not necessarily represent religious standpoint but the individuals who claim it purely religious (Sedgwick, 2010).

Al-Qaeda's Decline and Rise of Islamic State in Pakistan

Al-Qaeda was the only powerful group in 1990s that had transnational base camps in Sudan, North Africa, Middle East and Afghanistan and involved in the bombing of 1993 World Trade Centre, U.S. embassy in Kenya and Tanzania, Bali (2002), Madrid (2004) and London (2005). Al-Qaeda's main objective was to continue Jihadist manifestation and for that it attempted to recruit U.S. citizens who could travel to Europe carrying the message of Jihad and raise funds for Al-Qaeda. Another primary objective of Al-Qaeda was to drive U.S. forces out of Saudi Arabia (A holly land for Muslims) and they even issued a *Fatwa* (ruling on Islamic law) that attacking U.S. forces was necessary and proper (Caruso, 2001). Although Al-Qaeda operated independently but it also functioned in collaboration with other small terrorist groups that operated under its umbrella, According to a declassified report of National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) in 2006, Al-Qaeda's political goal

was to establish *Sharia* based governance across the Muslim world (Hebeck, 2012).

During 1980s and 1990s large number of independent groups bandwagoned with Al-Qaeda under the outline of 'global jihad ideology'. Most of the affiliated groups remained autonomous but with few exceptions. Current Al-Qaeda has roots in various regions of the world via affiliated groups. Zawahiri acknowledged authority over Al-Nusra Front (in Syria), Al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) which mostly operates in Yemen, Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb which operated in North of Africa and Al-Shabab (operates in Somalia).

Islamic State (IS) or Daesh, emerged as a powerful Jihadist group with the aim of implementing Caliphate (a state governed by Islamic law or *Sharia*). It made an appeal to all Muslims around the world to swear allegiance to Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al-Badri al-Samarrai better known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (self proclaimed Caliph) and asked all followers for migration to territory under his control (News, 2015). Baghdadi assumed IS leadership in 2010 and rebuilt its capabilities. He ordered more attacks on U.S. troops but also joined rebel fighting to remove Bashar al-Assad in Syria which formed Al-Nusra front. Al-Nusra was also known as Al-Qaeda in Syria. It reflects that Al-Qaeda was weak in Afghanistan and IS was weak in Iraq and Syria therefore, both were looking for cooperation from other like-minded terrorist organizations to regain strength. Instability in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria provided basis for cooperation but they were divergent on terms of cooperation.

Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani, central spokesman of the Islamic State from Syria on January 26, 2015 announced the expansion of Islamic State into Afghanistan-Pakistan areas that fraction is referred as "Islamic State of Khorasan". The announcement came after former Taliban supporters publicly declared their loyalty to Islamic State and set up a Khorasan Council (Shura) in Pakistan and publicly declared their loyalty to IS (Sheikh, 2017). The Islamic State wanted to benefit from Al-Qaeda and Taliban's decline in Pakistan and Afghanistan therefore, it proactively wanted to achieve its goals of expansion into Pakistan via Afghanistan.

A Struggle for Survival: Al-Qaeda Meets IS

The Islamic State geographically originated from Iraq with the name of Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (Organization of Monotheism and Jihad) which pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda and participated in Iraqi insurgency following the invasion of Iraq in 2003. It expanded organized network to Syria and later on penetrated to Afghanistan and some parts of Pakistan. Islamic State could not make any footmarks in India which abuts Pakistan. Indian occupied Kashmir because of its disputed status and turbulence provided conducive environment to Islamic State to announce its foray in Kashmir. Burhan Wani who was the commander of Hizbul Mujahideen (a freedom fighting group) in Kashmir uploaded his last video on

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social media and declared to establish Caliphate not only in Kashmir but the entire world (Sahai, 2016). Terrorist networks establish their safe havens in the turbulent areas with poor governance and worse law and order situation. Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Baluchistan and some parts of Karachi have similar environment of poor governance and exacerbated law and order situation. FATA is governed under Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) a brutal law with minimal governmental control on it. Baluchistan shares border with Iran and Afghanistan and is home to Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), therefore IS operatives could get easy hideouts in Baluchistan. Karachi experienced lawlessness because of the politically motivated crime syndicates. These factors of outlawry contributed towards emergence of Islamic State in these areas of Pakistan. Pakistan's interior ministry nullified the existence of Islamic State and its operatives in Pakistan. Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar stated, "Daesh does not exist in Pakistan. Other terrorist groups, which are already involved in activities against the state are using Daesh's name and are causing death and destruction in the country," (DAWN, 2016). whereas the Baluchistan government through a classified information warned federal government about the increasing footprints of Islamic State in the province (Mumtaz, 2015). The reason is that already fighting against multiple terrorist groups, government does not want to reveal major setbacks in counterterrorism policy that despite Operation *Zarb-e-Azb* (2014) and *Raddul-Fasad* (2017), Islamic State managed to established control in Pakistani cities.

The U.S. Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson during his visit to Pakistan in October, 2017 shared a list of 20 terrorist groups with Pakistani authorities and those groups are believed to carry out terrorist activities in border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Trump administration expects a stern action against these terrorist organizations from Pakistan's security forces. It included Haqqani network, Harkatul Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, TTP associated group Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Jandullah, TTP(vowed allegiance to Islamic State), Harakatul Jihadi-i-Islami, Jamaatud Dawa al- Quran, Jamaatul Ahrar, Tariq Gidar Group, Commander Nazir Group, Indian Mujahideen, Islamic Jihad Union, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Turkistan Islamic Party Movement, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Al Qaeda in the Indian Sub-Continent and ISIS-Khorasan. Islamic State of Khorasan wants to implement Caliphate in the areas of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia. Therefore, Islamic State made inroads to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Pakistan's youth bulge is a major factor that IS potentially may use as a source of recruitment. A country with economic slumps, political instability and burdened population, nuclear weapons could be a better choice for operating and amassing power from already functioning militant groups. After the killing of Osama Bin Laden in 2011, experiencing sharp decline Al-Qaeda became a headless network (Blair, 2012). Al-Qaeda as a brand name attached itself to the fragmented groups as the central leadership was eliminated and the command and control of this

transnational network was virtually impossible then. But Al-Qaeda's ideology of global Jihad against West and apostate regimes in Islamic world continued under the same brand name. Al-Qaeda was declining and IS wanted rise in Pakistan nevertheless such scenario provided space for cooperation between both terrorist networks. The Islamic State coordinated several terrorist attacks with Al-Qaeda but they also became contenders for influence in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Survival of Al-Qaeda was only possible after joining hands with emergent Islamic State. The objective of alliance making between various terrorist groups was to pose a herculean resistance to security forces in Pakistan and Afghanistan and wrest the control of lost territories from security forces.

Islamic State's Unconventional Acts of Terrorism

The Islamic State used non-traditional approach to carry out terrorist attacks. It started using information technology extensively as means of spreading terrorism, indoctrinating jihadist ideology, recruitment and claiming the responsibility of the attacks. The new development in the acts of terrorism is that a terrorist does not need a proper training of shooting or exploding Improvised Explosive Device (IED), now it's possible by crushing people with a truck or a vehicle. The latest terrorist attack in this connection was November 6, 2017 at New York Manhattan when an Uzbek rammed the vehicle into pedestrians and bicycle riders. Police found a note with him that he attacked in the name of Islamic State (Shimon Prokupecz, 2017). Similar attacks were reported in London and Barcelona where pedestrians were the target. In Germany IS terrorist tried to poison kindergarten children with poisonous ice-cream (Hall, 2016). German Government issued a paper with the warning of water poisoning by Islamic State terrorists (Martin, n.d.). The nature of the attacks shows that terrorist networks lack resources to get lethal weapons, bomb making equipment and now even recruits after financial chokes by worldwide financial institutions. Al-Qaeda traditionally did not use such tactics but IS started targeting soft targets as well to spread terror and gain prominence among other terrorist groups. According to *Congressional Research Service* report 2017, following factors have facilitated growth of Islamic State in different regions (i) ethnic, sectarian and political based conflicts (ii) Recruitment and travel network related to such conflicts (iii) arms availability in the society and weak performance of security forces (iv) dearth of cooperation in international counterterrorism and intelligence (v) People who find Islamic State's ideology more appealing and also the potential material gains from the group (Christopher M. Blanchard, 2018). Pakistan's areas in FATA, Baluchistan, Sindh and some parts of Southern Punjab offered favourable conditions to Islamic State because of the ethnic, sectarian and political conflicts among various groups. Easy availability of arms attracted Islamic State to make foothold as well as recruit people. Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) during its five years of government issued more than 69,000 prohibited bore weapons licenses including Kalashnikovs and sub-machine guns to

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Members of National Assembly (MNAs) (Ghumman, 2013). Dr. Asim Hussain, former federal minister for Petroleum was arrested in August 26, 2015 on the charges of facilitating terrorists. Another notorious gangster Uzair Baloch who was arrested by Pakistan Rangers in accordance with the Pakistan Army Act/Official Secret Act 1923, had over 40 cases pending against him in anti-terrorism courts confessed links with Pakistan Peoples Party (Uzair Baloch taken into military custody: ISPR, 2017). This shows that because of the militant wings of political parties and their alleged links with terrorist organizations. The in-charge of the Counterterrorism Department's Sectarian Terrorists Intelligence Group (STIG) in Karachi was dismissed from his service for sharing classified information with member of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). Islamic State found Pakistan a feasible soil to establish its network because of the political instability it had chances to succeed. Audrey Cronin states that Islamic State has supplanted Al-Qaeda as a greatest threat. Islamic State's ideology, rhetoric and goals are identical to Al-Qaeda and the two groups formally allied. Al-Qaeda remains dangerous because of the powerful affiliates operating in North Africa and Yemen. Islamic State presents post-Al-Qaeda threat and many observers assume that Washington should adopt formidable counterterrorism policy to handle this threat (Cronin, 2015).

Al-Qaeda-IS at Odds

Despite the cooperation there are conflicts between Al-Qaeda and Islamic State. Both the terrorist organizations are contenders for territory and supporters to spread their respective ideologies around the world. Ayman al-Zawahiri who succeeded Osama bin Laden after his killing in May, 2011 Operation Neptune Spear by U.S. marines, criticized IS for killing and slandering own jihadis. He termed IS thirsty for authority who is struck with the madness of *Takfir* (declaring Muslim as apostates) and has exceeded all limits of extremism.

Zawahiri disavowed Islamic State in 2014 because of failing to comply orders but it has emerged world's second largest terrorist organization and it demands and expects the same credibility, respect and support from other jihadi organizations as Al-Qaeda does (Berger, 2014). In other words, Al-Qaeda and Islamic State are contenders for influence in the world. The more influence one terrorist organization gets, the more it gets allegiance from other small terrorist networks. Renad Mansour a fellow for Middle East program at *Chatham House* stated that Al-Qaeda feels more confident and wants to position itself as more elitist organization compared with Jihadist populism of IS. Al-Qaeda differs in approach whose ultimate goal is not to establish a caliphate in lifetime struggle but to wage a perpetual struggle against infidels (Dearden, 2017).

Splinter Groups Bandwagon Islamic State

Therefore, despite Zawahiri's anti-IS statement, some small splinter groups from Al-Qaeda and its affiliates have pledged loyalty to Islamic State even AQIM and core Al-Qaeda from Afghanistan-Pak region. The power of Islamic State increased markedly as small groups continue tilting towards Islamic State as the Egypt based Jihadi group Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM) established strong ties with Islamic State. Another Jihadi group in Africa, Ansar al-Sharia Tunisia (AST) has shown considerable support to Islamic State on social media but declined to endorse Caliphate. Islamic State has got the support from the members of Abu Sayyaf group operating in Southeast Asia including Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines. "The group distinguishes itself from other Jihadist faction by claiming its territorial strength showed it to be the legitimate Islamic State promised by God in Quran (24:55)" (Lahoud, 2017). Such claims by IS help it gaining power from people joining it and expanding the size of Islamic State. Abu Bakr Baghdadi who claims himself a 'Caliph' attracts population with his sermons, he stated in 2014 at Mosul. "I am the wali (leader) who presides over you, though I am not the best of you, so if you see that I am right, assist me. If you see that I am wrong, advise me and put me on the right track, and obey me as long as I obey God in you. This is a duty on Muslims that has been lost for centuries" (Strange, 2014). The grand Imam of Al-Azhar, regarded by many as the leading authority on Sunni Islamic thought declared Islamic State as terrorist organization in his words. "All those who are today speaking of an Islamic State are terrorists, the Islamic caliphate can't be restored by force. Occupying a country and killing half of its population... this is not an Islamic state, this is terrorism." After Iraq & Syria, this group aimed to deepen its roots in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Presence of IS in Pakistan and Afghanistan is more penetrative as Al-Qaeda and Taliban were on the run after military onslaught from Pakistan and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

Islamic State Foothold in Pakistan

Islamic State founded bases near Afghanistan-Pakistan border and gradually expanded to urban areas of Pakistan. Though Islamic State is expanding its network in Pakistan slowly but it is getting more lethal than Taliban. Islamic State has been recruiting fighters to launch terrorist attacks in the urban areas of Pakistan. Islamic State claimed the responsibility of deadly attack on Sufi Shrine (Lal Shahbaz Qalander) which killed 83 people including women and children and wounded hundreds in the month of February, 2017 (Ali Akbar, 2017). Islamic State's penetration in Pakistan has largely been due to supporters instead of its direct fighters coming from Syria, Iraq or Turkey because that was much challenging for IS. For entering in Pakistan they might need a visa or a proper aerial channel. Taliban and Al-Qaeda affiliates entered in Pakistan because of the porous border with Afghanistan. It is assumed that already existing terrorist groups

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declared affiliation with IS. The slogan of Caliphate was not much attractive for the people in Pakistan and Afghanistan because Mullah Omer (leader of Taliban) already conserved him *Amir* (an independent ruler) and Taliban were his followers who were fighting for implementation of *Sharia*. Therefore, IS could not make much gains in Pakistan and Afghanistan but despite little presence it carried out major incidents of terrorism. IS was confident as it succeeded in Iraq and Syria, the reason of IS succeeding in Iraq and Syria was because of the Nouri Al-Mailiki's sectarian policies and Bashar al-Assad-Russia's fight against rebel groups than lethal IS (Ahmad, 2016). The statistics of Pakistanis joining IS are not much in number but hundreds out of 180million populations. Islamic State linked through those Pakistanis studying abroad and have little problem in commutation. IS fighters are more tech-expert than Taliban because most of the recruitment, planning and even execution of the terrorist attack has been directed through internet. Safoora Chowrangi massacre May, 2015 that killed 43 people in Pakistan was also Daesh-inspired. Stewart Webb in an article entitled *Daesh in the Digital Age: Online Extremism and The New Terror* rightly explains that Daesh (IS) attempts to make Jihad more attractive for those youth who are interested in doing adventure, they are dissatisfied with their physical community and most importantly do not have an extensive reading of Quran (Webb, 2017). Therefore, those who are desperate to do something for the sake of Islam with no or least knowledge of it, fall into the hands of so called Jihadists.

Taliban and Al-Qaeda network has not been much active on social media whereas IS operatives, adept practitioners of social media approach, extensively used social media as a tool to recruit, radicalize and raise funds to continue their transnational operations. Former head of British Global Communication Headquarters explained that terrorist now can hide their identities by using encryption tools which were once available only to the government agencies. The Islamic State has been vibrant on social media of all categories, including but not limited to Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Tumblr and Internet meme. Posting activity ramped up and reached 40,000 in one day, an all time high when they marched into Northern city of Iraq(Mosul).Social media monitor recorded that IS succeeded in creating total 700,000 accounts used for terrorist discussions (Reporters, 2014).

Al-Qaeda had been present on Social media for about two decades but got active on Twitter in 2011.Military intelligence service of Czech commented that Al-Qaeda was spreading ideology among Muslim community in Europe through social media. The difference between Al-Qaeda and IS' modus operandi to promote their ideology is that the former uses internet for distributing material anonymously whereas the latter employs direct approach by uploading videos of attacking villages, firing weapons and destroying towns.

Islamic State of Khorasan in Af-Pakistan

Islamic State proclaimed the imposition of *Khilafat* (Caliphate) under the leadership of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi as its ultimate goal and the rapid expansion of territory under their control attracted those who always wished *Khilafat* as their system of governance and *Shariah* as their constitution. Attraction for Caliphate in subcontinent has a profound history that dates back to 1918 when Muslims of subcontinent joined *Khilafat* movement fervently because of the issue of political power of Islam to save Ottoman Empire. Maulana Muhammad Ali Johar, a graduate of Oxford University and a journalist spent four years in prison for defying British rule and support for Caliphate. *Khilafat* movement of subcontinent is part of Pakistan studies, a compulsory subject in high school and college level in Pakistan. Based on that people perceive it as revival of *Khilafat* that was practiced by pious Caliphs (companions of Prophet Muhammad). Therefore, such system attracts Muslims irrespective of their geographical orientation. It is safe to say that success of Islamic State in recruiting fighters and collecting finances is because youth are inspired by *Khilafat* system. From the beginning of the 2016 when Taliban were waging shoot and scoot resistance in Afghanistan, Islamic State tried to establish safe havens which were aimed at extending influence to South and Central Asian states. On several occasion it also carried out terrorist activities in connection with Al-Qaeda (Gunaratna, 2002).

Pakistan's security forces were not sanguine of IS' presence in the country therefore contradicting reports and statements appeared on media. The Interior Minister Chaudhary Nisar stated in February, 2016 that "Islamic State of Iraq and Levant/ Daesh owes no existence in Pakistan. But there were reports that the other militant groups, already involved in terrorism and anti-state activities are using its name". The Islamic State gained its toe-hold in Pakistan in January, 2015 when six Pakistani Taliban leaders switched their allegiance over from Al-Qaeda to IS. The incidents which took place in Karachi where IS inspired attacks including the murder of Human Rights activist Sabeen Mehmood and Safoora carnage happened and that indicated presence of IS in Pakistan. Karachi was perhaps the first city where banners in support of Islamic State were displayed and wall-chalking was done. Aftab Sultan (DG Intelligence Bureau) admitted in front of Senate Standing Committee that the main reason behind emergence of IS in Pakistan is because of certain militant groups had a soft corner for it. Islamabad express highway, the busiest thoroughfare in the federal capital got flags of Islamic state with inscribed words on the "Khilafat is coming" (QARAR, 2017).

With the name of IS there has been terrorist incidents in Pakistan that has not solely been the activity of IS but the collaboration of IS and Al-Qaeda. A bomb blast in civil hospital Quetta on 9 August, 2016 that killed about 70 lawyers and civilians was amongst the most devastating of its own nature. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan's wing Jamaat-ul-Ahrar claimed the responsibility via email by Ehsanullah Ehsan, the spokesperson of group. Islamic State also claimed the

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responsibility of the same attack in Quetta. The armed groups' *Amaq* website stated, "A martyr from the Islamic State/Daesh detonated his explosive belt at a gathering of justice ministry employees and Pakistani policemen in the city of Quetta" (Aljazeera, 2017). To deter police force from combating terrorism and demoralizing security forces terrorist started targeting training schools as well. Such attacks basically were initiated by TTP but later on other terrorist organization like IS also carried out such attacks on training schools of police to target cadets. Islamic State claimed another deadly attack on police training school Quetta which killed 61 people most of them cadets and injured 128. Islamic State's news agency '*Amaq*' released the pictures of attackers i.e. three men wearing ammunition and holding guns who it claimed were attackers. According to Pakistan's official sources Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (Punjabi Taliban) was behind the attacks whereas a security official on the condition of anonymity told that Islamic State had outsourced the attack to Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (Mehmood, 2016).

Baluchistan being home to decades old insurgency and because of the shared border with Iran and Afghanistan remains volatile where Taliban and other terrorist networks prefer to maintain their presence. After the arrest of Indian spy, Kulbhushan Yadav, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) issued a confessional statement in a video in which he admitted to foment terrorism in Baluchistan and Karachi. Yadav confessed that the activities he carried out in Baluchistan were of criminal nature including killing or maiming of Pakistani citizens (Transcript of RAW agent Kulbhushan's confessional statement, 2016). Terrorist networks hide their operatives in populated areas like Karachi or restive border areas, FATA and Baluchistan because it provides them comparatively better hiding. Pakistan military's spokesperson Lieutenant General Asif Ghafoor stated "Islamic State was growing influence inside Afghanistan, prompting Pakistan to launch an operation in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), This operation was necessary because IS is getting established there and we have to stop the influence of it spreading into Pakistani territory through the Rajgal valley." (Sayeed, 2017). According to security forces terrorists enter Pakistan through border with Afghanistan. Pakistan military began fence construction along 2611 kilometer border with Afghanistan as part of its security program.

An upsurge in violence and terrorist related activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan might also be because of the Al-Qaeda-IS alliance which they reached because of their shared interests of similar ideology (Felbab-Brown, 2017). Al-Qaeda's defectors joined Islamic State because of the internal strife in Al-Qaeda's ranks. The Islamic State employed extensive propaganda to increase its nexus in Wilayat of Khorasan to make a joint effort with Taliban to acquire control of territory and people (Khalid, 2017). Some defected factions from the main faction of Taliban mainly known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) pledged allegiance to IS and ramped up their activities in Khorasan. Furthermore, domestic groups like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) also allied with the Islamic State in Pakistan. Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), a strong anti-Indian domestic

terrorist group in Pakistan, has already allied with Al-Qaeda which indicates the increased cooperation among domestic and transnational terrorist groups and the expansion of Islamic State in South Asian region.

In February, 2016 Ali Akbar published a story in *Dawn*, leading English newspaper in Pakistan that a high level delegation of the Islamic State comprising of three members reached in Pakistan headed by Zubair Al Kuwaiti and included Uzbek Commander Fahim Ansari and Sheikh Yusuf from Saudi Arabia. The delegation met with Lashkar-e-Islam chief Mangal Bagh to convince him joining the Islamic State. Mangal Bagh was the main supporter of TTP in Khyber Agency. According to him some level of understanding was reached between Mangal Bagh and the Islamic State but Bagh also refrained from pledging allegiance to IS fearing backlash of Pakistan army as the 'Khyber-I operation' was already underway (Akbar, 2015).

Financial Sources of Islamic State and Al-Qaeda

Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy termed as National Action Plan (2014) contains a point about curbing terrorist financing in the country i.e. "Choking financing for terrorist and terrorist organizations" (Plan, 2014). Pakistan is all set to take effective measures under the comprehensive National Action Plan (NAP). Terrorists would continue their heinous activities until their financial lifeline is choked. Before the implementation of National Action Plan (2014) there were laws to address the issue of terrorism financing under Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997 and Anti-Money Laundering Act (2010) but no coordinated strategy was opted. Before the incident of 9/11 and crackdown against militant outfits, terrorists were collecting funds through criminal and non-criminal sources in Pakistan. Criminal means included kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking, drug peddling and collecting extortion money, bank robberies, smuggling of antiques etc. The other non-criminal source was charity, philanthropy, donation and animal hides. What makes Pakistan's challenge of curtailing terrorist financing complex is cash-based economy. Out of 200 millions populations in Pakistan hardly 15% of the population signed up for formal banking therefore transferring of money through *Hawala* thrived in the country whose benefit was taken by terrorists because money can be moved via *Hawala* without any fear of detection compared to the formal banking system. Integrated efforts to combat financing of terrorists are limited to formal banking economy and Law enforcers in collaboration with State Bank of Pakistan's Financial Monitoring Unit (SBPFMU) waged relentless struggle to choke terror financing. Terrorist groups despite strict controls on their financial sources continue to finance themselves. Islamic State is not only a militant group or terrorist, they are also mafia who smuggles arms and rum old gray markets of oil and many other things which are prohibited in every country (Yassin, 2015).

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According to Vitaly Churkins, Russian ambassador to United Nations the Islamic State is netting £140 million a year. He claimed in April, 2016 that about 100,000 cultural objects of global importance and 4500 archaeological sites are under the control of Islamic State, of them 9 sites are in the list of UNESCO. IS sells antique objects to finance its odious regime (BURMAN, n.d.). Additionally, IS raises money through bank scamming, selling antiques and artifacts, donations, ransom and oil (Williams-Grut, 2015). All such means are modern and based on technology.

Al-Qaeda has been different because they raised funds in the name of Jihad. Their primary source of funding has been through facilitators and donations and later on after collection of money they moved by *Hawala* (a traditional, trust-based method for transferring of funds). According to Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) estimate that prior to 9/11 incidental-Qaeda spent \$30 million annually and \$10-\$20 million of which went to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. After war against terrorism, Al-Qaeda's negative image has caused marked cuts in charities and donations to Al-Qaeda (Al-Qaida / Al-Qaeda Funding in Afghanistan, n.d.). Pakistani Police reported in 2009 that Charities from individuals based at Saudi Arabia are a source of funding for Al-Qaeda, Taliban and LeT. According to that report Saudis gave \$15million to Jihadist groups even including those responsible for assassination of former Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (Ehrenfeld, 2011). There are also funding reports that Islamic State is financed by rich individuals from Persian Gulf countries mainly Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Turkey and Qatar. The Islamic State attracted recruits and other terrorist organization because of its plentiful resources. Its network in Pakistan though was small but well funded. In 2016, IS-inspired educated youngster from respected business institute became an associate of Islamic State and murdered many peoples of Ismaeli community (Ali, 2016). Radicalized youth provides potential recruitment for Islamic State and most of them have been seeking religious educations at madrassas.

The Madrassa Conundrum

Madrassa students are the most intolerant of all other student groups in Pakistan (Manzoor, 2015). Madrassas were established as a nursery to provide recruitment for Jihad during Afghan-Soviet war (1979-89), therefore their number grew in Pakistan dramatically. After a year of *Operation Zarb-e-Azb* Pakistan entered its 13th year of war against militants but regarding reformation of Madrassas very little improvement was made, a non-governmental organization HIVE launched a report on Madrassas in Pakistan entitled "The Madrassa Conundrum-The State of Religious Education in Pakistan". That report claimed that the number of Madrassa's in country had crossed 35,000 from fewer since the inception of Pakistan. According to that report number of Madrassas experienced phenomenal rise in their number after General Zia's regime. Sometimes federal government

statistics in Pakistan differ with the provincial governments and their departments which reflect poor record maintaining at governmental level and increasing number of unregistered madrassas which contribute towards abetting terrorism.

Glorification of Taliban and their leadership Mullah Omer has been the part of motivation lectures for madrassa students to make them realize about their potential to overthrow governments and establish an Islamic regime based on *Sharia* law under the leadership of an Emir (Anonymous, n.d.). Links between madrassas and terrorist organizations (Taliban, Al-Qaeda and Islamic State) led government to reform madrassas because these madrassas promote militant form of Islam. Pakistan army launched an airstrike on a madrassa near Afghan border in Bajaur Agency that killed about 80 militants in October 30, 2006 which sparked massive protests across Pakistan (Blanchard, 2008). Security forces have avoided any such strikes on madrassas to avoid protests against military in Pakistan.

The Lal Masjid, even after openly supporting the Islamic State, continues to operate in the hub of Islamabad. Mosque's leadership wants Pakistani government to implement Sharia law in the country. A recently released documentary, *Among the Believers*, offers an eye-opening insight about the radicalized and brainwashed students behind the walls of Lal Masjid. The documentary also highlights hundreds of other religious seminaries in Pakistan operating to amass popular support for militant groups such as the Islamic State (Jamal, 2017). Geo tagging of madrassas is not only the solution to problem but to monitor what is being taught at madrassas and curriculum reforms. National Action Plan is comprehensive enough to deal with madrassa reforms but no government in Pakistan has implemented it in letter and spirit.

Reforming the Madrassas under National Action Plan

Any critique of madrassas in Pakistan has to be careful because of the sensitivity of the issue, because madrassas have been considered as an institution by many as shield protecting Islam from foreign influence. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) established *Suffa* madrassa in Medina to impart education of Quran, *Hadith* and other skills including the art of war, calligraphy and athletics as part of curriculum (Hussain, 2017). Therefore this institution had been considered as revered before its involvement in fomenting extremism and terrorism. At *Suffa* the basic objective of the madrassa education was character building of students which other madrassas in later time could not carry on as legacy of *Suffa*. First generation of Taliban was educated in Pakistani madrassas which was indoctrinated with the zeal of fighting against atheists (Soviet Union), empty from any teachings of morality and character building. The Islamic State also found recruitment mostly from madrassas.

To reform madrassas government established Pakistan Madrassa Education Board with the primary objective of building model madrassas but board has not made any significant progress to meet its objective but three madrassas were

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established within span of 16 years because madrassa reforms are not much popular among politico-religious groups in Pakistan. Since the implementation of National Action Plan (2014), Pakistan's counterterrorism policy which also deals with madrassa reforms and countering violent extremism, only 2 out of 14000 madrassas in Punjab have been shuttered. Pervez Hoodbhoy a notable professor in Pakistan says "no Pakistani leader has had the courage to implement serious reforms" (*Tackling Terrorism in Pakistan's Heartland*, 2017). Any politician seriously reforming madrassas may lose vote bank of religious groups in Pakistan. Jamal Hussain, a retired Air Commodore of Pakistan Air force writes that "Maulana Fazlur Rahman, and Maulana Samiul Haq, the respective leaders of the two factions of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) run over 65 percent of all madrassas in Pakistan. Most of the students and teachers of Karachi madrassas under their tutelage are Pashtuns and Afghan refugees" (*Hussain, Madrasa Reforms: Lynchpin of Pakistan's efforts to combat terrorism*, 2017). Both the leaders Fazlur Rahman and Samiul Haq are the members of parliament and staunch critiques of war against terrorism. They influence governmental policies of reforming madrassas because of their political influence as well as through their disciples across the country. Taliban were the first generation of madrassas in Pakistan but after the decline of Taliban, Islamic State is trying to recruit from madrassas to continue their terrorist activities in Pakistan as well as internationally. But Islamic State focuses more on educated youth to recruit them for terrorist activities but other groups including Taliban and Al-Qaeda continue to recruit from madrassas. Pakistan's counterterrorism policy 2014, government has not taken any remarkable measures to end recruitment of terrorists from madrassas.

Pakistan's law enforcers have been facing challenges to smash the network of the Islamic State because of their online recruitment. However, FIA arrested the IS-operatives who were involved in online recruitment of youth in Pakistan. Pakistan's law enforcers also traced the money trail of Daesh involving 50 bank accounts to finance outlawed organization's activities. After the prolonged struggle by the United States, Islamic State is losing ground in Syria. Because the locals are not supporting such a terrorist organization which blatantly violates the rights of the locals. The president of the United States Donald Trump also claimed that they have taken over the territory of Syria from Daesh control and there are hardly some terrorists of Daesh present in Homs city (Levent Tok, 2019). The IS (Daesh) in Pakistan is on the run as it already had virtual presence in Pakistan and local groups owed their allegiance to IS. Now Pakistan's national action plan has achieved greater stability and security after intelligence-led operation under Raddulfasad. Afghanistan's internal dynamics are also changing where IS will find no place and will eventually be wiped off. Taliban are in negotiations with the United States and they have become a political entity rather than a terrorist group. The merger of FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will ensure no safe havens of terrorist organizations exist and the write of the government stays uphold. Such shifting dynamics are leaving no space for IS to survive and flourish. Pakistan's

strict regulation of social media under the National Action Plan will finally eliminate the chances of recruitment through social media.

Conclusion

Pakistan needs to counter online radicalization most efficiently as after the successful operation of Raddulfasad the presence of IS dwindles to the minimum level where they can not undermine state security. Geo-tagging of madrassas may not serve the purpose but streamline of madrassas into the educational system of Pakistan. Islamic State made safe havens in FATA, Baluchistan and Karachi because of lawlessness in these areas. The merger of FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has lessened foothold of IS and now the areas would be governed under the Constitution of Pakistan (1973) with improved law and order situation. Normalization of Karachi is also a key-point of NAP and there are no news of IS presence in Karachi in recent times. It is therefore needed that Pakistan needs to develop soft approaches to counter violent extremisms and radicalization in Pakistan. Military approach can gain operationally but peace education, deradicalization as promised by National Action Plan may end terrorism and put the country to path of progress and development.

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