

From Jihad to Al-Qaeda to Islamic State

Edited and Introduction by **Imtiaz Gul**



**Center for
Research &
Security
Studies**

Rule of Law - Security - Governance

Indian Ocean

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CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND SECURITY STUDIES

From Jihad to Al-Qaeda to Islamic State

Changing face of Militant Islam

Introduction/Edited
By
IMTIAZ GUL

Center for Research and Security Studies, Islamabad

From Jihad to Al-Qaeda to Islamic State

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Prologue

Pakistan's current security crisis is a direct result of both structural as well as trigger factors. The religious nature of the state i.e. Islamic Republic of Pakistan and its dispute with India over the Himalayan state of Kashmir represent two major structural factors. Both became even more pronounced during General Ziaul Haq's era between 1977, when he seized power through a coup, and August 1988, when the C-130 aircraft carrying him and several other generals as well as the American ambassador crashed near Bahawalpur, central Pakistan. A lopsided notion of 'strategic depth' is another structural factor born out of the proximity to Afghanistan in the west.

Besides internal trigger factors such as serious fundamental governance issues, political instability, military interventions, and questionable law-enforcement issues, a tardy criminal justice, global geopolitics too, has contributed to its volatility as trigger factors, particularly Washington's two campaigns - first against the former Soviet Union in the early 1980s and later against al-Qaeda beginning with the assault on the Taliban regime in October 2001 – Operation Enduring Freedom. On both occasions, Pakistan found itself under the rule of military dictators who were looking for international legitimacy, and thus became willing partners in campaigns which were geo-political in nature but entailed disastrous socio-political consequences for the country. Pakistan's current crisis is therefore rooted not only in its own lopsided policies in the name of national security but also in the cold war which sucked it into two Afghanistan-based military campaigns – the first one raised the complex of Osama bin Laden-led jihadists, and the second one undertook to undo the same complex that had flourished under the Taliban regime in Kabul.

What is the consequence? The situation is not without debilitating socio-political and economic costs. Pakistan has lost over 55,000 people since becoming part of the US-led war on terror. Its economy has suffered over 102 billion dollars' worth of direct or indirect losses since late 2001, according to an assessment Ishaq Dar, federal finance minister, gave in an interview.¹

Global Consequence

The global image of Pakistan also took irreparable battering and the country today

¹*The News*, June 3, 2014 [http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-3-253648-War-on-terror-causes-\\$102.5-billion-losses](http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-3-253648-War-on-terror-causes-$102.5-billion-losses)

is largely defined by perceptions about the country's role in international terrorism. Outsiders believe and insist that the leaders of al-Qaeda and the Taliban are hiding in Pakistan, and that terrorist groups of all shades, including those inimical to India, China, the US and the West at large, use Pakistani territory for their operations.

For over a decade most TTP, IMU and ETIM terrorists have used Waziristan, one of the seven FATA districts, as a sanctuary and training ground. The Afghan Taliban operate out of North Waziristan to mount terrorist attacks on Afghan and NATO troops. This finally prompted the Pakistani army to launch Zarb-e-Azb, a military operation to destroy and disrupt al-Qaeda-linked terrorist networks holed up in North Waziristan. Since the offensive began on 15 June 2014, the military claims to have killed over 1200 Pakistani and foreign militants, including Uzbeks and Chechens, as well as people from Dagestan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

Another preconception is that sections of the Pakistani military establishment maintain close links with such Islamist radical groups as the Haqqani Network, Afghan Taliban and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which focuses its attention on India.

These entrenched preconceptions form part of the global discourse on counter-terrorism that continues to stigmatise Pakistan.

The deadly December 16 massacre of at least 145 people, mostly students and teachers of the Army Public School at Peshawar and the ensuing reaction by the civilian government and the military, however, seem to have helped correct some of the negative perceptions about the country. Dubbed as a watershed moment in Pakistan, the civilian and military leadership moved swiftly to declare an open war against the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a faction of which claimed responsibility for the act. The first policy response was to lift the moratorium on the death penalty, followed by over two dozen executions, mostly of people who had been on the death row for several years. The Peshawar school incident appeared to have unified the nation, that culminated in a 20-point counter-terror National Action Plan (NAP) followed by a law that allowed the establishment of speedy trial military courts on January 7, 2015.

After the December 16 massacre, however, the Pakistani public clearly swung against all shades of militancy and is asking for more concrete actions, such as putting an end forever to the distinction between good and bad Taliban – a refer-

ence to those religio-militant groups that are considered as instruments of foreign policy against India. These groups are also at the heart of Pakistan's chronic tensions with its eastern neighbor. Critics insist that without revising the perspective on the jihad infrastructure that exists within Pakistan, it would not be possible to mend relations with India and Afghanistan. Nor would an effective fight against the TTP be possible.

This anthology of essays comprising 5 research papers traces the history of religious militancy in Pakistan. It is an attempt to contextualize the country's present security crisis and to explain how it happened. It also takes a look at the evolution of al-Qaeda out of the anti-Soviet Union CIA-ISI-led jihad and the emergence of the Islamic State in the Syria-Iraq region. It also elucidates how the US-led West now tastes the medicine that it used to motivate overzealous religious militants against unwanted dictators and the former Soviet Union.

The Enemy Within

Imtiaz Gul

In February 2012 Brigadier Ali Khan and four other officers were put on trial for their alleged ties to Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT, literally Party of Liberation), a banned Islamist group struggling for the global caliphate. All of them denied the allegations. Colonel Inamur Rahim (ret), Khan's lawyer, said his client was detained for demanding that someone within the military be called to account for the US raid on Abbottabad.¹ On March 3, 2012, Rahim also quoted his client as saying that he did write letters to the president and the army chief, urging them to take stock of what he described as the grave situation that had arisen out of Pakistan's alliance with the US.

In May 2012, from his prison cell, Khan issued a six-page political manifesto. His call was for the army to break off its anti-terror alliance with the United States, which he contended was forcing Pakistan to fight its own people. "This may help us redeem some of our lost dignity and we badly need that." ("Senior Pakistani officer issues anti-U.S. manifesto from his cell", The Washington Post, May 15, 2012) Apparently, his manifesto had little effect on the military leadership. The field general court martial sentenced him to five years of rigorous imprisonment on August 3, 2012. Four majors were sentenced to jail terms ranging from one to three years (dawn.com, August 3, 2012).

The case of Brigadier Khan reflects the bitter reality of radicalization of minds within the armed forces, which had been used as a major instrument first in the CIA-led anti-Soviet war in the 1980s. This way Islam was used as a motivating force. Later it also became the staple for the military, producing alarming consequences.

Background

It is indeed an irony to measure the transformation that the Pakistani society and the military have undergone since the jihad days of the 1980s. Osama bin Laden is dead. It appears a big blow has been dealt to terrorism and Islamic extremism. The world's most wanted man, guilty of plotting spectacular attacks on the West, is no longer there to inspire his terrorist group to stage more such attacks across the Atlantic or to bring down the Pakistani government. Now imagine the scene

¹For more on HuT, see 'Jihad turns into terror'

in the Pakistani parliament a few days after Bin Laden's killing. Maulana Asmatullah Khan, a leader of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam's 'Nazaryati' (ideological) faction, rose to offer prayers for the dead terrorist mastermind. Only two members of the assembly joined him in the prayers. One of them was Maulana Atta-ur-Rehman, a former minister for tourism in the Zardari government and a younger brother of Maulana Fazlur Rahman, the head of JUI-F. Fazlur Rahman is currently the chairman of National Assembly's Kashmir committee. The JUI-F had been a vocal supporter of the Afghan Taliban in the past.

The JUI-F, however, was not alone in the adulation of bin Laden; addressing a rally in a small town in Chakwal on March 18, 2012, Syed Munawar Hassan, the Jamaat-e-Islami chief, arguably the most educated and best-organized Islamic party in Pakistan, described Bin Laden as the greatest martyr and President Asif Zardari as the biggest traitor. He declared that Bin Laden had been "martyred" because he had refused to obey "the Great Satan". ("Osama biggest martyr, Zardari biggest traitor, says JI chief," Pakistan Today, March 18, 2012) Bin Laden's killing prompted a serious period of self-reflection in Pakistan, as the country tried to understand how he could have lived for so long in Abbottabad, 125 km north of the capital Islamabad. But the truth is that every level of society has been Islamized in recent years, creating an environment where extremists are too often tolerated. And herein lies the daunting challenge that the country faces today; the threat coming from within the society, particularly from people in positions of influence in politics, bureaucracy, and the military establishment, who sympathize, empathize, or privately eulogize the cause of extremism, personified by Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, or Mullah Omar.

Barely two weeks after the secret Navy SEALs' raid, hundreds of leaflets were distributed in the Rawalpindi cantonment, where the army has its headquarters, by suspected members of HuT.

Oh sincere and honest Army officers! Have you forgotten the path that you had taken to defend the Muslims living here against infidels? Who will you join on the day of reckoning – true followers of Allah and Mohammad, or the traitor rulers and their foreign benefactors? Since it is an open secret that the real power in Pakistan rests with the military, it is, therefore, incumbent upon it to step forward, join the Hizb ut-Tahrir, and make a comprehensive plan to rid the country of traitors and agents of infidels, and create conditions for it

to seize power and strive for the liberation and unification of occupied Muslim territories.

Infiltration came later on May 22, 2011, when a handful of militants were able to penetrate the PNS Mehran Naval Base in Karachi. They kept elite commandos at bay for 18 hours and destroyed two aircraft. According to analysts, this could only have been carried out with the help of an insider.

And then on June 21, 2011, came another shock to many when the Pakistani army confirmed that a senior officer serving at the GHQ in Rawalpindi, had been arrested for ‘contacts with a proscribed organization’, i.e. HuT.

Active in Britain, HuT is banned in many Muslim countries because it seeks to overthrow the incumbent governments. It was founded in 1953 in Jerusalem by Taqiuddin Nabhani (1909-1977). The Pakistani government had banned it in 2004, but the Multan seat of the Lahore High Court overturned the proscription in 2005, accepting the HuT’s plea that it was non-violent.²

In fact, Brigadier Ali Khan had been detained a month earlier on May 6, 2011 four days after the US Navy SEALs’ dramatic intrusion of the Bin Laden hideout in Abbottabad. Major General Athar Abbas, the then military spokesperson, later confirmed this information in an interview with the author. ‘We follow a zero-tolerance policy regarding such activities within the military and therefore a prompt action was taken on detection.’

General Kayani personally ordered Khan’s arrest. He was the highest-ranking serving army officer to face arrest in more than 15 years. In 1995, a group of officers led by Major General Zaheerul Islam Abbasi and Brigadier Mustansir Billa had been busted as they were plotting a coup against Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

According to Inamur Rahim, his client had asked serious questions in a meeting of senior military officers

about the Abbottabad raid and his concerns could be the cause of his arrest. Rahim is a retired colonel and began practicing law after his career with the army came to an end.³

According to family sources, Khan was concerned about the future of Pakistan,

²Ibid.

³The News, June 23, 2011.

and had dared ask the military high command how the American Navy SEALs were able to penetrate deep into the Pakistani territory to kill Bin Laden. He had also been critical of Pakistan's unquestioned cooperation with the US, and had also requested his seniors to call all those to account who had failed to locate Bin Laden.

Once passed over, Brigadier Khan began writing letters to generals, suggesting to them ways as to how to become 'self-reliant' and 'to purge the army of the American influence'. He reportedly told senior officers such as General Kayani that Pakistan's 'unconditional' support to the Americans was the real reason of resentment in the lower ranks of the army. He even wrote to President Asif Ali Zardari, giving him a formula of making Pakistan economically self-reliant by freeing the country of the US aid. These passionate attempts resonated the HuT's aggressive and ambitious agenda.

Alarmed by his growing impatience, many colleagues advised Brigadier Khan to stop writing letters to his seniors. 'But Khan wouldn't listen to us, he thought his input was necessary to save the institution he was serving and loved,' an officer, who had served with him, said.⁴ The raid on Bin Laden's compound gave him the last opportunity to vent his feelings.

On May 5, 2011, he was invited to an officers' meeting by his former student and now his boss, Lieutenant General Javed Iqbal, at the army headquarters. The question that officers were asked at this meeting was how to pursue an inquiry into the May 2 raid. As reported by one of the officers present in the meeting all had been going well until Brigadier Khan got his turn to speak. In his opinion, the culprits who had hidden Bin Laden and allowed the Americans to get away with breaching Pakistan's sovereignty were to be found within the army.

He also asked General Javed Iqbal whether Pakistan had given itself up into total US submission. Much before the meeting ended, Khan's criticism had already infuriated General Iqbal. As it turned out, Khan's views were not those of a lone wolf. He had managed to convince some of his fellow officers of the veracity of his case. The following day General Iqbal told the corps commanders' meeting, which was chaired by General Kayani, what had happened. 'But the problem is that his anti-American views and [opinions on] self-reliance were getting popular with middle- and lower-ranking officers,' one remarked. That same evening Briga-

⁴'Pakistan's dissenting army officer', BBC South Asia, , June 23, 2011

dier Khan was arrested. It looks as if Brigadier Khan's cult was growing too rapidly and too dangerously.

It was not the first time that senior officers got to hear Brigadier Khan's inflammatory anti-American views. He had earned the ire of General Musharraf in 2005, when he had asked him to explain the parameters of the support to the US-led war on terror. 'Khan's question seemed to set General Musharraf on fire,' recalls Dr Rifaat Hussain, a former NDU professor.⁵

Seven years on, his successor General Kayani, faced similar questions by a couple of officers, but the Chief kept his cool and composure. Instead, he spelt out his priorities and also explained the limitations of Pakistan's armed forces. The occasion was Kayani's address to the students of a military course at the National Defense University (NDU) on May 19, 2011, and the context was nothing else but the May 2 raid.

These two encounters exposed the nub of Pakistan's dilemma that exists between top military leadership and the rank and file; the top radiates a pragmatic realism, leveraging the country's strategic position to gain influence, cash, training, and equipment as an ally with of the US. But that is not popular with the younger officers who have grown up during a period dominated by the country's Islamization from the late 1970s.

Brigadier Khan is certainly not alone in radiating a particular school of Islamic thought. The country's involvement in the CIA-sponsored anti-Soviet jihad, facilitated by General Zia-ul Haq has left indelible marks on the outlook of the army. Zia invoked Islam for personal gain and that legacy continues to haunt liberal officers to this day.

'How can you rule out the possibility of the presence of ideologically-driven people in the army, after all it is an army drawn from within the society,' asked Major General Athar Abbas during one of our several meetings. However, he cited an elaborate monitoring mechanism, led by the ISI and the Military Intelligence (MI), to prevent the proliferation of extremists.

The defensive argument that any major institution would turn up the occasional militant misses the reality of twenty-first-century Pakistan and its armed forces.

⁵Author's interview with Dr. Rifaat Hussain, who retired as the head of Department of Defense and Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

Anti-Western sentiment, some rooted in Islamist ideology, is growing within the army itself, which has suffered several bouts of frustration for the fact that it is fighting against its own people on its own territory. For much of its history, Pakistan's military has used Indophobia as its organizing principle, the axiom around which its strategy has been based. But for a growing band of officers there is a new enemy: America. For them, the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, followed by the one on Iraq under the pretext of weapons of mass destruction, is part of the American expansionism, a move that aims denuclearizing Pakistan. Such officers – as well as their civilian counterparts– insist that much of the violence in Pakistan today is the direct consequence of the American interference in the region, an extremely contentious issue which generates heated debates among Pakistanis every day.

Most Pakistanis tend to scapegoat their problems, rather than looking inward. The right-wing mainstream politicians, in particular, have little time and inclination for critical analysis while talking about real causes of Pakistan's predicament: policies that factored in non-state groups as the supplement to the state security apparatus.

History of Dissent

Dissent or thoughts of rebellion are not new to the army. There is a growing list of plots and coup attempts emanating from the ranks of the army. In the mid-1990s, a group of officers led by Major General Zaeheerul Islam Abbasi and Brigadier Mustansir Billa had been busted as they were planning to stage a coup against Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The 1995 'Operation Khilafa' aimed at taking over the GHQ at the time of the corps commanders' conference, eliminating key commanders, and then taking over the country with the ultimate objective of imposing a Taliban-style Sunni rule. Earlier, Captain Farooq, one of General Pervez Musharraf's security officers, had also been identified as a member of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir after his posting as the security officer to the president. Once spotted, he was briefly arrested and then retired from the army.

In 2009, an air force officer, Squadron Leader Nadeem Ahmed Shah lost his job after the MI found out he had links to an outlawed outfit. Originally, a civilian employee of the Air Weapons Complex (AWC) near Islamabad, Shah was at the time the commanding officer at the Shamsi Air Base in Balochistan, a facility that had practically been handed over to the US-NATO forces for operations inside

Afghanistan and Pakistan's border regions soon after the war on terror unfolded on October 7, 2001.

Similarly, Muhammad Altaf, a civilian employee of the National Development Complex (NDC) that comes under the National Engineering and Scientific Commission (NESCOM) and deals with ballistic missile development, was arrested for their alleged links to a banned outfit. His status remains that of a 'missing person.'

In January 2005, a military court sentenced three air force officers to jail terms ranging from two to nine years for alleged links to the Jaish-e-Mohammad, led by Maulana Masood Azhar. Officials told me that mobile phone intercepts helped trace conversations with these officers, which led to their sacking and imprisonment. They had been part of a gang within the military, which was passing on information to Jaish-e-Mohammad before the two attacks on General Musharraf in 2003.

As many as 57 soldiers had been arrested in connection with the two assassination attempts on General Musharraf.⁶ Of these, five were given death sentences (mostly corporals, junior technicians), while one army soldier (from the DSG) was hanged. Others, who were awarded sentences of varying lengths, include two soldiers of the special services Group (SSG). The explosives used in the first attempt on 15 December 2003 were in fact stolen from a Pakistan Air Force (PAF) depot by one of the convicted airmen.⁷ Though some of the airmen were given in-house sermons on radicalization, others 'got a one-year leave on the pretext of going with Tablighi Jamaat, literally Preaching Party, but when they were later arrested, it transpired that they had, in fact, been training with different militant groups.'⁸

In May 2005, a court handed down death sentence [in absentia] to Naik Arshad Mahmood of the Special Services Group (SSG), the elite commando unit of the army. He was accused of conspiring to assassinate Pervez Musharraf. Mahmood was executed in early 2015, after the government lifted the moratorium on death penalty in the aftermath of a brutal terrorist attack on an Army-run school in Peshawar on December 16, 2014. Others named in the case included Havaldar Mohammad Younis of the 98 Air Defence regiment of the army, who was sentenced

⁶*Dawn*, June 25, 2009

⁷*Daily Times*, February 25, 2005.

⁸*The News*, May 24, 2011.

to ten years of rigorous imprisonment, and Lance Naik Zafar Iqbal Dogar of the SSG, who abandoned the mission halfway and turned a state witness.

Four months later, another military court sentenced Major Adil Qudoos, Colonel Abdul Ghaffar, and Colonel Khalid Abbasi to varying jail terms on charges of activities in conflict with their duty. One of the charges they faced was facilitation of Al-Qaeda-linked fighters. In 2003, they had also led the intelligence operatives to arrest Khalid Sheikh Mohammed's associates from army's hostels in Rawalpindi.

In one instance, a soldier, Abdul Islam Siddiqui was executed in August 2005 following a closed-door field general court martial for complicity in an attack on General Musharraf. The 35-year-old Siddiqui, the court established, pressed the button of the remote control device which caused an explosion targeting Musharraf in Rawalpindi on December 14, 2003.

The assassination of GOC of SSG Major General Ameer Faisal Alavi was plotted by a retired major, Haroon Ashiq.⁹ After joining the Lashkar-e-Taiba, he moved on to work with Ilyas Kashmiri of the Brigade 313 linked with Al-Qaeda. Ashiq's brother, Captain Khurram, had retired from the army only to join the Taliban and other fighters in Afghanistan. He was killed in 2007 in Afghanistan's Helmand province. Various other retired soldiers, many of whom had liaised with the Taliban during the 1990s, returned to Afghanistan to fight voluntarily.

However, Major Haroon Ashiq is not the only officer with links to Al-Qaeda. In 2003, Major Adil Qudoos of 45 signals was arrested and later sentenced for having links to the militant network.

It is not only people on higher positions in the army who are the main reason for worry; radicalization in the lower ranks is equally disturbing. Investigation by the Dawn newspaper in May 2010 showed that the deadly Jundallah group, an offshoot of the rabidly anti-Shia Lashkar-e Jhangvi, which attempted to kill the then Karachi corps commander, Lieutenant General Ahsan Saleem Hayat in 2004, had some serving and retired soldiers of the army and the air force in its ranks. Jundallah has gained a lot of notoriety as a small but deadly force.¹⁰ The police and intelligence agencies have been compromised in much the same way as the

⁹Ashiq was later acquitted by an anti-terrorism court (ATC) in March 2012 after being briefly arrested on charges of involvement in Major General Ameer Faisal Alavi's murder.

¹⁰Abdullah Malik, 'Radicals in ranks', June 3, 2011, <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/03062011/page7.shtml>

army. Constable Sheikh Muhammad Adil of the Sindh Police's Special Branch was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2002 for involvement in the murder of Daniel Pearl, the Mumbai-based South Asia bureau chief of The Wall Street Journal. Though in official service, he was in fact a crypto member of the radical outfit Harkatul Jihad-e-Islami, and actively abetted in Pearl's kidnapping.

The court found him guilty of providing active logistic support and cover for the kidnappers. Along with the mastermind of Pearl's murder, Omar Saeed Sheikh, Adil is currently serving his term in a Karachi jail.

Police is no exception either to religious radicalization; during the trial of Raymond Davis, CIA's private security contractor held for shooting to death two Pakistanis in January 2011 in Lahore, one of the policemen deputed to guard Davis was proudly wearing the badge of a militant organization. Even after admonition by the judge, the policeman refused to remove the badge.¹¹

While the military authorities could sniff some of the coup plots or locate dissenting people out, it could not prevent attacks on Pakistan Army GHQ on October 10, 2009, when several armed militants attacked the headquarters in Rawalpindi and took over three dozen people hostage inside the complex for almost 24 hours; the attack on the PNs Mehran Naval Base on May 22, 2011, storming of the Pakistan Air Force's Minhas Base on August 16, 2012 and the one on PAF Base Peshawar on December 15, 2012 were some of other examples that showed how insider information facilitated these brazen attacks.

Cooperation with the US in the war on terror has had a heavy bearing on the national psyche. It is a subject that the right-wing religio-political parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami, Jamiat Ulemai Islam, and the cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan often question. Their campaigns, premised on the issue of sovereignty, drone attacks, and 'unquestioned' cooperation with the US has led to an ideological, anti-American drift within the armed forces and its affiliated institutions as well.

There was a hint of this when the then Pakistani ambassador to the US, Husain Haqqani, was invited in May 2011 to address officers at the National Defense University. During the course of discussion he tossed a question at the audience: 'What is the principal national security threat to Pakistan, from within, India, or the United States?' Those of us in the audience watched in astonishment as the

¹¹Ibid.

majority, all of them well-educated, senior army and civilian civil servants, pointed the finger at the US.

According to a cable released by the WikiLeaks in 2008, Anne Patterson, the US ambassador to Pakistan, too, had 'expressed shock at the rising levels of anti-Americanism in the next generation of leaders of Pakistan's military elite'.

Fareed Zakaria, a former editor, *Newsweek International* and currently the editor-at-large of the *Time* magazine, also used the NDU anecdote in an article to raise questions about the 'radicalization and anti-Americanism' within the Pakistani army.¹² He also touched on the rise of religious thought in the armed forces.

'Islamist ideology is replacing strategy. For 60 years, Pakistan's military has focused obsessively on its rivalry with India. Large elements within military appear to be switching obsessions, and the United States is replacing India as the organizing principle around which Pakistan's military understands its national security interests. If this happens, not only is the Afghan war lost but Pakistan itself is also lost,' Zakaria wrote, pointing out that Pakistan stood only two notches above Yemen and Somalia in the 2011 list of failed states.¹³ Pakistan is drifting into a strategic black hole. Does the country really think its best path forward is as an adversary of the United States, currying favour with militants, and becoming a vassal of China? Are its role models North Korea and Burma? Or does it want to crush the jihadist movements that are destroying the country, join the global economy, reform its society, and become a real democracy? These are the questions Pakistan has to ask itself, Zakaria wrote in a direct reference to the emotional and incoherent attitudes, largely mired in religious zeal.

Internal Eyes on Radicals

Brigadier Khan's arrest is symptomatic of the presence of a radical mindset within the armed forces. The good news is that it probably also reflects new thinking: greater attention to all those who might be influenced by organizations such as Hizb ut-Tahrir and Lashkar-e-Taiba.¹⁴

Brigadier Khan's arrest may be surprising to many, but most Pakistanis are unaware that the army – particularly after five high-profile attacks including two

¹²*The Washington Post*, June 23, 2011.

¹³"The Failed States Index 2011", *Foreign Policy*, June 14, 2011

¹⁴*Foreign Policy*, June 22, 2011.

on former president Pervez Musharraf in December 2003 – long ago instituted mechanisms to keep an eye on suspect militant-minded officers. the detention of dozens of commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the army and the air force in connection with the suicide attacks targeting Musharraf's cavalcade in Rawalpindi did surprise the military high command, confronting it with a new reality –that Al-Qaeda and Taliban-linked militants had developed constituencies within the army and the air force units, and persuaded them even to go after their chiefs.

As a consequence, several suspected officers and low-ranking soldiers have either been transferred to insignificant positions or forced to take premature retirement. Musharraf had in fact entrusted the MI plus internal intelligence outfits of all the three services –the army, the navy, and the air force –to keep a check on officers who may be sympathetic to the cause of Islamists, or possess extremist religious inclinations.

Critics consider the army high command treating such radical elements with 'tolerance', but one wonders what to do with such officers? Hang them, jail them for life, or...? Would that not conflict with the universally accepted rights of religious freedom and thought? It is precisely for these reasons that Islamist groups such as HuT operates freely in the UK, and the government has little constitutional tool to suppress their activities.

This also brings into focus, for instance, the Western duplicity on certain issues. The Western nations keep condemning corruption in countries such as Pakistan, they find it difficult to block the entry of all those who benefit from this corruption, or at least are accused of graft and abuse of power. For example, Altaf Husain, the leader of the Urdu-speaking community that had migrated from India to Pakistan after the partition, General Pervez Musharraf, who ruled Pakistan for nine years and now faces multiple charges, or Asif Ali Zardari, who lived in New York until Benazir Bhutto's assassination in December 2007.

In the process, the jihadi zeal infected even the senior ranks of the armed forces as much as it impacted the religio-political landscape with alarming consequences for the society.

It is worth recalling that the attack on the GHQ of the Pakistan army in October 2009 had been led by Mohammad Aqeel nicknamed Dr Usman, who was execut-

ed on December 19, 2014.¹⁵ He had served as a nursing assistant in Rawalpindi's Army Medical Corps before deserting the army in 2004 to join forces with Commander Ilyas Kashmiri, who was killed in an early June 2011 drone strike.

Dissent or deviation from discipline within the military ranks on religious grounds can be traced to the way the armed forces under General Pervez Musharraf cooperated with the United States. 'The creeping coup of conservatism in the armed forces is a legacy of the country's third military dictator, General Zia-ul-Haq...; religious sermons by fanatical mullahs in military units were encouraged and even Tablighi Jamaat members were allowed to preach in the garrisons at will. This drift within the armed forces was first revealed during Benazir Bhutto's second stint as prime minister in 1995, when a group of senior army officers, headed by a major general, was caught planning to topple the government and to eliminate the army leadership, with the prime aim of enforcing Islamic Shariah in the country.¹⁶ One concrete consequence can be seen in the number of troops refusing to fight. Several units reportedly declined to be posted to anti-militant operation there and dozens of soldiers refused to fight against militants. Between 2004 and 2009, at least two thousand soldiers had either refused or disappeared after they were posted to the Waziristan region, a senior intelligence official in charge of the border areas told me.

Not that the majority of the officers, soldiers, or the population at large went radical the way Al-Qaeda wants them; but the real cause for alarm is their sheer presence and the influence in the society, as well as the potential to infect others with extremist religious ideologies, and also serve as a shelter foe militants.

One of the five senior MI officials under Musharraf had told me in September 2007 that his organization had been tasked with specifically looking for officers with affiliations to, or sympathy for, any religio-political party or those found favouring or praising Al-Qaeda and its local partners.

'The ISI was dealing with the CIA on the counterterror front. But the MI was not only managing internal special political operations, particularly in the volatile province of Balochistan and Sindh but also conducting regular checks to sift religious radicals within our ranks,' Brigadier Masood Ahmed Khan had said during

¹⁵Dr. Usman was executed on December 19, 2014, after Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif lifted the moratorium on the death penalty in the wake of the TTP's attack on Army Public School Peshawar on December 16, 2014.

¹⁶Amir Mir, 'Brigadier's arrest shows extent of radicalization', *The News*, June 22, 2011

an informal chat with me. One proof of Musharraf's unusual trust in the MI, and conversely, the lack of trust in the ISI, was evident from the fact that he had assigned the MI to deal with the Lal Masjid in July 2007. The ISI was kept out of the loop, and that is why one of the clerics, Maulana Abdul Aziz, known for his long association with the ISI, was caught while escaping in a burka. Ironically, Islamabad made headlines all over the world as the MI and the SSG prepared to raid the Lal Masjid (or the red mosque), located in the heart of the federal capital.

On July 10, 2007, Pakistan's military stormed the Lal Masjid. 'Operation Silence' was meant to neutralize a group of armed men and women who had assumed the role of a moral brigade to impose Sharia on the capital city. The operation left a trail of death and destruction; some 150 militants, led by Maulana Abdul Rasheed Ghazi, fell to the explosives and bullets of the storming troops. About a dozen army men, including a colonel and some commandos also lost their lives in action. The bloody assault left deep scars on Pakistan's political landscape, resulting in the emergence of the Ghazi force that went about avenging the raid by accelerating suicide attacks on security forces and innocent Pakistanis.

The mosque, in fact, had also served as a conduit and shelter for Al-Qaeda affiliates and probably because of that the chief clerics holed up inside were not amenable to any deal whatsoever. Instead, they opted to go down fighting. In a private conversation with an official, who looked after Aziz during detention, the cleric had complained that the ISI had advised him to leave the complex in a burka.

Seven years passed after the military operation, the mosque was rebuilt with the help of one of Pakistan's real estate tycoon Malik Riaz and Maulana Abdul Aziz after securing his freedom through courts is again preaching the radical agenda.

In January 2011, the cold-blooded murder of Salman Taseer, the Punjab governor, at the hands of his own police guard had sent shivers down the spine, even of senior army officers. Mumtaz Qadiri, a constable, worked with the Punjab police, was part of Salman Taseer's security team had been looking for an opportunity to gun him down. Reason? Taseer had advocated amendments to the Pakistan's blasphemy laws that mandate death sentence. On November 20, 2010, he had visited Aasia Bib, a Christian woman who had been sentenced to death on blasphemy charges, in the Sheikhpura jail, and promised to take her clemency appeal to President Zardari.

For ultra-conservative zealots like the 29-year-old Qadiri, this amounted to blas-

phemy, a crime punishable with death in Pakistan. On January 4, Qadiri got his opportunity in Islamabad's upscale Kohsar Market. As Taseer and his friends got out of a restaurant after enjoying coffee, Qadiri shot him 29 times with his Kalashnikov. Taseer breathed his last much before he could be taken to the hospital.

It is quite ironical that as of January 2015, Pakistan, governed by the complicated, and partially antiquated the Anglo-Saxon penal law, still lacks a comprehensive anti-terror law to respond to the new levels of socio-political threats. More ironical is the conservative mindset that has pervaded all levels of society. No surprise, therefore, when on July 2, 2011, for instance, Qadiri's counsel, Malik Mohammad Rafiq, confronted Shehryar Taseer, Salman Taseer's son, with frivolous, though stinging, questions. 'How many times did your father marry? Did he marry Muslim women in an Islamic way?

It was quite mind-boggling that the defence lawyer had to prove the victim as a 'bad, pervert Muslim' to justify a murder that took place in the presence of dozens of people. This case offered just another glimpse into the kind of radicalization that ran through, not only in the armed forces, but also the police.

Qadiri's is not an isolated case of religious radicalism. For example, the lower ranks of police in southern Punjab, home to more than 42 million people, are also infested with sympathizers and supporters of militant organizations. During the 1990s, when the province of Punjab in particular was hit by the worst Sunni-Shia sectarian war, a number of lower ranking officials did collaborate and provided inside information to the banned outfits on numerous occasions or helped them carry out counter-attacks. An offshoot of the Shia militant organization Sipah-e-Muhammad was led by Ashraf Ali Shah, a retired major of the Pakistan Army.

'We have ordered fresh scrutiny and enhanced vigilance of ranks after this gruesome incident, it is pretty scary,' said a general, a senior member of the army's high command, when I met him later that month at his Rawalpindi office.

Yet, even as he described the efforts to root out extremists, he conceded that Islam plays an important role as a motivating force in the army. 'Islam is the foundation of this country and we cannot disregard it,' said the general in a manner, as if Pakistan and religion were inseparable.

When I asked whether the Western armies also use Christianity as a motivating force, he said they (Western countries) do not rely on religion to motivate their

soldiers.

‘But why use this motivation at all, are you defending Islam or Pakistan?’ I asked him. For a while, the general went silent as he groped for an answer until he regained his wits: ‘You are right, it is a good question and we probably never thought about it.’

‘But we also certainly don’t want the soldiers to follow in the footsteps of rabid radicals such as Osama or Mulla Omar,’ he said, and that is why we have special units that are always on the prowl, looking for potential allies of Al-Qaeda and Taliban. “There is no compromise on that.”

Pakistanis at large were shocked to hear the news that Dawat-e-Islami holds a considerable influence in the armed forces. Dawat-e-Islami holds an ostensibly apolitical Bareilvi outfit had until September 2011 escaped scrutiny. However, a big number within the ranks have become key source of funding for Dawat-e-Islami. Over Rs20 million were collected from the Pakistan Air Force for the organization, during the month of Ramadan,’ a security official, requesting anonymity told The Express Tribune.¹⁷

As usual, intelligence officials played down the revelations on the inroads the organization has reportedly made into the garrison. ‘It is nothing new. We have zero tolerance for all such organizations within the military,’ the official insisted. He acknowledged that Dawat-e-Islami has a following in the armed forces, but it is not unusual. ‘You can’t stop individuals practicing their own religious beliefs, if they are not violating the military discipline,’ one of the officials said, reflecting the characteristic denialism that afflicts so many Pakistanis, both in khaki and mufti.

While the military takes pride in having a vigilance mechanism within, it has yet to realize that glossing over certain realities and quick fixes do not help build and save nations. Quick fixes may provide transitory relief, but the real remedy lies in treating root cause and not just the symptom.

The military, as of now, is undeniably, riddled with anti-American feelings and Islamist zealots. Rooting out the odd one or two is no substitute for tackling the ingrained, institutionalized anti-Western sentiment that has taken root in the armed forces –just as it has in the rest of society. The likes of Brigadier Khan or Constable

¹⁷Kamran Yousaf, ‘Dawat-e-islami comes under military’s radar’, The Express Tribune, September 12, 2011

Adil or the air force officers convicted of plotting to kill General Musharraf are symptoms of this malaise. If not treated, it has the potential to become an unmitigated disaster for the country.

Strangely, Pakistan also witnessed in early 2012 the emergence of the Difa-e-Pakistan Council (Defense of Pakistan Council, generally known as the DPC), that included several religio-political and banned religio-militant organizations such as Jamaat-ud-Dawa, the renamed Lashkar-e-Taiba. (Theoretically, LeT does not exist in Pakistan because of the Jan 2002 ban, when it was banned..) Lieutenant General Hamid Gul (ret), a former ISI chief, was the driving force behind the council. Most analysts saw this as a handiwork of hardliners within the military establishment, those still wedded to using the right-wing groups to leverage relations with the United States and India. The DPC, in fact, drew a lot of flak and ridicule by most writers and commentators for the simple reason that its leaders smelled rat everywhere. In public rallies across Pakistan, the DPC leaders accused the US and India of plotting sinister conspiring against Pakistan, urging the government to snap relations with both of them. Some of the vitriolic rhetoric even targeted Pakistani civil society and the media for having a 'pro-Western outlook'.

This self-destructive, isolationist ranting also prompted writers such as Ejaz Haider and Babar Sattar to suggest what the country indeed needed was another defence council to defend Pakistan against the clerical DPC. The agenda of this group seeks to reverse the wheel of history. If they could have their way, Pakistan's isolation would have matched that of Afghanistan under Mulla Omar. Most analysts agree that unless the military establishment categorically steers away from such conglomerates, and declares unequivocal dissociation from them, they would keep causing alarm and intimidation. The state institutions have to send a clear message. Until they do so, the majority of Pakistanis will keep living in fear of these religious zealots.

Bin Laden's 'Jihad': America's War on Terror

Boon for Organized Crime

Much before Bin Laden's exit from Tora Bora in December 2001, followed by the retreat of hundreds of Al-Qaeda fighters into eastern Afghanistan, vast swathes of the border regions that separate Afghanistan from Pakistan, used to serve as safe havens for organized criminal gangs, particularly those involved in cross-border smuggling, drug-trafficking, abductions for ransom, car-jacking, and target kill-

ings through hired assassins. On the Pakistani side a long strip comprising slightly over 27,000 square km called the Federally Administered tribal Areas (FATA) provided the ideal space for illegal businesses. Since the nineteenth century, a special set of laws called the Frontier Crimes regulation (FCR) has been governing the FATA. Since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, these areas have remained out of the Pakistani constitutional and penal code jurisdiction. Barring a few changes in the FCR that relate to the political activities and some amendments to legal procedures for criminal cases, the areas remain under these draconian laws even today, and also turned out to be the biggest supportive factor in the proliferation of crime and the unusually strong nexus between crime and militancy.

More than two decades of warfare and the subsequent counterterror war, therefore, offered the best political environment for the gangs to operate with impunity. Worse, many of the gangsters hooked up with regional commanders of Al-Qaeda and Taliban militants thereby creating a formidable nexus. The godfather of this arrangement was none other than Osama bin Laden— the sheikh. Revered by even the most hardened criminals, the sheikh was the common denominator. Publicly, Al-Qaeda and Taliban commanders held Islamic courts to punish small-time offenders. Privately, they struck lucrative deals to make the most of the circumstances.

Bin Laden's declaration of jihad against the West and 9/11 opened up vast opportunities for the militant and criminal mafias, giving birth to a war economy that involves staggering sums, and has thrown up new stakeholders. While poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and drug-trafficking through Tajikistan and Pakistan picked up, abductions for ransom also became the order of the day, with most of the leads culminating at the doorsteps of Al-Qaeda-linked Arab militants as well as those associated with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and dissidents from the Central Asian republic of Uzbekistan.

While the conflict has affected the economy of the region, destroyed millions of jobs and stymied growth, it has also brought dividends for those associated with the military establishments or those who are directly or indirectly in league with religious militancy.

New Stakeholders¹⁸

Until the launch of the questionable war on terror, local notables, such as the government-recognized tribal elders, bureaucracy and smugglers jointly shared the dividends of illegal trade and trafficking but when the Taliban militants consolidated themselves in the tribal regions (FATA), they also seized control of most of the FATA after 2006, and became the biggest stakeholders in this criminal empire wanting the biggest share of the pie. By 2008-09, the pro-Taliban militants not only controlled almost all of FATA, but also several districts in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa (KPK) until they were pushed back by the Pakistani army from the Malakand Division in mid-2009. During this period, the militants used their gun power to benefit from the aforementioned criminal activities in various parts of the FATA and Malakand Division. They still share bounties of a whole range of unlawful activities in areas under their influence –running their own criminal empires or preying on the incomes of other criminals, a frustrated police official in Peshawar told me.¹⁹ A little less than half of the cargo that lands at Karachi Port or the Port Qasim near Karachi on the Arabian Sea belongs either to Afghan traders who import it under transit trade agreement, or to the NATO forces.²⁰ Pro-Taliban militants in the FATA routinely target the convoys carrying goods for the NATO forces based in Afghanistan. They deploy two different approaches to ambush the cargo trucks destined for Afghanistan. They either demand protection money from those cargo trucks or rob them of their merchandize. Members of criminal gangs in Khyber agency –the major supply route for NATO containers –usually torch or bomb the trucks after stealing the goods, which they sell to the traders of the Karkhano Market in Peshawar.²¹ They team up with local strongmen and religious militants – the Taliban – who lord over the smuggling side routes.²² In addition, the militants – at times, with the connivance of the corrupt government officials, steal the entire cargo of the containers that are in transit en route to Afghanistan. For instance, the federal tax ombudsman (FTO) reported that at least 8,000 containers destined for the NATO troops in Afghanistan went missing

¹⁸The following section is largely drawn from a special report: ‘the Linkage between terrorism and transnational Organized Crime’; published jointly by the Säktek Foundation and Luleå University of Technology, [http:// www.ltu.se/?l=en](http://www.ltu.se/?l=en). Imtiaz Gul contributed to the section on Afghanistan and Pakistan, based on information and research following visits to Kabul, Kandahar, Karachi, Peshawar, and Jalalabad in early 2011.

¹⁹Author’s interview with one of the senior-most police officials in Peshawar

²⁰Author’s interview with a high-ranking former police and intelligence official in Peshawar

²¹Imtiaz Gul, 2010: pp.74-76.

²²Ibid, p. 76.

between summer 2007 and November 2010. Based on conservative estimates, the FTO concluded that absence of these containers from the documents of the Karachi Port and the customs officials in Karachi meant the national exchequer lost at least Rs27 billion (around \$320 million) of this pilferage.²³ As Pakistani authorities are not allowed to touch the Afghan transit or NATO cargo, the probability of connivance between officials, pro-militant traders, and transporters is pretty big. Similarly, Mullah Nazir, a Taliban militant leader based in South Waziristan is also reported to be benefiting from the smuggling of opium and heroin through the Angoor Adda border crossing.²⁴

The second most important funding source for most of the militants in the FATA is extortion from traders, smugglers, and cargo transportation. ‘The pro-Taliban militants in Khyber agency –regardless of who pays them –provide protection to the cargo that transits their area of influence. Smugglers, murderers, government and non-governmental organizations rely on the Taliban’s cover for passage through the region, thus ensuring a good source of income.’²⁵ The influence of militant and criminal rackets on the NATO supply routes via Torkham in the northwest and via Chaman in the southwest (on the way to Kandahar) is so immense that at times they seem to be controlling the trade across the border and the cost that the trade incurs.²⁶ Until early 2010, almost two-thirds of the US-NATO supplies meant for troops in Afghanistan came via Pakistan, but continued tensions between the US, frequent attacks by militants on the trucks, and the eventual suspension of the ground lines of communications (GLOCs) following the killing of 24 Pakistani soldiers in a US-NATO attack on a border post on November 26, 2011, the coalition was forced to turn to the Northern Distribution Network via Russia.

A journalist based in the Bajaur agency told me that Taliban militants, still in control of certain pockets in the agency, extort money from people involved in the smuggling of timber, weapons, drugs, and marble from the neighbouring Kunar province of Afghanistan. He thinks that it is almost impossible for traders and smugglers to ignore militants because they cannot afford their consignments to be stuck or confiscated or put their lives at risk.²⁷ Another account puts the going extortion rate by the militants at 10% of the total value, and even at times getting

²³Author’s interview with a high-ranking former police and intelligence official

²⁴Peters, 2010: p.83.

²⁵Gul, 2010: p.80.

²⁶Fair, 2010

²⁷Author’s interview with a journalist from Bajaur agency

involved in the illegal logging and smuggling themselves, dumping timber at the local markets at half its actual price to make quick money.²⁸ The local government officials, if present in the area, are usually found conniving in the illicit logging and smuggling of timber.²⁹ Various militant groups controlling different territories collaborate to ensure protection of complying shipments.³⁰

According to a secret report compiled by Pakistan's Federal investigation Agency (FIA),³¹ sometime terrorists get money by force or by threatening local residents and smugglers of timber of Agror Tanawal and the adjacent areas of Shergarh, a town in district Mansehra of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa. Local administration has limited control in this area therefore trees were cut illegally and smuggled out either through the river Indus in steamers or through auctions, where it is shown as timber confiscated by the forest division of Agror Tanawal.

More disturbing is the FIA's revelation that some of the timber traders and smugglers are related to terrorist groups such as Banaras Group, Momin Khan Group, that belonged to the banned militant group Jaish-e-Muhammad and was reportedly running a jihadi camp in Kala Dhaka, some 35 km northwest of Abbottabad until late 2010, and Muhammad Arshad Taliban Group. Muhammad Arshad, the area commander, had received training from the banned militant outfit Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and spent a few years in Karachi before moving to the Hazara region, apparently for organizing and leading militant activities. The chief of the Banaras Group, Banaras Babu, was declared a fugitive in July 2009 by the district court, but has not been arrested so far.

All the groups mentioned above have had a history of close ties to Osama bin Laden and his associates. In fact, the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen ran an Al-Qaeda-funded training camp in eastern Afghanistan. In August 1998, this camp, known as Zawar, was reduced to rubble when the US army rained dozens of Tomahawk missiles on it from an Indian Ocean base. (Were they fired from a base or an aircraft carrier?)

Bin Laden had survived the missile assault by a couple of hours. Smuggling with the support of and under the militants' protection, and with the connivance of government officials is not restricted to the Durand Line in the FATA alone. An-

²⁸Peters, 2010: pp.61-62

²⁹Khattak, 2010

³⁰Peters, 2010: p.52

³¹FIA's report No 31/10, serial No SIG/PU/183 conducted by it Peshawar-based Special Investigation Group. It was submitted to the FIA's head office on July 6, 2010.

other major trading route for the Afghan transit trade (ATT) goods as well as the NATO supplies is through the Chaman border crossing in the Balochistan province. Local smugglers in Balochistan have partnered with the militants to secure smuggling routes for the smuggling of the ATT goods back to Pakistan as well as to buy the robbed goods from the NATO supply containers at cheap wholesale prices from the militants. It is believed that all this happens with the active connivance of the government officials, including those from intelligence agencies.³²

Control of trading and smuggling routes is so crucial to the sustenance of many groups that it often triggers even armed and bloody confrontations among various Taliban factions. Fazal Saeed, a local commander of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in lower part of the Kurram agency, once developed serious differences with Hakimullah Mehsud, then another senior TTP commander, who later became the TTP chief. He was killed in a US drone strike in 2013. The reason for the differences was Saeed's assertiveness and his tight control over the trading roads and smuggling routes in and around Kurram agency. Their relations worsened to the extent that Hakimullah Mehsud sent a suicide bomber in 2010 to get Saeed killed but the bomber was caught.³³

According to some accounts, the funds that the militants receive from the tribesmen of Afghanistan and Pakistan living in the Gulf – and claimed to be donations by the former – are also 'security investments' by Afghan traders 'to ensure that the militants do not interfere with or destroy their businesses or properties back home.'³⁴ Foreign remittances are an important component of Pakistan's balance of payments. The total value of foreign remittances was estimated to be around \$15 billion for the year 2014.³⁵ Most of the money that ends up in the hands of militants is transferred through hawala. Some estimates of the militant income from foreign remittances through banks and *hawala* (informal sources) are estimated to be around Rs4 billion.³⁶ A trader from Quetta also argued that the biggest source of income for pro-Taliban militants in Balochistan is the *hawala* transfers.³⁷

Scores of interviews with police and intelligence officials as well as influential people with access to religious militants in Karachi, Quetta, and Peshawar leave no

³²Author's interview with a tribal elder hailing from Qilla Abdullah district in Balochistan

³³Author's interview with a parliamentarian from FATA sharing information on condition of anonymity

³⁴Peters, 2010: p. 36

³⁵*Business Recorder*, December 25, 2014

³⁶Author's interviews in Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar

³⁷Author's interview with a trader and tribal elder in Quetta

doubt that Taliban generate millions of dollars through criminal activities in Karachi, with one-third of bank robberies and 10% of kidnappings linked to the Taliban, and ransom demands ranging from \$60,000 to \$250,000. In one kidnapping of a Karachi businessman, who supplied fuel to the NATO forces in Afghanistan, the family agreed to pay \$2.5 million. A bank robbery of \$2 million was linked directly to Baitullah Mehsud, the founder of the vicious TTP, who was killed in a drone strike in August of 2009.

Interestingly, the militants also collaborate closely with big criminal kingpins in different regions of the country. The head HK (name withheld) of a land-grabbing mafia in Rawalpindi stands out as a perfect example of the nexus between crime and religiously-motivated militancy. Besides my personal observations, I was able to dig up substantial damning information on how this man and his group had thrived off their connections to politicians and bureaucrats.

According to a former high-ranking police and intelligence official, the elder brother of HK is a former member of parliament and his nephew also remained part of the government. Based on interviews with HK and some of the people around him, it is easy to figure out that the don expanded his empire through land-grabbing and extortions, going after properties of common people and forcing them into cheap deals. Intimidation, blackmail, and implication in false cases are the tools that these gangs employ to grab prized lands. Part of the gains of property-grabbing, thefts, and robberies also goes into charity and donations for religious organizations.³⁸ HK is acknowledged as a generous supporter of 'charitable religious causes' by the religiously inclined former member of the National Assembly, Shah Abdul Aziz, who himself was charged with the abduction and eventual murder of the Polish engineer, Peter Stanczak in February 2009. Shah is reportedly closely linked to the TTP.³⁹ Law-enforcement officials think that several religious leaders or those running seminaries are important players in the business of kidnapping for ransom and car thefts.⁴⁰ According to one senior intelligence official in charge of the southern districts of KPK, Shah Abdul Aziz was useful in securing the release of several abducted people but did not say whether he charged his services. People from his clan were also found involved in attacks on the NATO cargo.⁴¹

³⁸Author's interview with a high-ranking former police and intelligence official

³⁹Author's informal discussion with both the individuals in Islamabad

⁴⁰Author's interviews with police officials in Peshawar

⁴¹Author's interview with a high-ranking intelligence official

The dramatic events of 9/11, the coalition against terrorism, and Al-Qaeda's declaration of war against the United States helped create more opportunities for the chain that connects crime, militancy, politics, and bureaucracy.

Interestingly, during the five-year rule by the religio-political alliance –Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)–in the Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa province, which shares a 1,350 km border with Afghanistan, the state of law and order was acceptable. Between March 2002 and August 2007, when the provincial government served out its term, hardly any NATO cargo came under attack. Abductions for ransom were also minimal. But immediately after a caretaker government took control ahead of general elections held in February 2008, attacks on the NATO cargo and abductions surged dramatically.

This also underscored that as long as the clerics were in seat of power, their partners in trade and crime refrained from acts that would undermine the image of their government. All components of the MMA government, particularly the Jamaat-e-Islami (the Muslim Brotherhood school of thought) and the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), which has had links to the Afghan Taliban, made sure that business activities, including the NATO cargo transit flowed unhindered. It served two purposes: no bad reflection on the state of security in the province, and continued regular monetary inflows, made possible through covert deals between transporters, militants, and the gangs that control routes.

Both parties are also notorious for harboring Al-Qaeda's operatives, who tended to use the JUI's seminaries in the semi-autonomous border region as shelters. Scores of Al-Qaeda leaders and operatives such as Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Abu Zubaida were arrested from homes of people who had either belonged to the Jamaat-e-Islami or JUI-F.

While in government, both parties carefully charted a path that not only protected their business interests, but also kept their links to Al-Qaeda intact. Reverence for Osama bin Laden knew no limits. Even after his death,, Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri, JUI-F's secretary general, called him a mujahid (holy warrior) on the floor of the national legislature and prayed for his soul.

Government officials also feel helpless in the face of the nexus between militancy and crime. It breeds insecurity and crime on the one hand, and proliferation of skewed religious ideologies on the other, says a former senior police official.⁴²

⁴²Author's interview with a high-ranking former police and intelligence official

In Swat, for instance, criminals and land-grabbers saw an opportunity in the approaching and ascendant pro-Taliban militants, clearly linked to Al-Qaeda. Many of them turned commanders overnight. They started occupying lands in the garb of Taliban, asked lower-rung Taliban to tend them, and began propagating that the lands were being distributed among the people who originally had owned them.⁴³

Abductions for ransom, once a source of income for the criminally-inclined tribesmen in cahoots with the corrupt civil administration of the FATA, is now one of the most lucrative sources of revenue for the pro-Taliban and Al-Qaeda militants. High-profile hostages are often sold to Al-Qaeda-linked commanders, mostly Arab and Uzbek. The data from Khyber-Pakhtoonkhwa police department suggests that only in 2014, 667 cases of abductions were registered with police and ransom cases reach nearly 400.⁴⁴ In a high-profile case in January 2014, a group believed to have links to the Taliban kidnapped the deputy speaker of parliament, Moazzam Kalro, from Multan in Punjab province. Held for nearly three months in Kohat, a town in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on the edge of the lawless tribal areas, he was eventually released after his family paid Rs50 million (\$500,000), two police officials' familiar with the investigation confirmed.⁴⁵ Once again, porous governance structures in the FATA and the extensive power of the militants in these areas play to the advantage of the kidnappers, which has given them the upper hand over the law enforcement agencies in big urban centres, especially the ones close to the FATA, such as Peshawar. A senior police officer based in Islamabad once said, 'FATA is the biggest black hole when it comes to terrorism and crime investigations. Most of the terrorist activities in the settled areas are traced back to the FATA during the investigation, that's where we hit a brick wall, because the police cannot operate in the FATA.'⁴⁶ Law-enforcement officials add that there are so many different layers of the power structure in the FATA these days that it becomes hugely difficult to accomplish anything.

Militants and criminals also benefit from the internal displacement of civilians from their native areas because of armed conflicts. Refuge among the displaced communities gives them social shelter and thus unchecked movement from with-

⁴³Perlez and Shah, 2009

⁴⁴Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, Crime Statistics, <http://kppolice.gov.pk/Crimestatistics/crimefigure.php>

⁴⁵Annabel Symington, "Splintering of Taliban Fuels Spate of Kidnapping in Pakistan, The Wall Street Journal, July 30, 2014

⁴⁶Author's interview with a senior police officer based in Islamabad, who shared information on the condition of anonymity

in their camps set up in cities such as Peshawar, Mardan, Kohat, and Dera Ismail Khan.

In April 2010, a militant group based in North Waziristan kidnapped two former Pakistani ISI officers, Colonel Sultan Ameer Imam and Khalid Khwaja, and a British journalist of Pakistani extraction, Asad Qureshi. They had been lured into North Waziristan for an interview with the Taliban leaders for the journalist. The militants killed Khwaja in June, dubbing him a US agent. Ironically, he was known as a big Taliban sympathizer. According to a high-ranking security official, one of the militant groups led by Usman Punjabi of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, wanted a swap that is release of Taliban prisoners for Qureshi and Imam. A TTP-affiliated commander, Sabir Mehsud, on the other hand, wanted ransom. The conflict resulted in an armed conflagration in which Usman Punjabi lost his life. With Usman Punjabi out of the way, the TTP released the journalist after payment of a huge, though undisclosed ransom in May 2010. The TTP had originally demanded a ransom of around \$1.4 million for Colonel Imam's release.⁴⁷ And when the ransom money could not be provided to them, they executed him in January 2011. The video clip that the TTP released on Imam's execution also shed new light on the nexus of crime with Al-Qaeda-inspired militancy; before executing the 70-year-old Imam, Hakimullah Mehsud, the TTP chief hiding somewhere in North Waziristan, tells on camera that the colonel is being killed because he had become an American collaborator and thus deserved death. The clip also proved what officials and counterterrorism experts had been underlining for quite some time; criminals often hand over high-profile hostages to the TTP or other militant groups for making quick money. (Pakistan's former ambassador to Afghanistan, Tariq Azizuddin, had also landed in the hands of the TTP after abduction in February 2008. Pakistan government had reportedly paid about \$2.5 million to the group. The only indirect confirmation of the ransom came within days from Makeen, South Waziristan, where Baitullah Mehsud had visited his commander and gave him about Rs10 million for distribution among the Makeen residents.) Alamgir Bhattani, a former reporter for the Voice of America based in Peshawar with very good connections with Baitullah Mehsud, had told me.⁴⁸

Most of the high-profile abductions between 2008 and 2011, which included Tariq Azizuddin, released in May 2008; former Afghan ambassador-designate to

⁴⁷ Author's discussion with a high-ranking security official

⁴⁸ Author's conversation with Bhattani, quoted in The Al-Qaeda Connection in the chapter 'Who Funds Militancy'

Pakistan Haji Abdul Khaliq Farahi and an Iranian diplomat Hashmetzadeh, both released in the latter part of 2010, and the vice-chancellor of a university in Peshawar were all picked up by criminal gangs but landed in the hands of either TTP or sold to Arab or Uzbek Al-Qaeda groups. The brother of an employee of Pakistan international Airlines (PIA) was, for instance, released after a payment of Rs5 million in late 2008. One kidnap victim, a professor, recounted to the law-enforcement officials upon his release that at least 25 other people were kept at the compound where he spent more than a year. He recalled that most of the talk they could listen into would be between their abductors and the TTP leaders.⁴⁹

Abduction for ransom is not restricted to the FATA. The abductors have strong links to other militants and kidnapping gangs all along the Durand Line further south into Balochistan as well. The deputy inspector general (DIG), operations, in Quetta said in a press conference in April 2011 that 78 groups were involved in kidnapping for ransom in Balochistan, and another senior police officer added that most of them had links to the militants in the FATA as well as Afghanistan. There were 123 kidnappings in Balochistan in 2009, the figure nearly doubled to 237 in 2010.⁵⁰ The situation is quite grim on Quetta-Chaman and Quetta-Zhob highways where people avoid travelling after dark and are scared even travelling during the day. According to a tribal elder coming from Qilla Abdullah, who had participated in several jirgas for the release of hostages, local criminal gangs in the northern Pashtun areas of Balochistan have teamed up with religious militants in the business.⁵¹ The political elite of the area also have their fingers in the pie. According to a resident of the Pishin district of Balochistan, whose relative was kidnapped. This person was traded between one kidnapping gang and another for Rs5 million (around \$60,000), and was finally released after a payment of Rs15 million (around \$180,000). The police later arrested the leader of the kidnapping gang, but told him that local leaders of a political party, Balochistan National Party-Awami, Zafrullah Zehri and Sadiq Umrani called every day to secure the kidnapper's release.⁵²

Similarly, gangs comprising criminal mafias, nationalist militants and politicians' kidnapers are also operating in the impoverished and strife-torn Balochistan province, where these gangs often target foreigners and international NGO officials with the obvious objective of mobilizing funds as well as scaring develop-

⁴⁹Author's interview with intelligence officials in Peshawar

⁵⁰Author's interviews with police officers in Quetta

⁵¹Author's interview with a tribal elder in Quetta

⁵²Author's interview with a relative of a kidnap victim in Quetta

ment workers away from the province.

John Solecki, an American citizen and the regional head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Quetta, was among the high-profile kidnap victims in Balochistan. He was released safely after months of back-channel dealings with the kidnappers in early 2009. On July 1, 2011, militants belonging to TTP abducted a Swiss couple, Olivier David Och and Daniela Widmar – from the Killi Nigah area in Loralai district of Balochistan. They were later moved to South Waziristan. In what appeared to be a set-up after payment of ransom, the couple managed to escape from the TTP's captivity in March 2012. A March 30, 2012, media report claimed a huge ransom of Rs1 billion had been paid to the abductors for their release. Later, in January 2012, unidentified gunmen abducted a British official of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Dr. Khalil Ahmed Dale, from the Chaman Housing Society in Quetta. The abductors demanded \$30 million for the release of the British doctor but executed him in April after the British government refused to pay ransom.

In another case involving five men working for the US-based Mercy Corps, abductors managed to get \$250,000 from the organization and at the same time forced it to shut down 44 offices across Sindh and Balochistan in 2010. Likewise, two local employees of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) were gunned down in Mastung town in March 2012 and forced the agency to restrict its activities in the province. Meanwhile, the ICRC also closed down three of its centres in restive Balochistan after the rise in kidnapping cases for ransom in the province.

Karachi – the Purse for Militancy⁵³

The FATA is de jure part of Pakistan though the Pakistani laws do not apply there. But the colonial-era special draconian laws, which restrict personal liberties, are still in vogue. The FATA inhabitants, however, are free to travel all across the country. Karachi is to them what New York or London or Berlin is to most Pakistanis. Militants, too, are attracted to Karachi for the same reasons. Being the largest commercial city and the financial nerve-centre, it offers huge fund-raising possibilities and social protection, primarily because of its huge and diverse population. The presence of ethnic Pashtuns in the city also provides a social safety net to Pashtun militants from the FATA and Afghanistan. Estimated at around 4

⁵³Most of the information in this chapter is based on author's interviews with various politicians, journalists, academics, etc., in Karachi, unless it is otherwise specified

million, it is the largest concentrations of the Pashtuns in the world. It is larger than Kabul, Kandahar, Peshawar, or Quetta. (Some estimates put this number at “close to 7 million”.[http://www.pbs.org/ frontlineworld/rough/2009/07/karachi_invisi.html](http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/rough/2009/07/karachi_invisi.html)) With an overall population of over 23.5 million, Karachi counts among the biggest cities of the world. (Khawaja Amer, Population explosion: Put an embargo on industrialization in Karachi, *The Express Tribune*, October 6, 2013.) The multi-ethnic character of its population is also at the core of crime, lawlessness, ethnic, and sectarian violence. Ethnic violence is rampant in various parts of Karachi. The current conflict is rooted in clashes between Urdu-speaking majority immigrants and ethnic Pashtuns in 2007, which has thus far claimed more than 3,000 lives, according to the police sources in Karachi. Such prevalence of violence in the city and lack of state authority in several pockets offers an ideal environment for the militants to operate, often willfully.

Pashtun militants can easily blend in with the Pashtun population of the city. In addition, there is a strong network of madrassas in Karachi to help the militants in making their way through the city. Provided with such solid networks of support, any person can easily remain undetected by law in the sprawling slums of Karachi. This brings us to the discussion of the use of criminal means for extorting money by the militants in Karachi, most importantly, bank robberies and abductions for ransom. According to law-enforcement agency sources, around 65% of bank robberies in the city can be traced back to various Islamist groups, particularly the TTP, a city police official told me. One of the militants arrested in connection with the Allied Bank robbery (2010) in Karachi told officials: ‘It is the money of Jews/Americans, looting it is legitimate because we are serving the cause of Allah.’ There were three bank robberies in Karachi in 2006, it rose to 17 in 2008, and 21 in 2009, but came down to about 15 in 2010. Twenty bank robberies were reported in 2011 and 25 in 2012.. Whereas, according to the heinous crimes data of Sindh Police the number significantly rose to 29 in 2013, while the year 2014 witnessed 24 such cases.⁵⁴ The amount involved in the Allied Bank was almost \$3 million dollars in cash, which the attackers stole from two lockers.

Karachi also is home to several gangs involved in high-profile abductions for ransom. Satish Anand, a Hindu film director, was one of the ‘high-value targets’, whom pro-Taliban gangs had picked up in Karachi in October 2008. He was swiftly moved to the FATA, and eventually released in April 2009 against a ransom of

⁵⁴Available on official website of the Sindh police http://www.sindhpolice.gov.pk/announcements/henious_crime_reports.asp

Rs15 million (around \$180,000).

Officials and finance managers often describe Karachi as the Wall Street –or the ATM for organized crime and militants of various shades. It serves also as the hub for Afghan, Arab, and Pakistani militants/traders who are connected to their contacts in the town of Al-Ain, Dubai. From investor to trader, from preacher to militant, all are represented here– Al-Qaeda, Islamic Brotherhood, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, TTP, Tehreek ul Mujahideen Alalami, Tehreek ul Jihad al Alami, Jundullah and several others. The fact that at least 150 TTP activists/financiers were arrested in Karachi during 2010, followed by more than 150 similar arrests in 2011, also supports the suspicions that the TTP is using sleeper cells in the city to mobilize finances. The TTP also claimed responsibility for a daring suicide bombing at the residence of a senior Karachi police official Choudary Aslam in September 2011. Later on January 9, 2014 they succeeded in killing him when a suicide bomber smashed his vehicle into Aslam’s convoy on Layari Expressway when he was on his way to office. There are reports that for years, Dawood Ibrahim, the underworld Indian don, has been living in Karachi. He is alleged to have provided support to Muslim militants.

The Afghan Connection⁵⁵

The porous Pakistan-Afghan border has always worked to the advantage of militancy and crime. This also helped Bin Laden and his comrades to freely operate on both sides of the 2,560 km Durand Line. For years, particularly until a peace deal struck in September 2006 fell apart, most militant groups and Al-Qaeda enjoyed free passage and shelter in Waziristan. This also opened new networking opportunities for Pakistani militants. The problem of militant crime is compounded by the fact that they not only control territories on the eastern side of the Durand Line, but also on the western side, which makes it easier for them to complete the full circle of cross-border criminal activities.

About 10 foreign companies are currently handling the ISAF cargo, categorized as non-commercial cargo. TAQ, DHL Global, and FEDEX are some of the companies that handle about 46,000 containers via Pakistan every month for the coalition forces.

⁵⁵The information in this section is based on author’s conversations in Kabul with UN officials, Afghan it experts, NGO workers (Paktia/Logar), Afghan transport contractors – including the head of a transport company – diplomats, and the CEO of one of the ten logistics/cargo companies handling the us-led coalition cargo

Estimates by various government and non-governmental sources say that the Afghan security contractors may be paying between \$144 and 200 million (per year) to the Taliban for safe passage of the cargo as protection money. Let us quickly analyze the accuracy of these figures.

Security charge, usually known as the protection money, for a container to go from Kabul to Kandahar/Helmand costs between \$800 and \$2,000. Something between 20 and 40% of it goes to the Taliban militants, depending on the nature of consignment. If it is weapons or liquor, they charge up to 40% protection money.

One 20-foot container from Karachi to Kabul costs around \$4,000 in transportation and services. The transportation of a 40-foot container from Karachi to Kabul or Kandahar costs around \$6,000. Based on discussions with truckers, agents, and the cargo company officials in Kabul, following is what an ISAF/US troops' container costs depending on its post of origin and destination:

From	To	Cost
Kabul	Lashkargah, Helmand	\$8,000
Kabul	Dilaram	\$7,500
Kabul	Tareenkot, Khost	\$9,500
Kabul	Kandahar	\$5,000
Herat	Sheendand, Farrah	\$4,000
Kandahar	Lashkargah, Helmand	\$3,200

(This is what I have put together myself based on my conversations with UN security officials in Kabul, truckers in Kabul and Kandahar and some diplomats.)

These mind-boggling figures also reveal why within a span of six years more than 50 transport security contracting companies emerged, and many made a killing, while some continue to make the most of this war economy. The security contractor component in the total transportation is 20-25% (depending on the destination). That would mean about \$550 million for a year. The security contractors and the transport companies deny payments to the Taliban but it is hard to believe in view of:

- Slow-moving cargo convoys being practically sitting ducks for the militants (as they move in convoys of 20-50 trucks)

- The omnipresence of criminal gangs who are benefitting from the insurgency, and who in turn are a regular source of income for the insurgents
- Possible links between the security contractors and the insurgents

Interestingly, the Taliban insurgents charge exorbitant protection money depending on the cargo inside containers: weapons/ ammunition/liquor carry a much higher price tag. And if we were to take an average of 20% of the security charges, it would come to 110 million dollars in protection money for the ISAF/US container cargo. Official estimates on this count vary; Pakistani diplomatic sources claim that in 2011, the Taliban pocketed at least \$144 million by providing free passage to the NATO trucks transiting through the regions they control. The Taliban also generate hundreds of millions by taxing poppy and other trade. American sources put these figures between \$500 and \$800 million.

For a comparison of the transportation cost, let us see how it works out in and outside Afghanistan; from Karachi to Bagram, the truck covers a distance of some 1,500 km, for which the company charges \$4,000-6,000.

On the other hand, from Bagram to Kandahar/Helmand or other trouble spots, the distances are at most 800 km for which Afghan transport contractors charge between \$3,200 and \$9,500 for one container depending on the destination. One of the international companies (with offices in Kabul, Karachi, Peshawar, Dubai, and London) that I spoke to handles about 10% of the non-commercial (ISAF/US) cargo, and earns at least a million dollars in average monthly profits.⁵⁶

The UN officials in Kabul also agreed with the broad thrust of these calculations. A stretch of just about 35 km from the Highway Number One into the Sangeen district of Helmand province, said an Afghan UN official, costs at times up to \$10,000, depending on the nature of the cargo. This figure may look exaggerated, but is not far off the real cost, these UN security officials conclude. By far, the UN and US security and counter-narcotics liaison officers reckon that drugs' trafficking constitutes the biggest open source of income for the Taliban militants as well as the drug barons, followed by abduction for ransom, gunrunning and protection money. There is no hard evidence available but the UN and EU officials believe that Islamist charity organizations all over the world, particularly those based in the Gulf, also provide substantial support to the Taliban militants and their Arab

⁵⁶One would assume this is an understatement because the CEO of the company gave this figure very reluctantly

guests. Al-Qaeda itself has a number of conduits, said a European intelligence official in Maidan Shaar, the capital of province Maidan Wardak.⁵⁷

Most of the Al-Qaeda funding comes in cash. Online money transfers or that through money exchanges is well regulated. All these charities had worked and received funding from the Gulf almost unchecked until 9/11, but now pretty tight mechanisms for scrutiny are in place. That is why money transfers by Pakistani expatriates in the Gulf and elsewhere surged to almost \$12 billion in 2012.

Al-Qaeda and Taliban militants extort money from common people as well. This way they ensure the kitty remains full for their activities. People in the more troubled southern and eastern provinces of Afghanistan have to register the properties that they buy with the shadow Taliban administrations. Local farmers and traders pay a certain percentage of their income to the Taliban for protection as well. This becomes of particular significance in the poppy-producing regions of Afghanistan where the Taliban extort 10% of the total income of the produce calling it the Islamic *ushr* or tithe. The UN officials and foreign diplomats say that the narco trade generates about \$5 billion within Afghanistan alone.⁵⁸ Even if 10% of it goes to the militants the amount comes to a staggering \$500 million. This also reflects in huge private properties – commercial buildings as well as residential compounds in and on the outskirts of major cities such as Kabul, Jalalabad, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Herat (also referred to as narco-structures).

Officials reckon that part of the remittances by Afghan expatriates to their families and friends as well as zakat by affluent Afghans may also be going into the Taliban kitty as is the case in the tribal areas of Pakistan. People have to give a portion of that money to the Taliban militants for protection of their properties, and families back home.

It was against this backdrop that the Afghan government banned seven private security companies allegedly linked to some Afghan high ranking officials (to-lonews.com, Pajwak News Agency, January 31, 2011).⁵⁹ The seven disbanded companies were part of the 52 licensed private companies, whereas in December, the government had banned 57 illegal private security firms, among them was one owned by the son of the Defense Minister Raheem Wardak, and one that of a family member of President Karzai, Hashmat Karzai.

⁵⁷ Author's interview,

⁵⁸ Author's interviews with the UN officials and diplomats in Kabul

⁵⁹ TV Tolo News, January 31, 2011

One of the allegations related to the pay-offs to the Taliban militants for safe passage, and as of February 2011, investigations against 17 private security firms were on to determine their links to insurgents. A leading cargo handler and transporter I met with in Kabul denied militants get anything from him or other security companies, but one of his associates told us later over lunch that without protection money, quite a substantial part of the ISAF cargo would either go up in flames or hijacked. Without payments, it is impossible, he told me in Kabul.⁶⁰

UNAMA officials also confirmed this to me that without protection by the Taliban insurgents, these installations would not survive. In certain areas, mobile phone network does not work between 6 pm and 6 am under the Taliban order. This is the time for their activities and their own wireless communication, a senior UN official involved in the monitoring of insurgency told me in Kabul.

Another substantial source of income is the protection money that cellular companies pay to the Taliban. Currently, four –Roshan, MTN, Etisalat, Afghan Wireless (official) –are running operations across Afghanistan. It is unthinkable that the few thousand booster stations and communication towers (between 4,000–5,000) that these companies need to connect all Afghan cities and towns (including at least 500 towers in towns bordering Pakistan) could remain safe if the Taliban were not paid protection money. The fact that until 2012, cellular companies lost only about a dozen communication towers to terrorist attacks, also points to a possible deal among the cellular companies and Taliban militant groups. One Afghan intelligence official said that area commanders may be charging these companies between \$500 and \$800 per month for ‘protecting’ (not attacking) these. And its consultant based in Kabul admitted to it and said, ‘cellular companies do pay to the Taliban militants, hundred per cent. Without this, their communication towers would not survive.’⁶¹ An administration officer with an Afghan logistics company –that handles American cargo inland –also confirmed that the Taliban charge protection money for communication towers but was reluctant to admit that some of the money they pay to security contractors also goes to the Taliban.

Abductions are on the rise in Afghanistan. Most of the local businessmen who were kidnapped for ransom and then released have relocated to the UAE or other Gulf states.

Corruption in Afghanistan is also rampant, and thus a means of funding for all

⁶⁰Author’s interview with the head of a cargo company in Kabul

⁶¹Ibid.

including the Taliban insurgents. According to UNODC, Afghans paid \$2.5 billion in bribes in 2009, which is equivalent to 23% of the country's GDP.⁶² The UN estimates as quoted in *The Washington Times* that the figure reached \$4 billion in 2014.⁶³

But these facts are often denied. Pakistani and Afghan truckers, traders, security contractors, and logistic firms routinely deny they pay any protection money to militants, something hard to swallow keeping in view the surging violence across the country. The terrain between Kabul, Ghazni, Zabul, Helmand, Uruzgan as well as in the eastern provinces of Khost and Kunar is extremely hard and places natural restrictions on free movement of big vehicles; while on the move, the big containers are simply sitting ducks for attackers sitting in ambush, and thus require continuous protection which only Taliban can provide.

In retrospect, the conflict in Afghanistan and its spillover into Pakistan is the direct consequence of Osama bin Laden's refusal to leave Afghanistan. Mullah Omar, too, turned a deaf ear to repeated US demands for expelling Bin Laden or turning him in.

This provided the pretext for the US and its allies to move into Afghanistan. With this, a new dynamic began unfolding that is, war economy which in the last decade has created new vested interests and stakeholders that is, cargo and security contractors, security consultants, transporters, and their agents.

Seen in this context, while the war on Al-Qaeda and his zealots entailed suffering for the majority of the people in the region, it also brought enormous benefits to the militants as well as criminals disguised as militants. Violent and illegal means of making out a living in the mountainous and barren border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan has been a norm for centuries. The British during their rule were only concerned with their strategic interests and placation of the tribes through payments and other benefits to their leaders. After the creation of Pakistan, the British-introduced laws were not changed in the tribal areas on the eastern side of the Durand Line. In addition, numerous British laws are still in force in the rest of the country. With very little common knowledge about those colonial laws, and a well-trained and well-knit bureaucratic structure, there was a lot of room provided for corruption and abuse of power. It was in this milieu that the militants originated as another power-centre in the context of the war in Afghanistan beginning in

⁶²UNODC, 2010: p.4

⁶³*The Washington Times*, May 14, 2014

the late 1970s. They made full use of the lack of effective governance and prevalence of corruption in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

My meetings with informed people in Quetta, Karachi, Peshawar, Kabul, and Islamabad clearly point to the surreptitious collusion between criminals, bureaucrats, politicians, and religious militants. However, I did not come to know of any financial transactions between Al-Qaeda and the ISI or the military.

It also reflects the helplessness of state institutions vis-à-vis powerful organized groups, an intricate cobweb of illegal activities that also bolstered Bin Laden's mission. Decades of war in Afghanistan have created numerous opportunities for countless stakeholders in the region. As the US and NATO forces struggled to prepare for withdrawal, and hoped their talks with Taliban would facilitate those plans, the interests of top stakeholders – American contractors, Afghan and Pakistani traders, transporters, officials, politicians make it increasingly difficult for outsiders to disengage; an economy born out of the war on Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan continues to thrive and itself works as the biggest roadblock to the efforts for a political solution. It is therefore questionable as to whether a bulk US-NATO pullout from Afghanistan will in any way help in de-escalating the insurgency. Most of the vested interest – political leaders, bureaucrats, militant groups, and criminal mafias – is likely to serve as the spoiler. But as of early 2015, the visible regional synergy of thought and action among China, Pakistan, India and Iran for a regionally coordinated solution to the security crisis in Afghanistan does promise some hope for future.

Bin Laden Galvanizes Af-Pak

Jihad turns into terror

*'I had no knowledge of these attacks, nor do I regard the killing of innocent women, children, and other humans as a praiseworthy act. Islam strictly forbids causing harm to innocent women, children, and other people.'*⁶⁴ In this interview, appeared in an Urdu daily, Bin Laden denied his involvement in the 9/11 terror attacks but in an audio message released on October 29, 2004, he admitted that Al-Qaeda carried out the 9/11 attacks.

Quoting a column by prominent Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir in the mass circulation daily Jang (November 1, 2004) Khaled Ahmed, a senior journalist,

⁶⁴Bin Laden interview in Ummat newspaper (Urdu), Karachi, September 28, 2001, pp.1, 7.

wrote, ‘...by announcing that (responsibility for the 9/11 attacks) Osama had revealed the falsehood of Muslim intellectuals and ulema (who had until then) been insisting that 9/11 had been committed by the Jews.

‘America will never dream of living in peace unless there is a solution to the Palestine crisis. It is unfair that you enjoy a safe life while our brothers in Gaza suffer greatly. Therefore, with God’s will, our attacks on you will continue as long as you continue to support Israel,’ Bin Laden said in the last audio message, delivered at one of Al-Jazeera’s offices in January 2010.⁶⁵

What intrigued many in Pakistan was Bin Laden’s renewed focus on the Palestinian issue after a long time. In his previous public message, delivered to Al-Jazeera TV on September 25, 2010, Bin Laden had demanded of European countries to pull their troops out of Afghanistan or face retaliation.

Regardless of the veracity of this message from Al-Qaeda’s leader underscored desperation within the ranks of an organization that has over the past several years been forced to shift its command structure from Afghanistan to the border regions of Pakistan, where it finds its space rapidly shrinking. Increasingly, effective drone attacks on targets in Pakistan’s northwest have wiped out members of Al-Qaeda’s leadership, and also focus on Uzbek allies led by Tahir Yuldashev, the Haqqani Network, and the anti-government TTP. Elimination of over two dozen field operatives between 2009 and 2011 through incessant drone strikes into North and South Waziristan, had apparently led to panic in the ranks and with this message, Bin Laden attempted to boost their morale.

Afghan Jihad and Transnational Islamist Networks

The Afghan war against the Soviet Union was indeed a watershed in militant Muslim revivalist movements and gave a new platform to militant Islamists groups from all over the Muslim world. Sheikh Abdullah Azzam was one of the first Arabs to join the jihad in Afghanistan. He advocated a traditional jihad to push Christian encroachments out of all Muslim lands. Osama bin Laden, Azzam’s deputy, created a common enemy against whom jihadi efforts were to be focused. Thus the US troops in Saudi Arabia and later Somalia, provided the embodiment of that common enemy, thereby changing the focus of Salafi jihad to the ‘far enemy the United States and the West in general.’⁶⁶

⁶⁵*Foreign Policy*, January 24, 2010.

⁶⁶Aneela Salman, ‘Religious ideology and Lethality’ in *Criterion*, Islamabad, July-September 2010,

The CIA had played a major role in bringing the Muslim fighters from across the world to get them trained by the Pakistani ISI agency and use them as proxies against the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in February 1989, it left its Marxist proxies to deal with the mess of almost a decade. But the Kabul regime could hardly fill the vacuum and eventually fell in the face of an ascendant, though divided, mujahideen in late April 1992. The eventual chaos and factional fighting after the abrupt fall of President Najibullah turned Afghanistan into embattled fiefdoms, thereby providing the Arab Wahabi-Salafi, Pakistani Deobandi and pro-Iran Shia groups to influence the course of events there.

Saudi Role in Development of Transnational Networks

Saudi Arabia contributed to the spawning of Wahabite-Salafi groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan in its own way; during the jihad against the Soviets not only did Saudis match America's dollar for dollar but also funded creation of new mosques and seminaries. The Saudis also created their own proxies – Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and several others –to counter what they perceived as Iran's inroads into the Sunni regions.⁶⁷

The issue of funding for militant-political organizations is primarily rooted in the 1979 Iranian revolution, which heralded a new phase of rivalry between Tehran and Riyadh. The Saudis feared the Iranian revolution might undermine their influence in the neighbouring countries. Thus began a funding spree; as the Iranian mullahs began exporting their revolution by setting up cultural centres and supporting Shia and like-minded organizations across the region, including Pakistan/ The Saudis responded by funneling funds into Sunni and Sunni-Wahabi political parties. The December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan provided the Saudis with the best opportunity to financially support religio-political parties, and also help create political parties such as Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) to counter the advancing Iranian influence. The Saudis spent nearly \$4 billion in supporting the anti-Soviet jihad, largely supporting the Sunni and Wahabite Afghan parties fighting the pro-Moscow regime there.

A US official in a cable sent to the State Department stated that 'financial support estimated at nearly \$100 million annually was making its way to Deobandi and

quoting Marc Sageman in *Understanding Terror Networks*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

⁶⁷Imtiaz Gul, *The Most Dangerous Place: Pakistan's Lawless Frontier*, Penguin June 2010.

Ahl-e-Hadith clerics in south Punjab from organizations in Saudi Arabia and the UAE ostensibly with the direct support of those governments.’ The cable was sent in November 2008 by Bryan Hunt, the principal officer at the US consulate in Lahore. It was based on information gleaned from discussions with local government and non-governmental sources during his trips to the cities of Multan and Bahawalpur.⁶⁸

Quoting his local interlocutors, Hunt attempts to explain how the ‘sophisticated jihadi recruitment network’ operated in a region dominated by the Barelvi sect, which, according to the cable, made south Punjab (a huge, mostly backward and agricultural territory, where about 42 million of Pakistan’s 180 million population lives) ‘traditionally hostile’ to Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith schools of thought.

While the Saudi funding flowed for Sunni seminaries in Pakistan, it also triggered a violent sectarian conflict throughout the 1990s, mostly centred in Punjab, where radical Sunni organizations such as SSP, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Jaish-e-Muhammad, LET and JUD and Shia outfits, including the defunct Tehrik-e- Jafria Pakistan are headquartered.

Interestingly, the Saudi royal family always bailed out Pakistan in critical times, such as free oil immediately after the world slapped economic sanctions on the six nuclear tests it conducted in May 1998. Cash budgetary support on several other occasions also underscored conscious Saudi efforts to keep the Iranians off Pakistan.

It were the Saudis who brokered a deal with General Musharraf, allowing Nawaz Sharif to leave Pakistan for Saudi Arabia for ten years. Such interventions clearly underline the royal family’s desire to maintain clout within Pakistan. Close relations with right-wing political, religio-political parties, and Sunni outfits in particular, provides the Saudis with an important tool of influence, which the United States also uses whenever it finds itself bound by the laws.

The ISI had its own axe to grind. It was looking for the so-called strategic depth in Afghanistan. It saw in Taliban a force multiplier for itself, a force it thought should be able to counter Russian, Indian, and Iranian influence. This led various militant groups to emerge, guided and influenced by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, both nurturing their favourite outfits. Most of these organizations derived impressions from Al-Qaeda, and Osama bin Laden was revered as the hero of the Muslims

⁶⁸Released by WikiLeaks and published by dawn.com, May 21, 2011

across the world, somebody who had challenged the sole superpower, i.e. the US and its ally Israel.

The emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s, Bin Laden's return to Afghanistan in 1996, the US-led anti-terror war in Afghanistan (October 2001) and the invasion of Iraq provided yet ever greater grounds to trans-nationalist movements such as Al-Qaeda to raise cadre for an organized resistance to the 'US-led Western imperialism'.

As a consequence, a synergy or fusion of interests and similarity of causes has emerged between the traditionalist clergy and the radical reformists –largely led and influenced by Al-Qaeda. In south and southwest Asia, a sort of synthesis has developed between Islamist militants and traditional mullahs, who earlier prospered under the American largess, and now serve as direct supporters or apologists – indirect supporters – for the pan-Islamist missionaries.

This mission, basically the Al-Qaeda ideology, also resonated in a video statement by Zawahiri which he issued in the context of the Hezbollah-Israeli conflict in summer 2006.

The whole world is an open field for us. As they attack us everywhere, we will attack them everywhere. As their armies got together to wage war on us, our nation will get together to fight them... the shells and missiles that tear apart the bodies of Muslims in Gaza and Lebanon are not purely Israeli. Rather, they come and are financed by all countries of the Crusader alliance. Thus, all those who took part in the crime should pay the price. We cannot just stand idle and watch all these shells falling on our brothers in Gaza and Lebanon.⁶⁹

Prominent Transnational Networks

For a discussion on the transnational networks and their proliferation in recent decades, we need to focus on groups and movements that sprouted from the Islamist thought that flowed from the teachings and vision of the Egyptian scholar Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949) and the subcontinental religious thinker and leader Abul Ala Maududi (1903-1979), and later influenced by the Iranian revolution. The Muslim Brotherhood, the oldest and largest Sunni transnational movement, has been the main source of ideological inspiration and organizational knowledge

⁶⁹Intel Center Words of Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Volume 1, p.128

for similar organizations in the rest of the world, in the Middle East in particular.

Muslim Brotherhood (MB)

Founded in 1928 in Egypt by the schoolteacher Hassan al-Banna, the Brotherhood's stated goal is to 'establish the Quran and Sunnah as the 'sole reference point for... ordering the life of the Muslim family, individual, community... and state'. Since its inception the movement has officially opposed violent means to achieve its goals, with some exceptions such as in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or to overthrow secular Baathist rule in Syria.⁷⁰ The Muslim Brotherhood has been formally banned in Egypt since 1954, but the Egyptian government has allowed it to operate within limits since the 1970s, keeping it in check with frequent arrests and crackdowns. A more open political atmosphere in 2005, due to both domestic and international pressure, led the government to grant the Brotherhood unprecedented freedom to campaign before that year's parliamentary vote. While the group's 150 candidates officially ran as independents, there was nothing secret about their Brotherhood affiliation. Candidates held rallies, hung posters with the Brotherhood's name, and used its slogan, 'Islam is the solution.'⁷¹

MB's core mission is religious proselytizing through preaching and social services and the network is spread all over from Egypt to Jordan, Palestine, Kuwait, Sudan, Yemen, Syria, and Tunisia, which makes it a predominantly Arab-based entity.

Al-Qaeda

In the last decade no other organization has influenced the political thought across the Muslim world as much as Al-Qaeda. It is the vanguard of the global Salafi movement which includes many sister terrorist groups that share the same ideology. 'The Salafi movement determines its mission, sets its goals and guides its tactics. Salafi ideology makes the Saudi government an un-Islamic regime, which needs to be purged of its present leaders.'⁷² In his declarations Zawahiri adopted the historical imagery of Islamic resistance to the European crusades, describing the enemy as 'the alliance of Jews, Christians and their agents' and holding them responsible for 'massacres in Tajikistan, Burma, Kashmir, Assam, the Philippines,

⁷⁰Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke, 'the Moderate Muslim Brotherhood', *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2007.

⁷¹Council on Foreign Relations backgrounder on Muslim Brotherhood, December 1, 2005

⁷²Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Fatani [as transliterated], Ogaden, Somalia, Eritrea, Chechnya, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁷³ Al-Qaeda in Arabic means ‘the base’. Led by Bin Laden till May 2011, it is administered by a council that discusses and approves major terrorist operations. The head of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the top deputy of Bin Laden, and its current head Zawahiri was also Al-Qaeda’s ideologue.

Al-Qaeda grew out of the services office, a clearing house for the international Muslim brigade opposed to the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In the 1980s, the services office—run by bin Laden and the Palestinian religious scholar Abdullah Azzam, recruited, trained, and financed thousands of foreign mujahideen, or holy warriors, from more than 50 countries. Bin Laden wanted these fighters to continue the “holy war” beyond Afghanistan. He formed Al-Qaeda around 1988.⁷⁴

Today Al-Qaeda is a ‘networked transnational constituency rather than the monolithic, international terrorist organization with an identifiable command and control apparatus that it once was.’ Since 9/11 it has emerged as a ‘nimble, flexible and adaptive entity,’ demonstrating remarkable resilience and durability and claims to be stronger and more capable.⁷⁵ With a hydra-headed network, Al-Qaeda shares Sunni Muslim fundamentalist view with many Islamic terrorist groups around the world. It depends on its local cells for its pan-Islamist ideology.

The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies – civilians and military – is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate Al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosques from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of Almighty God. And fight the infidels all together as they fight you all together, “and” fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevails justice and faith in God.⁷⁶

Terrorism emanating from Yemen is a major security concern for the United States, but the Al-Qaeda core in Pakistan remains an extraordinarily formidable

⁷³Christopher M. Blanchard, *Al-Qaeda Statements and Evolving Ideology*, CRS report for Congress, November 16, 2004, p.3

⁷⁴Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder on Al-Qaeda updated in December 2009.

⁷⁵Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2006: p. 282.

⁷⁶Fatwa 20 issued by Osama Bin Laden and others in Al-Qaeda, published in *al-Quds al-Arabi*, February 23, 1998, taken from Quintan Wiktorowicz’s *The New Global Threat: Transnational Salafis and Jihad in the Middle East Policy*, Volume viii, December 2001.

and dangerous terrorist organization whose targeting of the United States continues despite the pressure that the group is under in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas,' Benjamin said in his remarks. he was responding to a *Washington Post* article that suggested US government officials are now ranking Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and specifically in Yemen, as the most urgent threat to United States security; even a greater threat than the Al-Qaeda core in Pakistan.

Yemen was Bin Laden's ancestral homeland, and it also served as the staging ground for Al-Qaeda's attack on the American destroyer Cole in 2000. Interestingly, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) threat assessment proved right, when the group staged a successful assault against Charlie Hebdo, a French weekly satirical magazine, on January 7, 2015, killing at least 17 people, 10 at the magazine office, including chief editor Charb and cartoonists Cabu, Wolinski and Tignous, three police officers together with two assigned to guard the building and four civilians taken hostage by the gunmen in a grocery store whilst escaping in northern Paris. The weekly published caricatures of Prophet Muhammad and other early Islam leaders. Its chief editor was on Al-Qaeda most wanted list as appeared on AQAP magazine *Inspire*. "We have avenged Prophet Muhammad, we have killed Charlie Hebdo", one of the two gunmen brothers (Said Kouachi and Cherif Kouachi) said while fleeing the magazine office after the attack, Reuters news agency reported. The France 24 News channel termed the attack "most deadly" on the French soil in five decades. Apart from Kouachi brothers two other attackers also engaged the security officials, Amedi Coulibaly and a female Hayat Boumeddiene, though they did not attack the magazine offices. Coulibaly claimed that he coordinated with the attackers of Charlie Hebdo. All of the male attackers after engaging police for 72 hours in attempt to flee were killed by police in a standoff, whereas, the female attacker succeeded in fleeing. She has been described as "France's most wanted woman" (Yahoo News, January 10, 2015). There are reports that she has fled to Syria.

AQAP claimed responsibility for the attack against Charile Hebdo offices. A source within AQAP has provided a full statement to news resource, the intercept.

Some ask the relationship between Al-Qaeda Organization and the (brothers) who carried out the Charlie Hebdo operation. Was it directed? Was the operation supervised by Al-Qaeda wing in the Arabian Peninsula? The leadership of AQAP directed the operation, and they have chosen their target carefully as a revenge for the honor

of Prophet (PBUH). The operation was the result of the threat of Sheikh Usama (RA). He warned the West about the consequences of the persistence in the blasphemy against Muslims' sanctities. Sheikh Usama (RA) said in his message to the West: If there is no check on the freedom of your words, then let your hearts be open to the freedom of our actions. They had the freedom to use cartoons in their magazine, and we have the freedom to use bullets from our magazines.⁷⁷

In an interview with CNN affiliate in France BMFTV Cherif Kouachi said that his trip was financed by Anwar Awlaki, a US-born radical jihadist cleric of Yemeni origin. He was killed in a US drone strike in September, 2011 in Yemen. The channel talked to the Said Kouachi as well and he too reportedly was inspired by Awlaki. In the very first edition of *Inspire* magazine in 2010, Anwar al Awlaki called for jihadists to attack cartoonists who had supposedly smeared the legacy of the Prophet Mohammed.⁷⁸ Awlaki was responsible for the radicalization of many youngsters in West and Major Nadal Hussein, who was sentenced to death by US court for killing 13 US soldiers at Fort Hudson in 2009. Meanwhile, the underwear bomber Ahmad Farooq Abdulmutalib was also radicalized by Awlaki, whose attempt to blow up a US plane over Detroit on Christmas day in 2009 was foiled by the authorities.

What distinguishes Al-Qaeda from Muslim Brotherhood is the ideological cohesion that simply transcends geography, culture, ethnicity, and personalities. MB also displays its political pragmatism by taking a reformist approach to the countries where it operates. It does not oppose the democratic process, nor does it bar its members from participation in the elections, implying that, while sticking to its core mission, it also believes in peaceful pursuit of political power. This may perhaps also be the reason for regional disagreements and conflicts within the MB network.

In this regard Olivier Roy, a well-known French expert on Islam, makes a valid argument: first of all, there are several centres: the Egyptian MB, the Pakistani

⁷⁷Jeremy Scahill, "Al-Qaeda Source: AQAP directed Paris Attack, *The Intercept*, January 10, 2015 <https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/01/09/alwaki-paris/>

⁷⁸Thomas Joscelyn, "Paris terrorist reportedly claimed ties to Anwar al Awlaki, AQAP, *The Long War Journal*, January 9, 2014 http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/01/paris_terrorists_rep.php

Jamaat, and the World Muslim League based in Saudi Arabia. From there connections and collaborations are established around a network of personal relationships, riddled with disagreements and divisions, their common denominator is not the MB ideology but the simple desire to re-Islamize the society. These networks are periodically torn apart by conflicts that set the states of the Middle East against one another.⁷⁹

Al-Qaeda Brings Suicide Bombing to Pakistan

Clearly, Al-Qaeda consciously chose Pakistan as its staging post for attacks on the US interests in Afghanistan, as well as plan atrocities in other parts of the world. It also brought with it the phenomenon of suicide bombings with the first strike on a church located inside capital Islamabad's Diplomatic Enclave on March 17, 2002. With this a new phenomenon began unfolding in the country, something unheard of earlier.

The only other suicide attack in Pakistan in 1995 had targeted the Egyptian embassy, when the bomber rammed his explosives-laden truck into the embassy compound, killing 14 people. The bomber was an Egyptian. The second suicide attack hit Karachi in 2002 after a lapse of six years; while PPP leader Benazir Bhutto's December 27 assassination was the most high-profile suicide strike of 2007. Highly motivated youngsters went on to shake Pakistan with close to 407 such attacks until January 2015.

The extent of Pakistan's fall in chaos is best exemplified by the fact that, compared to the 21 suicide attacks between 2002 and 2006, the year 2007 witnessed at least 54 lethal strikes, targeting mostly army, police, and restaurants. The trend peaked in 2009 with 76 such strikes, followed by 49 in 2010.

Such attacks declined to 41 in 2011, and 39, 43 and 25 respectively for years 2012, 2013 and 2014. . Shopping areas, mosques, shrines and security installations were among the targets of such attacks... .. with hundreds of women and children also falling prey to the deadly living weapon of the militants with Peshawar carnage being the deadliest in Pakistan's history where some seven suicide attackers stormed the Army Public School on December 16, 2014 and killing at least 145 people, most of them being students.⁸⁰ .

⁷⁹Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, I.B.Tauris, 1994, p.112

⁸⁰Suicide Attacks in Pakistan: 2002-2014, South Asia Terrorism Portal, available at <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/Fidayeenattack.htm>

Those involved in suicide attacks can be categorized in two classes of radical organizations; the first type is the group based on sectarian influences – the first and foremost being the banned militant Sunni group, the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LEJ) whose diehard zealots insist on carrying out their jihadi agenda, including the resolve to contain the Iranian Shia influence in the country; its leadership comprises mostly those who fought in Afghanistan, first against the Russian troops and then met head-on with the US-led allied forces while backing the Taliban.

The second type belongs to those pro-Taliban groups who are also linked to Al-Qaeda in Waziristan as well as other tribal regions, who initially gathered under Baitullah Mehsud, killed in a US drone attack on August 5, 2009, succeeded by Hakimullah Mehsud, who was also killed in a US drone strike in 2013. Now these fighters are headed by Mullah Fazlullah, former head of Taliban in Swat.

Maulana Rafi Usmani, a reputed Pakistani cleric, together with 52 other scholars, in 2005 declared that suicide bombing was not permissible in Islam if it kills innocent people. These religious rulings were of little help in stemming the tide of Al-Qaeda-led suicide bombings.

‘Despite allegations, there is no evidence that suicide bombers are paid to do the job.’ Yousufzai explains he also met families of three suicide bombers in Shabqadr area of Charsadda district who told him that they didn’t receive any money after their young sons sacrificed their lives in the Indian-administered Kashmir and Afghanistan. Visits to their poverty-stricken homes and, in one case, the small shop of the bereaved families and interviews with neighbours were convincing enough to show that the sponsors of the suicide bombings and those supportive of their cause didn’t pay them any money. The three young men killed themselves and many others thanks to their belief that they were dying for a worthy and holy cause.⁸¹

Pakistani civilian authorities and the army are running four rehabilitation centres for boys captured during or after the military offensives in the summer of 2009. At one of these centres – ‘Sabaon’ – some 150 former trained suicide bombers, mostly less than 16 years of age, are undergoing regular secondary school training.⁸²

Dilshad and Rehman, sons of a schoolteacher, had for instance, joined the TTP’s Swat chapter in early 2009. Those were the days of Taliban terror and the life had

⁸¹Rahimullah Yousufzai in *The News*, August 5, 2007

⁸²Author’s visit to Sabaon, March 2011

come to a virtual halt, schools and female vocational centres shut down by force. Boys had nothing to do except idle around.

‘Once a mullah came and took us to a madrassa,’ recalled Dilshad, slightly over 16. ‘They promised us big rewards if we completed the training in suicide bombing,’ he said. Both brothers underwent the special training for five weeks but meanwhile the army had begun moving on the TTP stronghold of Kabal and Peochar. The boys got wind of it and slipped the camp after heavy artillery struck the camp they were staying in. They moved to a relatives’ place in Peshawar within next few days along the droves of internally displaced persons (IDPs) until their father got a phone call from an army officer in early 2010.

The intelligence had meanwhile figured out that Naeem Khan’s sons were trained suicide bombers. ‘Hand them over or be ready for consequences,’ the officer threatened Khan. Realizing there was no escape, Khan himself brought Dilshad and Rehman to the Dargai Fort, situated on Swat Road in Peshawar, and handed them over to the army.

Both were enrolled at Sabaoon Centre, and in March 2011, Dilshad, the elder brother, passed his secondary school examination, topping the list of successful candidates of the Malakand district.

Jamaatud Dawa (Lashkar-e-Taiba)⁸³

Jamaatud Dawa (JuD) represents the Ahl-e-Hadith school of thought, drawing ideological, political and financial support from Saudi Arabian sources. The Ahl-e-Hadith do not follow any of the four Sunni school of jurisprudence or fiqh.⁸⁴ They take an eclectic approach in this regard. This is what distinguishes these proponents of militant Islam from other versions of Islam such as the Deobandis and Barelvis. Interestingly, both Deobandis and Barelvis hate each other but follow the same imam: Abu Hanafa (599-767). The Ahl-e-Hadith are champions of Salafi Islam, known for its fierce opposition to Sufism and to the established schools of Islamic jurisprudence. The Salafis insist that Muslims must go back to the original

⁸³Primary source for this section is Imtiaz Gul, *The Unholy Nexus: Pakistan-Afghan relations under Taliban*, Vanguard, Lahore, 2002, p.128, and Imtiaz Gul, *The Most Dangerous Place*, Penguin /US/ UK, June 2010.

⁸⁴Fiqh means to understand and comprehend (the Islamic Sharia) with the help of the Quran and the sayings of Prophet Mohammad. There are four major fiqhs in Islam. Generally, fiqha is defined as the divine legislator, pertaining to conducts that have been derived from their specific evidences. Saim Kayadibi, *Ottoman Connections to the Malay World*, p.155.

sources of inspiration: the Quran and Hadith. The broad thrust of their beliefs remains the same among the majority of Arabs in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Yemen, Qatar, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, and Kuwait. (This does not seem to be true. Please double-check. For example, Salfis came in second in the 2011-12 parliamentary election in Egypt.) They share the same philosophy, for instance of jihad, and that is why they all praise Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. Ironically, the Saudi government had revoked Bin Laden's citizenship in 1994.

Markaz Da'awat-ul Irshad ('the Centre for Preaching and Guidance'), which has its social and doctrinal roots in Ahl-e-Hadith school of thought, was set up at Muridke near Lahore in 1986 by two Pakistani university professors, Haifz Muhammad Saeed and Zafar Iqbal, and took the jihadi scene by storm particularly in the 1990s, with its vicious militant campaign in the Indian-controlled Kashmir. The Markaz Da'awat-ul Irshad complex, where the JuD is headquartered, is spread over many blocks, meant for religious education. The JuD also runs several hundred schools in the Punjab and some parts of the southern Sindh province.

Following the government ban on six militant organizations in January 2002, including Lashkar-e-Taiba, Markaz Da'awat-ul Irshad renamed itself Jamaatud Dawa (JuD), with the main players remaining the same. That is why JuD and LeT are considered as two sides of the same coin.

The organization's headquarters in Muridke, a small town some 30 km from Lahore, is a sprawling complex spread over 160 acres with residential quarters, two model schools – one each for girls and boys and a university, Al-Dawat-al-Irshad. The students attending the university also learn horse-riding. Hundreds of them graduate every year, and hundreds more are swelling their ranks, essentially those driven by the LeT's ideology of leaving and living for God.

JuD also radiates a global message that synchs in with the stated mission objectives of Al-Qaeda, i.e. an extremely radical, anti-US outlook that combines pursuit of knowledge with military training to prepare true 'mujahids of Islam'.

Thorn in Indo-Pakistan Relations

On April 2, 2012, Wendy Sherman, US undersecretary of state for political affairs, made an unusual announcement at the American Center in . . . Ms Sherman bemused her members of the audience by informing them that the US rewards for Justice had placed a \$10 million bounty on Hafiz Saeed. She also spoke of \$2

million bounty for Saeed's deputy, Abdul Rehman Makki, who is described on the rewards for justice website as the 'second in command' of the LeT. This announcement again whipped up an anti-Pakistan sentiment, less than a week before President Asif Ali Zardari's day trip to New Delhi and Ajmer, a Sufi shrine near the Indian capital. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh threw a lunch for Zardari but the issue of Saeed had already overshadowed what had earlier been anticipated as an unusual path-breaking meeting. The inconclusive meeting only reinforced the fact that since the late 1990s, JuD (formerly Lashkar-e-Taiba) has been at the heart of Indo-Pak tensions, a major irritant in the bilateral relations. India considers this Wahabi outfit as 'Pakistan army's first line of defence', which it says has carried out terrorist attacks not only in Kashmir but also elsewhere in India. As far back as 1998, the LeT had launched and eventually implemented the concept of fidayee attacks (commando raids on specified targets with the objective of killing and getting killed). Many such strikes including the one on the Indian Parliament in December 2001, and the almost simultaneous multiple bloody acts of violence in Mumbai on November 26, 2008, bore the hallmarks of fidayee attacks.

The 2008 strikes, including those on the Taj and Oberoi Trident hotels in Mumbai— were the work of the LeT. Eleven attackers, who had travelled from the Pakistani port city of Karachi, wreaked havoc on Mumbai for three days. These acts of terror provided Indian officials and the media with another opportunity to point a finger at the ISI. The electronic media in India whipped up a frenzy that aroused fears of yet another war between the two nuclear-armed nations.

On December 10, 2008, India formally requested the UN Security Council to designate JuD as a terrorist organization. On December 11, 2008, the council imposed sanctions on JuD, declaring it a global terrorist group. Interestingly, even China, Pakistan's "exemplary friend", supported this action. On the same day, Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, the JuD chief, declared that his group would challenge the sanctions imposed on it on all forums, including the International Court of Justice. "The ban has been imposed at India's behest. It is an attack on Islam and religious group and also on Pakistan," he declared. Pakistan's government also banned the JuD on the same day and issued an order to seal the JuD in all four provinces, as well as in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. The United States also designated JuD as a foreign terrorist group posing threat to its security.

The JuD is also on the list of some 48 organizations that the US has designated as terrorist outfits. The JuD, through various local organizations in Europe and the

US, is also well-networked, and uses its jihadist appeal as well as reverence for the cause of Al-Qaeda to mobilize funds. Its cooperation with different jihadi networks in Pakistan, Afghanistan as well as in Kashmir also lends it a trans-national character. Although based in central Pakistan, the JuD is very well-connected with Afghan militant outfits such as the Haqqani network that operates in areas between Pakistani Waziristan and eastern Afghanistan.

Pakistani security officials view this nexus with ever-increasing concern. While they may listen to the US and refrain from violence in Kashmir, their growing relationship with Arab, Afghan and other groups have become a formidable challenge, a senior ISI official told me.⁸⁵ This also amounted to an expression of helplessness vis-a-vis an organization that had been considered a handy pawn in Pakistan's Kashmir policy but now, because of its contacts with transnational groups, seems to have grown out of control.

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, or the Pakistan Taliban Movement, emerged as a powerful new entity in 2007 in the context of a series of military operations— US-led missile strikes on the one hand and an incursion by the Pakistan army into the Mehsud area of South Waziristan on the other. Until then, most of its component groups (13 in all) were loosely organized, with ties to the Afghan Taliban.

Led by Baitullah Mehsud, who fell to a US drone strike on August 5, 2009, it was initially a 40-member central Shura (assembly), comprising representatives from all seven FATA agencies that guided the organization. Its leaders met regularly until the death of Baitullah Mehsud but a pike in the US drone attacks as well as the Pakistani military operation in South Waziristan disrupted the organizational command structure, forcing them to disperse in various directions for shelter. After Baitullah the command went to Hakimullah Mehsud who too was killed in a US drone strike in 2013. It is currently headed by Mullah Fazlullah who rose to prominence in Swat, when TTP took control of the area as TTP Swat head until they were forced out of the area in a military operation in 2010. Fazlullah, is believed to be hiding in eastern Afghanistan's Nuristan province.

The TTP employs modern, more lethal techniques, operates in most of Pakistan's lawless tribal areas bordering Afghanistan with the help of numerous Taliban

⁸⁵ Author's meeting with the official in Islamabad, August 2010. His name would remain anonymous.

groups, most of them wedded to anti-Americanism and determined to implement Sharia. Its creation marked a new and more threatening development, arising out of a realization among most local and foreign militants that they needed a central command figure that could transcend tribal differences. In Baitullah Mehsud, followed by Hakimullah Mehsud (who succeeded Baitullah after his death) they found a unifying force. Inspired by Al-Qaeda, most militant groups in the tribal regions – also called the Federally Administered tribal Areas (FATA) – share a common ideology and are opposed to the international coalition against terrorism. Driving foreign forces out of Afghanistan and enforcing Sharia wherever possible is their shared goal. They also want Pakistan to end its cooperation with the US and NATO forces based in Afghanistan, and demand sharia must replace the existing legal system, which these militants condemn as ‘corrupt and repressive’.

Proof of the TTP’s involvement in Afghanistan and its association with Al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban came in early June 2008, when about 18 militants belonging to the TTP fell to air strikes by coalition forces on militant positions in Afghanistan’s Helmand province. All eighteen were from the Makeen village in the Waziristan agency.

Also, in January 2010, about a week after the deadly December 30 suicide attack on the CIA’s Forward Operating Base Chapman in eastern Afghanistan, a video showed Hakimullah Mehsud sitting to the left of Khalil Abu-Mulal al-Balawi, the Jordanian doctor who ended up killing seven CIA officials, including the base chief, a mother of three young children, five men, and another young woman. The emergence of the video instantly turned Hakimullah Mehsud into the CIA’s prime target because his group had apparently first hosted al-Balawi and then facilitated his onward journey into Afghanistan to hook up with the CIA.

This incident followed by Faisal Shehzad’s confessions in New York in May 2010, also revealed the TTP’s transnational character. It simply reinforced earlier analysis that the TTP had become part of a network that transcends Waziristan and Afghanistan, and had begun colluding with Al-Qaeda, the Afghan Haqqani network (Waziristan and eastern Afghanistan), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) as well as Pakistani auxiliaries of Al-Qaeda, i.e. Lashkar-e-Taiba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.

Ruthless attacks on Pakistani military and government targets offer ample evidence that while publicly the TTP wants to counter US hegemony, it also wants to keep Pakistani forces on tenterhooks. It also has joined hands with Al-Qaeda to

stage devastating suicide bombings since mid-2007– killing government officials, military and intelligence officials, women and children across the board – which has turned the TTP into a major source of instability – beside the anti-Shia radical Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.

The TTP, for instance, claimed responsibility for the daring raid on the Pakistan Navy base in Karachi on May 21, 2011, while it made a similar claim some days ago (May 13, 2011), when two suicide bombers killed almost 100 fresh cadets of the paramilitary Frontier Corps at Shabqadar near Peshawar. It also owned up to deadly suicide raids in September 2011 at the residences of a senior police official in Karachi and that of the head of the Frontier Corps in Quetta, the capital of the Balochistan province.

These appeared to be the revenge for more than 150 TTP-linked arrests in Karachi and Quetta between September 2010 and October 2011, which the organization saw as a serious setback for itself.

Pakistan's security establishment treats the TTP as its public enemy number one for its string of vicious attacks all over Pakistan. On 1 September 2010, the US formally designated the TTP as a foreign terrorist. Daniel Benjamin, the ambassador at large for counterterrorism, formally announced it at a press briefing, thereby making the TTP the latest addition to a list of 47 such organizations banned under the executive order number 13224 (reported by various Pakistani news organizations and newspapers on September 2, 2011).

'The TTP and al-Qaeda have a symbiotic relationship. The TTP draws ideological inspiration from Al-Qaeda while Al-Qaeda relies on the TTP for safe havens in the Pashtun areas along the Afghan-Pakistani border.' Daniel Benjamin explained, 'this mutual cooperation [between the groups] gives the TTP access to both Al-Qaeda's global terrorist network and the operational experience of its members. Given the proximity of the two groups and the nature of their relationship, TTP is a force multiplier for Al-Qaeda.'

The TTP caught the US lawmakers' attention in a big way after failed Times Square bomber Faisal Shehzad confessed to having contacts with the TTP in June 2010. He warned of 'more strikes on the United States until it leaves Muslim lands'. He told the judge he had undergone five days of bomb-making training during a 40-day stay with the Taliban in Pakistan, between December 9 and January 25, 2010.

Besides generating terror scare across the country, the Pakistani Taliban scored their greatest success with the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in Rawalpindi on December 27, 2007, causing mayhem across Pakistan. In the general elections on February 18, 2008, Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) emerged victorious to form a coalition government. Al-Qaeda inspired militants continue to sow more terror into the hearts and minds of people through attacks on markets, Sufi shrines, as well as government and security forces. Several attacks in May 2011 within days of Bin Laden's killing – including the 16-hour siege of a naval base in Karachi on May 22– underscored that, far from General Kayani's claim that the back of terrorists had been broken,⁸⁶ the militants still possessed the resolve and the capacity to spring shocking surprises on the military establishment. Following a relative improvement in 2011, TTP-linked militants wreaked death and destruction in early 2012, when they zeroed in on numerous police and paramilitary targets in Peshawar and some other areas of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa.

The group went on to carry out its violent activities in 2013 and 2014 by targeting security forces, government installations and minorities. The major attacks in 2013 included a suicide attack on January 10 on Quetta's Alamdar Road, which took 105 lives mostly of Shias. On June 23 the same year TTP attacked and killed nine foreign tourists at the base of Nanga Parbat, one of the world's highest peak in the Himalayas. On July 30 they attacked the Dera Ismail Khan prison, freeing over 200 inmates, including Adnan Rashid, a former airman of PAF and now TTP commander, who was serving a jail term for attacking President General Pervez Musharraf. And on September 22 in a brazen attack on a church in Peshawar 85 people lost their lives, mostly Christians. On June 9, 2014, the TTP attacked the country's largest international airport in Karachi, 36 people, including ten terrorists, were killed. Sixty-one people, including three Rangers officials, were killed in an attack at the Wagah border with India near Lahore on November 2⁸⁷. Apart from these violent activities it staged a gruesome attack on young school-going children in Peshawar Army Public School on December 16, 2014, killing more than 150, including 140 children, an attack they claim to be at a psychological front by targeting the families and children of army personnel fighting the war on terror in the FATA.

⁸⁶Address at Pakistan Military Academy, April 22, 2011

⁸⁷South Asia Terrorism Portal, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/Fidayeenattack.htm>

The IMU factor

This dissident Islamist group from Uzbekistan also qualifies as a small transnational entity with steadfast allegiance to Bin Laden and Al Zawahiri.. It had enjoyed the Taliban's hospitality in Afghanistan until the fall of their government in December 2001. Regardless of their exact numbers, which vary between 500-1000, most of the ferocious Uzbek militants had moved into the Waziristan region led by Tahir Yuldashev. These IMU militants faced little problem in finding support and shelter among the Ahmadzai Wazir tribesmen in and around Wana. Yaldashev soon became a star speaker at mosques in the Wana region; the administrative capital of Southern Waziristan.⁸⁸ Once well-entrenched, Yuldashev founded Mohajireen-o-Ansar, to pursue his agenda, which essentially converged with that of Al-Qaeda's.

Yuldashev's revered status took a hit when his loyalists began targeting Pakistan army and government officials in late 2006. These anti-army strikes turned the Uzbeks from revered heroes to villains. The pro-government Ahmedzai Wazir Taliban commander Mullah Nazir disapproved of targeting the Pakistani army and civilians.

This led to bloody fights between Mulla Nazir's men and the Uzbeks in March 2007, and eventually forced the IMU zealots to take refuge in the Baitullah Mehsud dominated area as well as North Waziristan, where Hafiz Gul Bahadur and the Haqqani network provided shelter to the Uzbek radicals.

Intelligence and local sources agree that this organization has indeed morphed into a vicious non-Arab Al-Qaeda entity; from the late 1990s, when they opened their first training camp near Mazar-i-Sharif in northern Afghanistan, to their escape to South Waziristan because of the US-led Operation Anaconda, most of the Uzbeks from the former Soviet Central Asian republics are probably now making their last stand in a region that is under sharp CIA focus because of the presence of all the Al-Qaeda driven militant outfits there. Tahir Yuldashev reportedly fell prey to a US drone strike in 2009.

⁸⁸Primary source: Imtiaz Gul, *The Al-Qaeda Connection*, and *The Most Dangerous Place*

How do Experts and Practitioners View Al-Qaeda? Different Perspectives and Approaches

Dr. Farhan Zahid

Al-Qaeda– ‘the base’–is a peculiar case study in terms of studying terrorist organizations. The organization simultaneously operates as a terrorist organization, insurgent group, a network and a network of networks in more than 60 countries. It is both regional with respect to the activities of its affiliated groups and global in terms of its reach. Formed in the backdrop of the Afghan war (1979-89) and after the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda is primarily an Arab organization with leadership hitherto belonging to Arabs. Its volatile, fluid, and ever changing nature has allowed experts, academics, and practitioners to contemplate and study its characteristics. Ever since we see, despite of many claims, its unprecedented growth in many different countries located in all continents except South America.

Al-Qaeda is successor to Maktab al Khidmat (Services Bureau), a Peshawar-based support organization aimed at meeting the needs of Arab mujahedeen landing in Peshawar, Pakistan, to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan. The Maktab was headed by Shaikh Abdullah Yousaf Azzam, an Arab Palestinian with a Muslim Brotherhood background and staffed by Arabs from various countries¹.

Abduallah Azzam had his own ambitions beyond Maktab and Afghan war against the Soviets. In true sense he was an Islamist intellectual, foreseeing a jihadi organization spearheading the global jihad movement to be started from the platform of Maktab al Khidmat al Mujahedeen. The real idea was to create an Islamic brigade of holy warriors, experienced and war tested. The numbers were to be drawn from the veterans of the Afghan war and had to be of Arab descent.²

Abdullah Azzam was one of the displaced Palestinians because of the long-standing Palestine-Israel issue. In his view Arab nationalism, Arab socialism and secular ideas of leaders like Jamal Abdul Nasser, Yasser Arafat, Anwar Sadat, Hafiz ul Asad, King Hussain had all failed to yield any result.

Four wars have been fought (1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973) and lost; whereas Israel

¹Andrew McGregor, *Jihad and the Rifle Alone: Abdullah Azzam and the Islamist Revolution*, The Journal of Conflict Studies, Vol. XXIII, No. 2 Fall 2003.

²Profile of Dr Abdullah Yousaf Azzam, Global Jihad, available at: http://www.globaljihad.net/view_page.asp?id=67

remained a dominant power in the region in spite of superior military might of its Arab neighbors. After the Grand Mosque Siege in Makka (1979) by ultra-orthodox Wahabi radicals belonging to the Movement of the Muslim Revolutionaries of Arabian Peninsula (MMRAP) the Saudi government launched a crackdown against militant groups.³ On other hand the Saudis as a policy measure decided to support the Afghan mujahedin against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. The *raison d'être* was to export the Saudi Islamist militants to the Afghan war zone. The Saudi policymakers thought the war would linger on for decades and by supporting the mujahedeen they were trying to silence their own Islamist radical groups, either to be killed in action or never to return home again. The architect of this strategy was Prince Turki al Faisal, son of former King Shah Faisal and chief of Saudi intelligence (GID). He also headed the operation launched by Saudi forces during Grand Mosque siege, saw the militants in action and had developed a good understanding about their ideology. The strategy worked for a while and Saudi government alongside US-CIA and Pakistani ISI participated in Operation Cyclone. The Saudis also financed the war by providing billions of dollars in this regard and even created their own Saudi-backed mujahedeen groups (Ittehad-e-Islami led by Abdul Rab Rasool Sayaf). But it did not work long enough to prevent further threats to the Saudi state as the war ended in 10 years and Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan leaving behind a fragile government and many mujahedeen group, now to fight each other.⁴

Problems grew further as many of the Arab mujahedeen from Saudi Arabia chose to return home. Bin Laden was one of them who despite having played a significant role in actual combat operations in Afghanistan (remained active in relief and fundraising activities) decided to move back to Saudi Arabia. As he landed back, he was given a warm welcome and proclaimed as Saudi war hero who defeated Soviet Union's Red Army. He became an instant celebrity in Saudi Arabia. People, especially the youth, began to be inspired by his heroic status. He visited Saudi cities where he delivered lectures on jihad at mosques and community centers and shared his experiences of jihad against the Soviets. Bin Laden's visit alarmed Saudi intelligence as it was almost certain that his thoughts could stir an already disturbed society that could pave the way of another rebellion against Saudi monarchy.

³James Wynbrandt, *A Brief History of Saudi Arabia*, InfoBase Publishing, 2010, p. 240.

⁴For details see, Steve Colls, *Ghost Wars: The Secret of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet invasion to September 10, 2001*, Penguin Books, New York and London, 2004

In August 1990 a major but unexpected event occurred in the Middle East. Saddam Hussein, Iraq's president, massed forces on the Kuwaiti border and a few days later invaded Kuwait. It was expected that the next target of Iraqi Revolutionary Guards would be the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Panic encircled the Saudi Royal circles. It was almost certain that a monarchy with no popular support base could be defeated as easily as the Kuwaitis. Saddam's one million strong war tested troops were on Saudi nerves. At this critical juncture the US put their weight support behind Saudis. The US armed forces under the UN umbrella started landing in Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden who was in Saudi Arabia strongly opposed Saudi policy of inviting foreign troops. He paid visits to high level Saudi state officials to dissuade them from this course of action. He proposed that his Arab-Afghan brigade would defend Saudi territory in case of an Iraqi attack. His offer was politely declined by the Saudi Interior Minister, Mohammad Nayef, who was in no mood to listen to his offer of a few thousand Afghan war veterans to defend Saudi Arabia from a predictable Iraqi invasion. Bin Laden, a onetime Saudi intelligence asset went rogue, as according to him letting 'infidel US and allied soldiers' in the Muslim holy land of Arabia would be an unpardonable sin.

A rudimentary Al-Qaeda organization which was established in 1988 in Peshawar was now he left with. Soon after launching a war of words, in collusion with some Saudi clerics, against the Saudi government's policy Bin Laden left Saudi Arabia along with his followers, four wives and children and moved first to Pakistan and then Sudan.

Another prime mover for Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden was the Algerian civil war of the 1990s. The war started after the military took control of the government in the wake of the elections (municipal and first round of parliamentary) which seemed to be resulting in a pro-Islamist party Islamic Salvation Party's victory⁵. The war was initially fought between the military-dominated regime and Islamist/nationalist parties in alliance but in the latter part it took a different shape. The veteran Afghan Algerians joined forces with Islamist parties and finally formed their own Group Islamique Army (GIA). The GIA started a killing spree, with invoking the doctrine of *takfir* (excommunication) and brutally slaughtering anyone not accepting their beliefs. According to one source,

During the conflict between the government and Islamist rebels, jihadi

⁵For details on origins and history of GIA see Brynjar Lia, *The Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al-Qaeda Strategist Abu Musab al-Suri*, Hurst Foundation Books, London, 2007, p.127

groups massacred civilians, assassinated public personalities (including Berber singers, feminist leaders and academics), and targeted members of the press. Between 1996 and 1998, civilians were killed en masse in a directed and purposeful strategy of total war that eventually claimed more than 150,000 lives (mostly civilians).....GIA chief Abu al-Moudhir argued that civilians who fought against the jihad by 'force, talk or with pen' were legitimate targets, reflecting the doctrine of total war ⁶.

Algerian extremist organizations (GIA and its splinter Salafist Group for Preaching and Jihad) termed killing civilians in the course of 'jihad' as just and according to the 'virtues of offensive jihad'. They applied the doctrine of takfir⁷ and justified killing civilians and anyone opposing their beliefs. The extreme views propounded by these groups were explicitly rejected by a wide majority of Muslim scholars. But at the same time these reasons were borrowed by Al-Qaeda in justifying attacks against the civilian targets. In fact, Bin Laden financed significantly during the early phase of civil war. The Islamic militancy in Algeria was crushed by Algerian military together with the support of Algerian people who rejected such naked acts of violence and aggression upon unarmed civilians.⁸ Theologically, it was Egyptian radical Syed Qutab, inspired by Ibn-e-Taymiah (1263-1328), who had sown the seeds of modern radicalism in the Arab world. His Quranic commentary *Fi Zil Al Quran* (In the Shade of the Quran) inspired Maulana Abu-al-Ala Maududi, founder of Jamat-i-Islami, Azzam, Osama and Zawahiri. Qutab was later convicted of plotting President Jamal Abdul Nasser's assassination, and was hanged in 1966.

Though defeated, the GIA provided Al-Qaeda leadership a model jihadi organization. Before departing for Afghanistan from Sudan in 1996 Bin Laden had managed to establish many terrorist training camps in Sudan. It was only after immense pressure from Egypt and the the Sudanese government forced Bin Laden and his followers to leave Sudan. Landing just before the advent of Taliban in Afghanistan (who became masters of Afghanistan in September 1996) the Al-Qaeda leadership found a conducive and hospitable environment in their new base.

⁶Quintan Wiktorowicz, and John Kaltnor, *Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11*, Middle East Policy Council, Volume X, Summer 2003, Number 2

⁷Takfir is refers to declaring others guilty of apostasy, thus justified to be killed.

⁸For more on Sayed Qutb, see, Farhan Zahid, "Analysis of the Influence of Sayed Qutb's Islamist Ideology on the Development of Jihadism", Foreign Analysis Paper No 8, *Centre Francais de Recherche sur le Renseignement*, Paris, France (September 2014).

Mufti Nizam ud din Shamzai⁹ of Binori Mosque Karachi facilitated talks between Taliban and Osama in Karachi in the early years of the Afghan iihad, as he was Mullah Omar's mentor. Khaled Ahmed, a senior Pakistani journalist, is of the view "this was the same Shamzai who, while accompanying a post-9/11 delegation led by then ISI chief Lt. Gen. Mahmud Ahmed, ended up persuading Mullah Omar to go on fighting the Americans instead of causing Al-Qaeda to leave Afghanistan."¹⁰ Bin Laden, in association with Ayman al-Zawahiri, Mohammad Atef, Seif al-Adal and different religious scholars from around the world issued the well-known fatwa (religious ruling), 'Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of Two Holy Sanctuaries' on August 23, 1996 from the Hindukush Mountains of Afghanistan¹¹. A fax message was sent to many Arab newspapers. Osama was of the view, "each of you knows the injustice, oppression, and aggression the Muslims are suffering from the Judeo-Crusading alliance and its lackeys".¹²

In 1998 from the platform of World Islamic Front Against Jews and Crusaders, Bin Laden issued another fatwa along with the likes of Ayman Al Zawahiri, Abu Yasir Rifa'i Ahmad Taha of Egyptian Islamic Group, Sheikh Abdul Salam Muhammad Khan, leader of Harkat-ul-Jihad (HuJ) Bangladesh, Fazlur Rehman Khalil, leader Harkat-ul-Ansar (HuA) Pakistan, and Sheikh Mir Hamzah, secretary of

⁹Nizam ud din Shamzai was one of the founders and guides of the Taliban Movement in Afghanistan. His students from the Binori Madrassa in Karachi joined Mullah Omar and his Taliban Movement on Shamzai's orders. Nizam ud din Shamzai and his disciple Qari Saifullah Akhter mediated between the Taliban in Afghanistan and Bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Nizam ud din Shamzai issued more than 2000 Fatwas (religious edicts). Most of those fatwas were against the USSR, India and Israel. After the establishment of Al-Qaeda by Osama bin Laden formed in 1998, the US became the main target of his Fatwas. He also issued a fatwa against the US invasion of Afghanistan and calling upon all Muslims to wage jihad against the US and allied forces.

¹⁰ Khaled Ahmed, "The Ghost of Osama bin Laden," *Newsweek Pakistan*, July 28, 2013, <http://newsweekpakistan.com/the-ghost-of-osama-bin-laden/> (accessed 2 September, 2014).

¹¹ In 1996 after a terrorist attack on a US military compound in east Saudi Arabia, the Khobar Towers, Osama bin Laden issued a public declaration of war in the 'Al Islam' newspaper in London, of Jihad against the United States military in the Middle East and against US collaborators - the Saudi Arabian regime. Under the pressure of Saudi Arabia and the US Osama bin Laden was forced to leave Sudan and in the end of 1996 he left Sudan, in a well planned and executed operation, with all his staff and family members to Jalalabad, Afghanistan. In February 1998 while stationed in Afghanistan Bin Laden issued another fatwa along with Ayman Al Zawahiri, Rifaai Taha, , Fazlur Rehman Khalil, and Amir Hamza, under the title «The World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders» through the Al Quds Al Arabi newspaper in London. The fatwa was a war declaration against the West, the Jews and against all those who fight true Muslims in the world. The fatwa became the Al-Qaeda manifest. (For details see www.globaljihad.net)

¹²Gilles Kepel and Jean- Pierre Milelli, "*Al Qaeda in its own words*," (Cambridge 2008), 47

the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan¹³. The fatwa stated: (Please note that Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan is a Bareilvi organization and Barelvis don't support Bin Laden.)

To kill Americans and their allies, both civil and military, is an individual duty of every Muslim who is able, in any country where this is possible, until the Aqsa Mosque [in Jerusalem] and the Haram Mosque [in Mecca] are freed from their grip and until their armies, shattered and broken-winged, depart from all the lands of Islam, incapable of threatening any Muslim".¹⁴

Afghanistan became the orchestrating ground for future Al-Qaeda attacks against western targets starting from East African Embassies' Bombings in 1998, USS Cole attack in 2000 and finally September 11 attacks.

Al-Qaeda justified September 11 attacks and killing civilians on, April 24, 2002, six months after the attacks, in a press release titled *A Statement from Qaidat al-Jihad Regarding the Mandates of the Hero's and the Legality of the Operations in New York and Washington*. All these conditions were based on Manichean and dualist principles of Wahabi/Salafi sect of Islam takfiri by characteristics:

In reciprocity for avenging the killings of Muslim civilians' death in Palestine (as Al-Qaeda believed that that killing Muslim civilians had allowed them to level score with killing American civilians)¹⁵

- Inability to distinguish civilians from combatants
- Assistance of civilians in 'deed, word or mind'.
- The necessity of war (in order to weaken the 'enemy' because the WTC was an 'enemy stronghold')
- Human shields (as the civilians had become human shields)¹⁶

The next decade of Al-Qaeda's global Jihad witnessed Anwar al Awlaki, a fine orator both in English and Arabic dominating the jihadi cyber world with his lectures, involved in the brainwashing of Fort Hudson, Texas shooter Major Nadal Hussein who killed 13 US soldiers in November 2009, Sameer Khan a US-Paki-

¹³Ibid, 56

¹⁴Ibid, 55

¹⁵Moreover from Al-Qaeda's viewpoint democracy is a system of kufr (unbelief), therefore, anything related to it tantamount to kufr. For details see Al-Qaeda ideologue Abu Mohammad al-Muqadisi's book, *Democracy is Religion*.

¹⁶Quintan Wiktorowicz, and John Kaltnor, *Killing in the Name of Islam*

stani who accompanied him to Yemen for launching Al-Qaeda propaganda “Inspire” magazine, and the Nigerian Umer Farooq Abdul Mutlib, the infamous underwear bomber who was captured by US authorities while on board a plane from Amsterdam to Detroit, Michigan, on Christmas day 2009. Awlaki was killed in a US drone strike on September 30, 2011 in Yemen.¹⁷

The US-born Awlaki who resumed a leadership role in Al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) gave Al-Qaeda fighters a new justification, “In democracy power resides with people. American people are the source of power on whose taxes the US troops are waging wars elsewhere in the Muslim world, thus killing an American is an individual duty of every Muslim.”¹⁸

Many academics, journalists in the field and practitioners in combat operations who have worked for many years in Afghanistan and Pakistan as part of their assignments and closely covered the growing trends of Islamic extremism have come up with several theories and models about Al-Qaeda. Most of them are journalists; some of them even interviewed Bin Laden in Afghanistan and Sudan and developed theories for understanding the Al-Qaeda phenomenon. All of them have different and interesting views letting scholars and researchers of this subject draw inferences for closely examining and studying the matter. We must not forget that not many people have had access to Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden and these were some of the individuals who worked hard and managed to get to the truth about Al-Qaeda.

Different Models and Perspectives

Bruce Riedel’s Theory

Bruce Riedel, a former CIA analyst and White House aide during the Clinton Administration and author of several books on Al-Qaeda, considers Al-Qaeda as the only global Islamist terrorist organization. It has global reach and tentacles across the world. The way it has managed to launch terrorist attacks from New York to New Delhi and created a network of franchises and like-minded terrorist groups makes it a unique entity. According to Riedel, the main objective of Al-Qaeda was to create an environment of hostility among Muslims so that hatred against the

¹⁷“Anwar-Al Awlaki Fast Facts, *CNN*, August 23, 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/23/world/meast/anwar-al-awlaki-fast-facts/> (accessed September 2, 2014)

¹⁸Awlaki lecture, “Allah is preparing us for victory”, available at, <https://archive.org/details/Anwar.Awlaki.Audio.Archive>

US and the West continues to grow and eventually result in a global war of religions. Al-Qaeda leadership, in fact, wanted to drag the US into Afghanistan and that was the very objective of the 9/11 attacks.

Riedel believes Taliban were aware of all the Al-Qaeda operations from day one and, in fact, Mullah Omar was taken into confidence beforehand. Omar was in the loop and amply compensated by Al-Qaeda by eliminating his enemies such as Ahmad Shah Massoud, a leader of the Northern Alliance. The Taliban were also provided with Al-Qaeda trained Arab, Pakistani, Chechens, Uzbeks, Tajiks and other non-Afghan volunteers who fought against the forces of Northern Alliance alongside Taliban forces (Al-Qaeda's storm troopers called Brigade 55). Al-Qaeda-trained Arab brigade had most fierce and hardcore militants with higher fighting capabilities and morale than the Taliban troops.

According to Reidel, it was only after the "betrayal" by President General Pervez Musharraf that Al-Qaeda and Taliban started to suffer. Riedel believes that both had never expected such a U-turn from Pakistan. They were pretty sure about getting Pakistan's support in the global war against the US and the West. In fact, it was President Musharraf's unexpected move that, according to them, tipped the balance in allied forces' favor. On the other hand Musharraf made the move for salvaging his own forces and country that could have been destroyed if he had taken the wrong side.

According to Riedel, the real planner behind all Al-Qaeda beliefs and philosophy is Ayman al-Zawahiri. He is one person that encompasses all the traits of a global terrorist. He has written books and articles in justification of his set of beliefs and remained operational and pivotal in many acts of terror. His thoughts have greatly influenced Bin Laden, and it was his guidance and ideas that the whole organizational structure was based on. Bin Laden was the leader of the organization, but the organization worked under the principles set by Zawahiri. Bin Laden the supreme commander of the organization, was one of the 'knights' (in typical Zawahirian terminology) fighting for the greater good of the organization. For Riedel, Zawahiri is the most determined of all jihadists.

For Bin Laden and his organization the primary enemy is the US because of its support to the Jewish state of Israel. The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 between French and British diplomats was the first step of creating animosity. The agreement defined their proposed spheres of influence and control in the Middle East in the wake of Ottoman empire's dissolution. Another matter of outrage was the

Balfour Declaration, a plan to provide Jews a homeland in Palestine. All these agreements did not involve American backing, but at a later stage the US did assume a new role and provided assistance. According to Riedel, Al-Qaeda and its ideologues have set forth their agenda for the global jihad movement:

Al-Qaeda has an ambitious agenda for the new century. Its ultimate goal is to create (or in its view to restore) the Islamic caliphate from Spain to Indonesia, uniting all the lands of the modern Muslim world and some territories lost in Christian reconquests over the past few centuries. Although it has no blueprint for governing the caliphate, it plans to impose Sharia (Islamic law) on the model of the Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, whose governing barely functioned in its brief history. they are well aware that they do not have a mass following in the Muslim world and that they are not on the verge of taking over even a single Muslim country. They agreed themselves as a vanguard movement, a small group of 'knights', showing the way for Ummah.

The first step that Al-Qaeda wanted to take was to bleed the US and its allies by terrorist attacks like 9/11, London Underground Bombings, 2005, Madrid Bombings, 2004, and US embassies' bombings in East Africa in 1998. It wanted the US to retaliate and overreact. Then the time would be ripe for a propaganda campaign laden with conspiracy theories about the US aims of robbing Muslim countries' wealth and oil along with supporting Israel. Bringing the US and its allies to Afghanistan was one of the aims successfully achieved. After achieving all of this then the time would come for confronting the US forces with guerrilla warfare in the difficult terrains of Afghanistan.

Acquiring nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction was one of the major aims of Al-Qaeda. For this purpose the organization had been eyeing towards the nuclear program of Pakistan. Taking over Pakistan was another major objective in the Al-Qaeda's worldwide planning.

Riedel does not foresee Al-Qaeda as a major threat to world peace like that of Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan or the Soviet Union of previous century. But he believes that it would require considerable planning and well-structured reforms to defeat the organization, both militarily and politically.

“At the end of day, al-Qaeda is not Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, or the Soviet Union. It is a relatively small organization that can be defeated by wise and smart

policy. Though it is responsible for the worst day save one in US history, its demise should not take decades to achieve.”

As far as the 9/11 attacks were concerned Riedel believed that the inspiration was sought from the 1994 hijacking of Air France jet by the Algerian Islamist terrorist organization GIA and plan of crashing it over Eifel Tower in Paris in 1994. The French intelligence agencies aborted the plan as they already had some sort of intelligence reports of the plan in offing and it was put to a halt by luring hijackers into a trap at Marseilles airport where the French commando units successfully aborted the plan.

Peter Bergen on Al-Qaeda

Peter Bergen, an eminent expert on terrorism and author of famous books on Al-Qaeda *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, and *Holy War Inc: The Secret World of Osama Bin Laden*, has different things to say about Al-Qaeda and its leader Bin Laden. Like other authors and researchers on the same subject, Bergen also thoroughly investigated the phenomenon. In fact, he was one of the few Western journalists to interview Bin Laden in Afghanistan in 1996. In order to get to understand the Al-Qaeda's rationale, Bergen conducted a hectic pillar to post research work keeping in view of all the undercurrents and causes.

Bergen opines that Al-Qaeda and its leaders and followers have not developed such hatred-laden theories against the West, heretic Muslims (in their eyes) and especially the US overnight. They are the people fighting for certain causes and for that they even do not get bothered to kill unarmed citizens, women, children and senior citizens strictly forbidden in Islam's holy war concept. Bin Laden subscribes to Wahabi/Salafi school of thought, but it is indeed Qutbism, the political thoughts of Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood ideologue Syed Qutb, that seems more reflective in his actions. Bergen is one of the few western journalists who interviewed Bin Laden in person in southern Afghanistan for CNN.

According to Bergen, Bin Laden's views are similar to that of Samuel Huntington's much talked about theory of clash of civilizations, primarily between Islam and the Western civilization or what Huntington called is as Christian-Judaic civilization. The focus of Laden's ideas as reflected in his speeches is also jihad against Jews and "Crusaders". On many occasions Laden called for jihad against adherents of Judaism and Christianity, as he considered them chips of the same block and "allied against Muslims", in plotting conspiracies to occupy and dominate Mus-

lim lands and resources. Bergen believes these thoughts have founded the fundamentals of Bin Laden's thinking and thus become the manifesto of Al-Qaeda.

As Bin Laden has not acquired any formal theological education, and relied heavily on radical Islamist theologians like Safar al-Hawali, Salman al-Oudah and Omer Abdul Rahman from the beginning. Initially, he was inspired by Abdullah Azzam, his teacher and mentor in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, who also later persuaded him to move to Peshawar (base camp) in jihad against the "atheist" Soviets. In his later phase of life he was in the company of Ayman al Zawahiri, more radical than Azzam in interpretation of jihadist thoughts and believer in takfiri doctrines. Bergen sees a profound impact of Zawahiri's thoughts and ideas on Bin Laden's personality. As Azzam was more anti-Israeli in his thinking because of the fact the he was a Palestinian, on the other hand Zawahiri was anti-American and anti-Hosni Mubarak's regime. Zawahiri being an Egyptian was anti-American because of American support to Mubarak's regime. Therefore both his mentors had personal- cum-nationalist agendas, camouflaged in the garb of religiosity.

Albeit these influences on his personality, Bin Laden himself had some of his own notions. He was a Saudi but had problems of identity. His father was a Yemeni immigrant to Saudi Arabia. In the early 1930s he had migrated to Saudi Arabia in search of a better life and settled in Jeddah and became a naturalized citizen. Mohammad Bin Laden had worked for the US multinational firm Aramco as a manual laborer, when he first arrived there in Jeddah. With the passage of time the Laden family became rich and famous in Saudi Arabia, but still identity crisis continued to deepen and remained as many of the Saudis still considered them Yemenis.

The roots of Al-Qaeda as Bergen described are found in Muslim Brotherhood movement. Although there have been many influences on Bin Laden's thought development, but the initial one was his exposure to Muslim Brotherhood.

Soon after, he attended Jeddah's prestigious King Abdul Aziz University, from which he received a degree in economics and public administration.

It was there that Bin Laden first became associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist group, and first came under the spell of two prominent teachers of Islamic studies, Abdullah Azzam and Muhammad Qutb. The influence of these men cannot be underestimated—it's

as if Ronald Reagan and Milton Friedman's brother had taught him about capitalism.¹⁹

Moreover, he met Afghan jihadist leaders Burhan uddin Rabbani and Abdul Ra-sool Sayaf while performing hajj in the early 1980s. They, too, encouraged him to join the Afghan ihad. Abdullah Azam, his teacher and jihadist ideologue at Jeddah University also persuaded him to join in. Soon after reaching Peshawar in 1983, Bin Laden financed Bait ul Ansar (guest house) for mujahedin coming from Arab countries in an upscale Peshawar neighborhood.. His mentor Abdullah Azzam was also running a Services Office (Maktabul Khidmat) and was active in providing logistical support to mujahedin. Another person with whom Bin Laden worked closely was Afghan mujahedin commander Gulbadin Hekmatyar of Hizb-e-Islami (HI). Out of the the seven most prominent jihadi organizations, HI was the favorite of the Pakistani intelligence community. Hekmatyar was one of the least successful and less competent jihadi commanders but extremely ruthless and hardcore Islamist of all the Afghan commanders. His connections in Pakistan predated the Afghan crisis of 1979. When Afghan President Daud Khan raised the issue of Pashtunistan in the mind 1970s and rejected the British-established Durand Line (1893), Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, along with his Afghan affairs advisor General Naseerullah Babar, Inspector General of Frontier Corps, NWF Province, launched a counter campaign of supporting radical Islamist groups of Afghanistan, basically to neutralize the issue of Pashtunistan.

Another close associate of Bin Laden was Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. Sayyaf was even worse in his Wahabi/Salafist radical Islamist ideology. His main backer was Saudi intelligence (GID) and he himself was a stern Wahabi/Salafi. Prince Turki al Faisal, the chief of Saudi intelligence had close ties to both Sayyaf and Bin Laden because of his family. Prince Turki and Bin Laden kept on meeting each other whenever Turki visited Pakistan. There is a strong possibility that Bin Laden might have been recruited by Turki and became an active source of Saudi intelligence. But most of the time Bin Laden remained very close to Azzam, who indeed had become most dominating influence on his personality. He was more like a father figure to him because of the age difference, teacher-student relationship and scholarship. Despite his presence in Peshawar and his terms with Jihadi commanders, Bin Laden played a limited. It is suspected that he went to the battle field and took part in actual fighting only once, along with other Arab Afghans. Things remained smooth until Bin Laden became acquainted with Zawahiri and other members of

¹⁹Peter L. Bergen, *Holy War Inc: Inside the Secret World of Osama Bin Laden*, The Free Press, 2001, p. 47.

Egyptian Islamic Jihad.

The Afghan war did not only move men like Bin Laden spiritually; it also enabled them to meet key figures in terrorist organizations in the Arab World. In 1987 Bin Laden was introduced to members of Egypt's Jihad group, the organization behind the 1981 assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. A leader of the group, Ayman al Zawahiri, had settled in Peshawar and was putting his skills as a physician to work at a hospital for Afghan refugees. In 1989, Bin Laden founded his Al-Qaeda organization that would eventually merge with al-Zawahiri's Jihad group.²⁰

According to Bergen, Bin Laden initiated the Al-Qaeda project to make a database of all Arab Afghan those who had participated in Afghan war. He was perhaps the only Arab Afghan after the death of his mentor Azzam, who had good terms with all the key commanders and their backers, and Saudi intelligence.

Bergen rejected all conspiracy theories involving the CIA in the making of Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. He did not approve of any such idea that the CIA had recruited and trained him or that he was a renegade CIA agent. He blamed Pakistani intelligence apparatus for recruiting and training the Afghans from refugee camps in Pakistan and that all the seven major Afghan Mujahedin parties (Peshawar Seven) had bases in Pakistan. Arab Afghans, according to Bergen had been an instrument of Saudi intelligence and Saudis paid dollar for dollar paralleled with the Americans in Afghan war. In his own words:

The United States wanted to be able to deny that CIA was funding the Afghan war, so its support was funneled through Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI). The ISI in turn made the decisions about which Afghan factions to arm and train, tending to favour the most Islamist and pro-Pakistan. The Afghan Arabs generally fought alongside those factions, which is how the charge arose that they were creatures of the CIA.

Former CIA official Milt Bearden, who ran the Agency's Afghan operation in the late 1980s, says: 'The CIA did not recruit Arabs,' as there was no need to do so. There were hundreds of thousands of Afghans all too willing to fight and the Arabs who did come for jihad were 'very disrupt-

²⁰ibid, p.59

tive'....one Afghan told me, 'Whenever we had a problem with one of them we just shot them. They thought they were kings'²¹'

Bergen also acknowledges the fact that there had been some level of assistance or one may call approval from the CIA for Arab Afghans to play their role in the war. There were instances when American CIA was found helping and supporting the Arab Afghan but the nature of their relationship and to the extent that it had reached during the war, is not clear. Indeed some of the Arab Afghan leaders, including Azzam repeatedly visited the US during the 1980s for recruitment purposes. They were issued visas and accommodation arrangements were made. According to one source, Azzam time and again visited the US and preached at least in 43 US cities for recruitment of US Muslims.²²

During his investigative course Bergen traced Bin Laden's background and even visited his ancestral village of Hadramout in Yemen. He chronicled all of his journeys from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, then Afghanistan, and later to Sudan and then again in Afghanistan; and the evolution of his organization from once a group of few veteran jihadist to an international patent organization.

Most importantly as Bergen considers Al-Qaeda's primary agenda is to galvanize Islamic revolution across the globe and to create anti-American/western sentiments among Muslims, capitalizing on Muslims' plight in several different territorial conflicts. Moreover agenda includes dissemination of Qutbian ideas in a situation when these ideas seem real and easily adaptable to masses.

One cannot underestimate the influence of Qutb on the jihadist groups in Egypt and by extension, on Bin Laden. A journalist and critic, Qutb visited the United States as a student between 1948 and 1951 and was 'appalled by the racism and sexual permissiveness'. He returned to Egypt with 'an uncompromising hatred of the west and all of its works' and promptly joined the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, which by 1940s was already a significant mass movement with perhaps half a million members and which opposed the regime of President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who took over in a 1952 coup. The slogan of the brotherhood was resounding andThe execution of Qutb elevated him to martyr hood; his writings were subsequently devoured by Is-

²¹Ibid, P.65

²²Dan Caldwell, *Vortex of Conflict: US Policy towards, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq*, Stanford University Press, California, p.75.

lamists. The Saudi dissident Saad al-Fagih describes Qutb's writings as the 'most important' for the militant Islamist movements.²³

According to Bergen, the one person that greatly influenced Bin Laden in latter part of his life was undoubtedly Zawahiri.. The merger of Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda with al-Zawahiri's Islamic Jihad is quite convincing in translating the influence of Egyptian Islamist movements which were mostly home grown Egyptian organizations against consecutive dictatorial regimes in Egypt since 1948. Bergen believes that the best results could be obtained in the ongoing war on terror by eliminating Zawahiri not Bin Laden. Where Bin Laden constituted the body of Al-Qaeda and its global jihadi network, Zawahiri is the brain. The global Islamist network that Bin Laden managed to encompass was only with the assistance of Zawahiri and his ties with other Jihadist groups. No one knew Bin Laden before his acquaintance with Zawahiri and his group of jihadists, it was only after their alliance that the Al-Qaeda emerged on the scene evolved into a worldwide patent terrorist organization.

The profound impact of al-Zawahiri on Bin Laden's thinking has become increasingly clear, and some of have suggested that this little known physician is more important to Al-Qaeda than Bin Laden himself. Like the late Abdualah Azzam before him, al-Zawahiri has influenced his younger partner to become even more radical. During their all public appearances, al-Zawahiri sits beside Bin Laden, a cerebral taciturn man in his fifties, his face framed by heavy glasses, a beard, and a white turban. He speaks English very well and sometimes acts as Bin Laden's interpreter²⁴.

Zawahiri was not the only Egyptian that has influenced in the making of Bin Laden's thought and his radical mindset and pent-up aggression. There had been others closely circled around him. There is a long list, but some prominent amongst them were Abu Hafs al-Masri, Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri (former Egyptian police officer later fled Egypt during the crackdown against Islamist), former American-Egyptian US Marine Corp soldier Ali Mohammad (Zawahiri's source in US forces), Riffa Ahmad Taha, Mohammad Shawki Islambouli (brother of Anwar Sadat's assassin) and Blind Shaikh Omer Abdel Rahman, all key players in Al-Qaeda's establishment.

²³ibid, pp.199-200.

²⁴ibid, p.202.

Finally as it seems convincing that Bin Laden's thoughts are derived from Huntington's clash of civilization thesis. It appears that Bin Laden firmly believes in the ideas propounded by Huntington, though in his own way. Huntington's theory, according to Bergen sounds very impressive but time has proved it wrong in many ways. Since he made his theory public several wars have erupted and destabilized world peace but not on the same lines as outlined by Huntington; most of those wars were of ethnic and linguistic by virtue of nature. Since then more Muslims not non-Muslims have so far been killed in wars fighting each other on the basis of sectarian and ethnic conflicts. Bergen called this phenomenon Clash of Acquaintances. Moreover there had been wars fought on the same issues between many other non-Muslim communities such as War and genocide in Rwanda and many in other regions of the world.

In Bergen's view Al-Qaeda is a hydra-headed monster. The only way according to him is to block the source of its never ending supply of trained foot soldiers and for that matter he believes the only solution is the shutting down of all training camps which are the source.

If Al-Qaeda is to be buried in that unmarked grave, the most effective plan beyond eliminating the leadership of the group is to shut down permanently the Afghan training camps where the foot soldiers of Holy War Inc learn their deadly skills. Without the training camps, Al-Qaeda recruits cannot easily learn how to construct devastating bombs or create disciplined cells capable of carrying out complex operations such as the September 11 attacks.²⁵

Pervez Musharraf on Al-Qaeda

In 2006, President Musharraf, a big time anti-terror warrior, presented his own ideas about Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden. In his book *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (Simon and Schuster, 2006), he described events relating to the manhunt and arrest of 672 Al-Qaeda suspects from the bordering areas of Pak-Afghanistan. Musharraf in 2006 claimed that "Bin is dead" and most of Al-Qaeda leadership is either dead or captured during the US-led war on terror. At that time it was difficult to challenge the authentic nature of his ideas as he was heading the country as well as Pakistan Army and premier intelligence agency ISI (he was chief of army staff and president).

²⁵Ibid, pp. 233-234.

According to Musharraf, the name Al-Qaeda was coined by Palestinian Afghan war veteran Abdullah Azzam, who used it first in one of his articles in a magazine called “al-Jihad” in 1988 used to publish from Peshawar in Arabic. He said: “In fact, the full name used by Azzam was Al-Qaeda al Sulbah, ‘the solid base.’” But that was not the Al-Qaeda what it later became in the hands of Bin Laden after the death of Azzam. The purpose of such an organization for Azzam was to create a base of Afghan War veterans for “Muslim awakening” by means of social services and charity work. Azzam’s Al-Qaeda was never meant to be a military organization or if it would be then the goal was only to liberate Palestine. Musharraf believes that there must have a difference of opinion between Azzam and Bin Laden over the agenda of this organization and that eventually led to the assassination of Azzam in late 1989. Bin Laden was suspected to be behind his murder in Peshawar.²⁶

The predecessor organization to Al-Qaeda was Maktab al Khidmat (Services Bureau), an organization established by Azzam at Peshawar in 1982 to facilitate the Arab mujahedin landing in Pakistan from several different countries to wage jihad in Afghanistan against the Soviets. The MK coordinated financial and logistical support from Saudi Arabian intelligence agency and some Saudi backed Afghan groups of Mujahedin. Apart from working with Azzam, Bin Laden also set up his own base in Jaji, eastern Afghanistan and fought briefly with Soviet forces on and off.

After the death of his mentor Azzam, Bin Laden, Al-Qaeda and his small number of followers remained unknown and did not come into limelight until their 1998 US embassies’ attack in East Africa, while they moved back to Afghanistan from Sudan. It was from then onwards that the Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden were highlighted in world media. According to Musharraf, Bin Laden established another organization called Islamic World Front, a merger of several different small groups of radical militant organizations belonging to South and South-east Asian countries. He used this forum for delivering his fatwa against the Americans in 1998. But it was Al-Qaeda that provided him fame as the Americans got to know about Al-Qaeda not the Islamic Front.

In reality though, in February 1998, nine years after the formation of Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden formed an umbrella organization called the Islamic World Front. The initiative was to present Al-Qaeda in a more formal fashion with its multinational membership and providing umbrella for jihadist groups not acting

²⁶Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir*, Simon and Schuster, 2006, p. 219.

in tandem. General Musharraf believes that Al-Qaeda from its earliest days had an Egyptian stamp on it most of the high profile leaders were Egyptians. It has a worldwide presence and its purposes are the following:

1. To coordinate with existing Islamist groups and to create new ones at places where there are none
2. To proselytize
3. To drive Americans forces out of Muslim countries
4. To combat the designs of Israel and the United States in the Middle East
5. To support the Muslims' struggles for freedom everywhere
6. To pool all Muslim resources for the common cause of jihad²⁷

Although Musharraf never claimed in his book about the death of Bin Laden but later on while interacting with the international media he acknowledged the fact that he might have died of renal failure and other diseases required sterile environment.

In an exclusive interview with CNN International he said,

I think now, frankly, he is dead for the reason he is a ... kidney patient..... Pakistan knew bin Laden took two dialysis machines into Afghanistan. "One was specifically for his own personal use, I don't know if he has been getting all that treatment in Afghanistan now. And the photographs that have been shown of him on television show him extremely weak. ... I would give the first priority that he is dead and the second priority that he is alive somewhere in Afghanistan."²⁸.

The same view point was also expressed by Afghan President Hamid Karzai in an interview with CNN International. He seconded Musharraf's claim and said:

I would come to believe that [bin Laden] probably is dead, But still, you never know. He might be alive. Five months ago, six months ago, I was thinking that he was alive.

²⁷Ibid, p.219.

²⁸Interview with CNN International <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/south/01/19/gen.musharraf.binladen.1.19/index.html>

The more we don't hear of him, and the more time passes, there is the likelihood that he probably is either dead or seriously wounded somewhere.²⁹

About Mullah Omar he said, "We know of that," he said. "And we have come close to arresting him several times, but he's been able to escape."³⁰

In another interview Musharraf designated the present day Al-Qaeda as a godfatherly figure to the worldwide network of militant jihadi organization and provides a platform of logistical support, technical expertise and financial assistance to any radical organization in need. For Musharraf it was the US that abandoned the 30,000 mujahedin in Pakistan and Afghanistan after winning the cold war against arch rival Soviet Union. There was no plan for the settlement of those Afghan war veterans. No assistance of any form was provided; neither to Pakistan nor to Afghanistan to rehabilitate them. It was Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden that took the advantage and cajoled those Mujahedin into the Al-Qaeda camp³¹.

The annual "Country Reports on Terrorism 2008", published by the U.S. State Department to some extent also seconded Musharraf's ideas in its report.

Additionally, supporters and associates worldwide who are 'inspired' by the group's ideology may be operating without direction from AQ central leadership; its impossible to estimate their numbers. AQ serves as a focal point of 'inspiration' for a worldwide network that is comprised of many Sunni Islamic extremist groups, including some members of the Gama'at al-Islamiyya, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Islamic Jihad Group, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Harakat ul-Mujahedin, Ansar al-Sunnah, the Taliban, and Jemaah Islamiya³².

Ahmed Rashid's Model

Ahmed Rashid, a Pakistani expert on Afghan affairs, author of bestsellers *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (I.B.Tauris, 2000) and *Descent into Chaos* (Penguin Books 2008) presented his own version about

²⁹Hamid Karzai Interview with CNN, available at: <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/central/10/06/karzai.binladen/index.html>

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Interview with Der Spiegel, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,628960-2,00.html>

³²Country Reports on Terrorism 2008, United States Department of State Publication, Office of the Coordination for Counterterrorism, April 2009, p. 319.

Al-Qaeda linked with Taliban. Though more famous for expressing his expertise about Taliban, Rashid also viewed Al-Qaeda only resurrected during the Taliban period. According to Rashid, it was during the Taliban era in Afghanistan (1996-2001) that a weak and demoralized Bin Laden was able to make his dreams come true. It was only under the Taliban rule and their patronage that Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden's international network grew to become what we see it today. Rashid sees certain other elements working behind the scenes; first for installing the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and then promoting it. For Rashid, the Taliban swift successes and series of victories one after another was only because of the role Pakistani intelligence agencies played behind the scenes. Rashid does not consider any role of Pakistani intelligence agencies in promoting the cause of Bin Laden or Al-Qaeda but in fact they allowed him to use the playing field only to further their own strategic interests. During his years in Peshawar Bin Laden worked closely with Gulbadin Hekmatyar, the leader of Hizb-e-Islami. Bin Laden also provided funds for toppling the government of Benazir Bhutto in a vote of no confidence against her in 1989.

The United States did not play any role when Taliban were taking over Afghanistan and committing worst human and women rights violations. The US desire was to see a stable government in Afghanistan to pursue the goal of exploring central Asian untapped oil reserves. In this regard many US oil companies were already negotiating agreements with Taliban leadership. Washington had no problem with the internal policies of Taliban and was not at all concerned about the human rights abuse being carried out against ethnic minorities and women. The US concern was, of course, Bin Laden only after when he used Afghanistan as a base to carry out terrorist attacks against the US embassies in 1998. It was only after that the US policymakers started to draw policy measures for Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, but not for those harboring the Al-Qaeda leadership. Albeit the fact that Bin Laden was instrumental in lobbying and financing against the first government of Benazir Bhutto (1988-1990) the second Bhutto government (1993-1996) was the period when Taliban were backed by Pakistan and helped succeed in their endeavor to take Kabul. As Rashid explains,

During Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's second term of office (1993-96), the retired Interior Minister General Naseerullah Babar promoted the Taliban. He wanted to free Afghan policy from the ISI. Both Bhutto and Babar were deeply suspicious of the ISI's power and resources, which it had used to discontent against Bhutto in her first term

in office.....Babar 'civilianized' support to the Taliban. He created an Afghan Trade Development Cell in the Interior Ministry, which ostensibly had the task of coordinating efforts to facilitate a trade route to Central Asia-although its principal task was to provide logistical backing for the Taliban, not from secret funds but from the budgets of government ministries.³³

It was during the same period that Al-Qaeda flourished and established a viable playing ground for recruitment, planning and putting its agents into the fields of operation. Bin Laden was not invited by the Taliban; he was already there in Afghanistan before the Taliban climbed over the echelons of power in Kabul. He tactfully developed a close relationship with Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, even establishing matrimonial alliance by giving his daughter in marriage to Omar and swore allegiance to supreme leader. He was eventually successful in developing a close and tight relationship with Taliban high command and in becoming a confidant of Taliban supreme leader Mullah Omar, though he also developed enmity with some Taliban high ups who considered Bin Laden a bad omen for Afghanistan.

Rashid indeed views a primary role of Pakistan in establishing Taliban in Afghanistan and it was the Taliban who provided sanctuaries to Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda which was at that time crucial for the further existence of the organization. Rashid also views with suspicion the shifting of training camps being run for Kashmiri Mujahedin in Afghanistan.

The Taliban handed over Al-Qaeda the running of the training camps in eastern Afghanistan that the ISI and Pakistani extremists had earlier run for Kashmiri insurgents. Bin Laden now gained control over all extremist groups who wanted or needed to train in Afghanistan. In return, he began to fund some of Mullah Omar's pet projects, such as building a grand mosque in Kandahar and constructing key roads. Until then, the Taliban had not considered America an enemy and showed little understanding of the world affairs. But now Taliban leaders began to imbibe the ideas of global jihad.³⁴

³³Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, I.B. Tauris, 2000, p.184

³⁴Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, Penguin Books, 2008, p.15.

Bin Laden was homeless and badly wanted a place to settle down and in Taliban he received a whole country for his endeavors. While settled in Afghanistan he started to galvanize support for its organization by training Islamist groups across the world interested in jihadi activity. Al-Qaeda trainers in Afghanistan imparted training to almost all militant Wahabi/Salafi inspired and Deobandi groups of Pakistan, known for their extremist activities, mostly sectarian violence. In Afghanistan Al-Qaeda established a network of training camps with experts imparting quality training to future Islamist terrorists. His financial condition was as worse while he was in Sudan, where he lost considerable amount of family inherited money in futile efforts to build roads and farms in Sudan. His financial conditions also improved as Pakistani jihadist groups and sympathizers in Pakistan and Middle East filled al-Qaeda coffers with enough money to embark upon his global agenda of waging war against the western/American interests.

“This support base in Pakistan was to prove critical to Al-Qaeda’s survival after 9/11. Between 1996 and 2001, al-Qaeda trained an estimated thirty thousand militants from around the world.”³⁵

The Taliban-Al-Qaeda alliance became clear in those years and Afghanistan had become the central hub of recruitment and training of radical Islamist groups across the globe.

In 2000 the clear indications that the Taliban and al-Qaeda were partners in creating an international army for terrorism based in Afghanistan were still receiving little attention abroad.....Al-Qaeda now organized Arab and North African fighters into special unit called Brigade 055, which backed the Taliban army in some of its bloodiest offensives against the Northern Alliance. Al-Qaeda enlisted other extremist groups to fight on its behalf, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Chechen fighters from the breakaway republic of Chechnya, and Uighur Muslims from China’s eastern province of Xingjiang. Meanwhile, al-Qaeda training camps were churning out thousands of terrorists from around the world, many of whom remained behind in Afghanistan.³⁶

Thus it became evident, according to Rashid in promoting the agenda of installing a pro-Pakistan regime in Kabul the Pakistani intelligence agencies inadvertently

³⁵Ibid, p.16.

³⁶Ibid, p.17.

supported Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden and allowed them to keep up the activities. Taliban regime, isolated from the world affairs, busy in fighting Northern Alliance and having very little knowledge about the outside world relied heavily on Laden's Al-Qaeda. They had been supported by Saudi Arabia but only in terms of military equipment. The Taliban leadership was being toyed by Al-Qaeda. All three players in this game had their own vested interests.

According to Rashid, the Al-Qaeda's real agenda that what it was doing right now or what it would be capable of doing in upcoming years was totally unexpected for both Pakistan and Taliban. In later years both suffered because of the deeds of Al-Qaeda. Taliban regime was toppled by allied forces and Pakistan became a victim of its fall out effects on all over the Pakistani society as it continues to suffer to this day.

Al-Qaeda has its charming ways costing heavily anyone such as Pakistan and Taliban. Bin Laden charmed both; for Taliban he provided trained foot soldiers to fight against their enemies along with funds, and for Pakistan he opened up his training camps to provide fresh recruits of mujahedin to fight against the Indian forces in Kashmir. In fact, he managed to gain the confidence and pretended to be an "innocent jihadi" fighting a holy war. Pakistanis had already alienated former mujahedin groups (then called the Northern Alliance) and totally banking on Taliban regime. Pakistanis, according to Rashid, backed Taliban, even by sacrificing their own society and cultural norms. The wave of Talibanization was also penetrating Pakistani society's fabric and fundamentalism coupled with sectarian extremist violence was already on rise. At the end of the day it was Pakistan that suffered the most and became the worst victim.

Jason Burke's Theory

According to Jason Burke, a renowned British journalist and a correspondent for The Times of London, and hardcore Al-Qaeda researcher, the organization had been in existence for some period of time but it does not exist anymore. The peculiar thought was propounded by him in his famous book *Al-Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam* (Penguin Books, 2004). Burke embarked upon a journey to find the real story behind the functioning of the world's most notorious terrorist organization and made this conclusion that it didn't exist anymore. In his own words:

The nearest thing to Al-Qaeda, as popularly understood, existed for

a short period, between 1996 and 2001. Its base had been Afghanistan, and what I had seen at Tora Bora were the final scenes of its destruction. What we have currently is a broad and diverse movement of radical Islamic militancy. Its roots go back decades at the very least. Elements can be traced back to the earliest days of Islam.

In his well-researched work Burke traced the very origins of radical Islamist movements in Middle East and South Asia. He stressed over the need of tackling a new wave of terror coming up with the rise of radical Wahabi/Salafi Islam. Pan-Islamist organizations like Muslim Brotherhood, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and Hizb Tahrir (HuT), once used to have small number of supporters and sympathizers but the political canvas of Muslim societies has started to change significantly and now these organizations have considerable political appeal. Apart from these international organizations there had been radical and semi-radical Islamist movements such as 18th century Wahabism and the 19th century Deobandi movement, and 20th century Tablighi Jamaat. Those movements were apolitical initially but in later years political parties with stern Islamist agendas established from their platforms. Many of the political parties later produced splinter groups, both radical and violent.

Islamist parties which were formed before the Second World War were beaten back in elections in all newly founded Muslim states by secular and nationalist forces. But decades later in the early 1970s and 1980s their vote bank started to swell because of the failures of secular and nationalist parties in almost every Muslim-majority country. The ruling parties failed to deliver to their impoverished masses and poverty touched new levels. It was mostly because of the dictatorial attitude of secular/nationalist leaders dominant in most of the Muslim-majority countries. Corruption and cronyism also paved the way for creating disillusionment amongst the masses. Political leaders, bureaucrats and military generals amassed large chunks of wealth whereas on the other hand masses remained poverty-ridden. Standard of living in most of the Muslim majority countries kept plunging and the ruling elite continued to enjoy all the privileges. Military coups also dissatisfied the populace and any mass movement was crushed. Like Nazi Party's tremendous growth in the backdrop of Weimer Republic's failure the Islamist parties took full advantage of the situation. Like IRA, these Islamist parties formed their militant groups to conduct terrorist acts and at the same time political wings like those of Sean Finn to oversee the political matters. This practice is still in fashion among most Islamist parties. In such manner the parent party

could easily distance itself from any act of terror and condemn the act and when time comes for the negotiations with the authorities the political wing comes forward and does the job.

According to Burke, low levels of GDP growth rates, high levels of inflation and unemployment and corruption were all the indicators that reflected the failure of political regimes in many of the Muslim states. With Saudi Arabia's sponsoring of Wahabi/Salafi thoughts and exporting Saudi brand of radical Islam, things became even more difficult to cope up with.

In the words of Bernard Lewis, a hypothetical scenario if Ku Klux Klan gains control of Texas and it would start using the oil-rich American state's resources to propagate KKK's thoughts to the Christian world. The Saudi oil wealth also played a pivotal role in galvanizing support for its brand of extremist Islam which was violent and dangerous. Although a strong percentage of Muslims still does not adhere to such version of Islam but Saudi money has played its role in amassing support for radical Wahabi/Salafi brand of Islam. Countries with little or no support-base of Wahabism are now having hundreds of mosques built with Saudi money and support and involved in preaching Wahabism/Salafism in these countries. Growth of number of Muslims adhering to Saudi brand of Islam is steadily increasing, which is quite alarming.

Burke explained the reasons. Firstly the Afghan war (1979-89) provided a solid base for the Islamist movements' radicalized groups to come to Pakistan capitalize on ISI-CIA-run training camps. Before Afghan jihad and Islamic Group but their rank and file did not have any formal training of asymmetric warfare and had no such patronage. Afghan war was such a golden opportunity for radical Islamist cells worldwide that hundreds of thousands benefited from highly sophisticated training programs designed for guerrilla warfare, close quarter combat, hit and run, and manufacturing and deployment of explosives devices. A few years later in 1993 Ramzi Yousaf, an Islamist radical of Kuwaiti-Pakistani origin, trained at such facilities, planted a van full of explosives beneath World Trade Centre causing billions of dollars of loss and six deaths.

In the late eighties, Ramzi graduated from one of such camps established in lieu of specialized training course in explosives. Most prominent abettor of WTC bombing was Omer Abdul Rahman (Blind Shaikh), who arrived in Peshawar in the early eighties for the indoctrination of holy warriors by the Saudi intelligence. He received his US visa with the CIA's assistance and escaped prosecution from

Egyptian authorities for his alleged role in President Sadaat's assassination in 1981.

Secondly, according to Burke, the formal religio-political parties with Islamist and Pan-Islamic agendas are not directly involved in terrorist acts and neither these parties preach violence to their workers. But these parties act as springboards for producing sleeper cells and independent of mother organizations. Usually colleges' students of natural sciences are recruited with middle-class educated backgrounds with little understanding of religion in are particular targets. It is true that pan-Islamist religious parties such as the Jamat-e-Islami Pakistan, Hizb-ur-Tahrir, Muslim Brotherhood and even apolitical Tablighi Jamaat never explicitly ask their workers and followers to take up arms against the states, but instrumental in agenda setting and developing a jihadi mindset in the name of God. The message of these parties is usually very subtle and conveyed between the lines. Every party's propaganda cell plays a crucial role in recruitment and grooming the mindset of workers and sympathizers. Reading and teaching of selected and particular jihadist text from the Quran and Hadith without contextual interpretations, are the ways the jihadi propaganda machine works.

In other words, they show you the way but ask you to do it yourself without their support. Don't ask don't tell is their policy. According to Burke, if background of Pan-Islamist parties is traced then one would find that all of these have one way or other similar in many aspects with almost same manifestos. Many of their ideologues are western educated. Vote banks of these parties have traditionally been limited in Muslim countries, with some exceptions.

Even during its heydays the Al-Qaeda (1996-2001), according to Burke, used to provide financial, logistical and technical assistance to Islamist terrorist cells across the world. Independently formed cells such Hamburg Cell had sought help from Al-Qaeda for doing "something". Hamburg cell members Mohammad Atta, Zaid bin Jarrah, Marwan al-Shehi and Ramzi Bin al-Shibh just wanted to participate in 'jihad' anywhere and by any means, but it was Al-Qaeda leadership that provided them a plan after carefully studying their profiles. Al-Qaeda did not send them to fight the Northern Alliance as many of the Uzbeks and Chechens were sent by Bin Laden to fight alongside Taliban forces at war against their *bête noire*. Respecting their western orientation Al-Qaeda provided them a plan of action and financed them to further get trained for the execution of the plan called 'Planes Operation'. Whether East African Embassies' bombings or USS Cole bombing, Al-Qaeda

provided a game plan and assisted the planners of local origins to execute their plans. When Taliban with all their military might had not been unsuccessful in defeating Ahmad Shah Masoud's forces, again Bin Laden provided Arab suicide bombers to assassinate the Northern Alliance leader and Ayman al Zawahiri used his connection for providing the means to access Masoud.

Burke believes that Al-Qaeda works as a functionary organization or a terrorist university that provides help and assistance to radical Islamic cells, without magnitude and direction. Even during the Afghan War, Bin Laden and his fellow Arab Afghans were hardly seen in action. They kept a restrictive role of supporting the Afghan Mujahedin with their finances, logistics (guest houses in Peshawar) and arranging medical treatment facilities for the wounded where Zawahiri as medical practitioner remained quite active.

Burke even rejected the very notion that Al-Qaeda had ever been a formal and well-structured organization. The very first intelligence reports were collected by the CIA and FBI in 1996 from one defected Al-Qaeda member, the Sudanese Jamal al Fadl who, in fact, embezzled Bin Laden's money and then defected to the CIA only to immigrate to the US. Most of the preliminary information about Al-Qaeda, Bin Laden and this organization's activities came from this source, which could not be relied heavily because of the character of Jamal al Fadl. Burke also rejected theories that Bin Laden was trained by the CIA. The group of Arab Afghans who started to join the war was mainly encouraged by Abdullah Azzam and he had agendas different than Bin Laden and Zawahiri. His idea was to build an Arab brigade to fight the Soviets and later to liberate his homeland Palestine from the Israeli occupation. Influx of Islamist Egyptians in Afghanistan changed the course. Egyptian core group members like Zawahiri, Seif al-Adal, Mohammad Atef, Ahmad Khdir and Omer Abdul Rahman had agendas different than Azzam. They wanted to use the brigade for creating havoc in Egypt and "liberate" it from the clutches of 'apostate' dictators like Hosni Mubarak and implement Sharia law in Egypt, their homeland.

Azzam's mysterious assassination left the future fate of Arab Afghans in the hands of Bin Laden who immediately left Pakistan for his homeland, Saudi Arabia. Not all of the Arab Afghans could go back to their respective countries as many of them were wanted for militant activities in their own countries. Many preferred to settle in tribal areas of Pakistan, mingled with the locals and married the local women. Some who went back to their countries created troubles for the ruling elite as they

started to preach militant Islamist thoughts and rebelled against the states. Such type of mutinies and armed rebellion had taken place in Algeria and political canvas was also disturbed by veteran Afghan warriors in Yemen. Formerly there had never been an Arab brigade and all the recruits from Arab countries were sent along with Afghan Mujahedin. It was in fact a dream of Abdullah Azzam to create such brigade (al-Qaeda tal Salbah or the sold base) after the end of Afghan War. Bin Laden wanted to have this brigade under his command with Saudi government as the main backer. He saw the involvement of countries backing their own Afghan Mujahedin parties during the Afghan War. He tried and presented the idea before Saudi government officials in the wake of an upcoming gulf War (after Iraqi invasion of Kuwait) but his idea was politely rejected by the Saudis. Frustrated by his own government's behavior Bin Laden searched for a base to start his own activities. He found one in first in Sudan and then in Afghanistan. Settling in Sudan was a considerable failure but Afghanistan turned out to be a big success as far as his plans were concerned.

Finally, Burke defines two broad groups of radical Muslims. According to him:

The first can be termed 'intellectual activists'. These are men who can justify their attraction to radical Islam in relatively sophisticated terms. They share common elements, particularly in regards to their backgrounds, with more moderate political Islamists. This group would include Gulbadin Hekmatyar, Dr Ayman al Zawahiri, Bin Laden himself, Khalid Shaikh Mohammad, Omar Saeed Shaikh, Abu Doha, Abu Qutada and arguably Mohammad Atta, and many others. Such men are drawn from the same social groups who were involved in the earliest Islamist movements of the colonial period.

For Burke, these individuals had at least some political and religious insight and they wanted to bring about revolutionary Islamist change. They belonged to a generation of Islamists who found themselves in the middle of nowhere. With all their wealth and comfortable lives they were not satisfied, perhaps because of the circumstances and conditions they were living in. They were confused, and had very little understanding of true spirit of Islam or any other religion.

"It matches the experience of the 17-year-old Pakistani lower-middle-class youth torn between the mullah and MTV. If he accepts his desire to be part of the westernized world he will have to address the fact that he will only ever enjoy an ersatz, inferior version of 'western' life of his equivalent in London or Los Angeles. His

clothes will never be as up to date, his skin will never be the right colour, and his chances of per-marital sex will always be infinitesimally lower. An alternative of course is to reject the west and all it stands for in favour of the affirming, empowering, certainties of radical Islam, which teaches him that he is no longer subordinate but merely denied what is rightfully his.”

The second group of Islamist radicals is from a different class, poverty-ridden and less educated.

“The second group of radical Muslim activities emerged at the end of the 1980s and has become increasingly dominant though the 1990s. They are less educated, more violent and follow a more debased, popularized form of Islam. They are more unthinkingly radical, bigoted and fanatical. Instead of being drawn from frustrated, aspirant groups within society they are more often drawn from its margins, from those who have fewer expectations to be disappointed.”

In short Burke’s ideas could be summarized in terms of a threat much bigger than Al-Qaeda, and Islamist radicals according to him are not united under one umbrella group or organization but in small decentralized cells. These cells operate independently and seek financial and technical assistance occasionally from Al-Qaeda. The expertise and experience that Al-Qaeda leadership provides to these cells in times of need is indeed the real forte of Al-Qaeda and distinguishes it from all other Islamist parties and terrorist organizations. The cells may be composed of highly educated university students or immigrant workers, living in some western country or local cells in almost every Muslim-majority country. There is no such definition or it is highly improbable to make a profile of these groups. For Burke, Bin Laden throughout his jihadist career had endeavored to achieve a Godfather like figure amongst the Jihadi organizations worldwide.

In Burke’s theory the problem of radicalization of Muslim youth could not be solved without addressing the issues of international significance, where Muslims are involved and need support for resolution of long standing issues from international community. If world community fails to address the ongoing problems of disgruntled Muslim youth and a de-radicalization campaign is not launched then the result would be further radicalization of and growth of Al-Qaeda affiliated groups. In other words Al-Qaeda will come up to fill up the vacuum. In his own words:

The causes of terrorism must be addressed; moderate Muslim leaders

must be engaged and supported; it must be recognized that genuinely authentic and appropriate governments in the Islamic world will include a strong representation of Islamists; the spread of hard line strands of Islam at the expense of tolerant, pluralistic strains must be rolled back; repressive governments must be made to reform; a huge campaign must be launched to convince the Muslim world that the West is not a belligerent foe but a partner in mutual prosperity; every policy in every sphere must be weighed carefully and its adverse impact on the youthful populations of the Islamic world considered.

Conclusion

Since its inception, the global war on terror (GWOT) has been an effort to mainly destroy, dismantle the sanctuaries, and disrupt financial flows to Al-Qaeda. At global scale allied countries involved in GWOT have endeavored to dislodge and curb Al-Qaeda, some have been quite successful in doing so but many others have contracted the Al-Qaeda disease. Today Al-Qaeda has more branches, offshoots, affiliates and associated movements than ever. Though considered unfavorable in several public opinion polls by a great majority of Muslim populace in Muslim-majority countries but still it has been able to widen the network. Recently we see many different faces of Al-Qaeda emerging out of conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Mali, Pakistan, Nigeria, Algeria, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, the Philippines, Turkey and associated cells based in Europe, Australia and North America. Although, Al-Qaeda in Iraq has defected over the leadership and its jurisdiction issues in Syria with Zawahiri's appointed Jabath-al-Nusra front, Al-Qaeda in Iraq has changed its name to Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), announced Caliphate and reportedly attracted many other radicals pledging oath of an allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr Baghdadi. However, Zawahiri is still able to exercise his power and influence on other offshoots. The Al-Qaeda strategic plan as elucidated by Al-Qaeda strategist Saif al-Adal seems to be at work though at a slow pace³⁷. The post-9/11

³⁷According to Saif al-Adl,

1. The Awakening (2000-2003)
2. Opening Eyes (2003-2006)
3. Arising and Standing Up (2007-2010)
4. Removing Apostate Arab Regimes (2010-2013)
5. Declaring Islamic State/Caliphate (2013-2016)
6. Total Confrontation (2016 onwards)
7. Definitive Victory by 2020

scenario has seen an unprecedented growth of Al-Qaeda ideological concepts³⁸. The current trends predict a future of Al-Qaeda at least in near future despite the fact that its leader Osama Bin Laden is no more alive to lead the terrorist network he created. The unique Al-Qaeda character which makes it more or less a terrorist university or consultancy has made security strategists' job much more difficult to curb its activities. On the other hand we observe Al-Qaeda strategists like Abu Musab al-Suri, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Saif al-Adal, Mohammad al-Muqadisi and Obaid al-Qurashi at work for devising tactical and strategic plans. Therefore we could conclude that Al-Qaeda does have a future and its operational might is likely to increase. On the other hand, we observe new Islamist violent non-state actors appear to have come up to take Al-Qaeda's place, with more radical agendas, manpower, skills, and control of territories. ISIS, Islamic Front in Syria, Boko Haram in Nigeria and Ansar-e-Dine in Mali, though, have similar Islamist ambitions but definitely exert more control, and power, keeping in view of regional context.

³⁸Al-Qaeda ideology revolves around key concepts: Wahabi / Salafi ideology, theory of *Jahiliya*, doctrine of *takfir*, establishment of global Islamic caliphate, implementation of Sharia law, militant global jihad, ouster of secular Muslim regimes, to reclaim lost territories, to drive out foreign forces from Muslim lands.

The Expanding World of ISIS: Affiliates and Associates

Dr. Farhan Zahid

With increasing competition between the two ideological twins i.e. Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS), the two have hitherto shown their will and resolve to contest over wearing the crown of global jihad and being the umbrella jihadi organization of worldwide jihadi forces. Another key issue is to show strength and influence in order to gain media attention.

The ISIS, though, quite new on the scene with not very experienced leadership has been able to flex its muscle by carving out Syrian and Iraqi territories and announcing a renegade Islamic State. On the other hand 26-year old Al-Qaeda (b.1988) under the leadership of experienced Zawahiri is living in shadows. In order to stay in limelight, Zawahiri has recently announced the creation of new Al-Qaeda wing, the Al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS)¹. While Baghdadi's ISIS non-stop tremendous track record has attracted the attention of radical jihadi groups worldwide.

The creation of Islamic State (aka ISIS and Daash) has allowed a plethora of jihad-is to seek the ISIS franchise. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi whose real name is Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim al-Badri (aka Abu Dua) proclaimed his caliphate with a message to all Islamist groups, he said,

It is incumbent upon all Muslims to pledge allegiance [to him], once the caliph and his fighters arrive in a particular area, the legality of all emirates, groups, states, and organizations, becomes null by the expansion of the khalifah's authority.²

By September 2014, a wide range of Islamist terrorist groups have either pledged allegiance or supported ISIS:

- Tehreek-e-Khilafat Pakistan
- Indonesian Mujahedeen, East Timor

¹For details about AQIS see, Farhan Zahid, "A Profile of Asim Umar: Amir of Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent", *Aberfoyle International Security*, October 2014, available at: <http://www.aberfoylesecurity.com/?p=940>

²Patrick Goodenough, Pledge allegiance to New 'Caliph', ISIS demands of World's Muslims in Ramadan Declaration", *CNS News*, June 29, 2014, available at: <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/patrick-goodenough/pledge-allegiance-new-caliph-isis-demands-world-s-muslims-ramadan>

- Liwa Ahrar al-Sunna, Lebanon
- Jamaat Ansar Bait al-Maqdis, Sinai, Egypt
- Jaish al-Sahaba (Supporter of the Companions), Syria
- Al-Huda Battalion (part of Jund al-Khalifa aka The Soldiers of the Caliphate), Algerians in Syria
- Boko Haram, Nigeria (supported)
- Okba Ibn Nafaa Battalion, (part of Ansar al-Sharia), Tunisia
- Al-Tawheed Brigade in Khorasan, Afghanistan
- Ansar al-Sharia, Yemen
- Abu Sayaf Group, the Philippines
- Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, the Philippines
- Ansar al-Khilafah, the Philippines³
- Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (defection of some leaders)

Some of the above mentioned ISIS-affiliates are novices in the field of terrorism, either they are just surfaced or with very thin memberships. Most of them have been credited for very few terrorist incidents. Some are quite old and seasoned terrorist groups like Boko Haram and Abu Sayaf which are in the business for quite some time. Each has its own reasons to join hands with ISIS and the geographical location is another interesting issue. A number of Wahabi/Salafi Ulema (clerics) have also exalted the creation of Caliphate and approved its credentials. Some of those Ulemas are:

- Shaikh Abu Umar al-Kuwaiti
- Abu Yazid al-Qahar al-Khurasani⁴
- Bilal ash-Shawasi al-Tunisi

³“Islamic State’s Global Affiliates: Interactive World Map”, Intercenter.com, September 29 2014

⁴“Alleged TTP Faction Official Abtalul Islam Media Pledge to IS”, SITE Monitoring Service Enterprise, July 11, 2014, available at: <https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/Multimedia/alleged-ttp-faction-official-and-abtalul-islam-media-pledge-to-is.html>

From Jihad to Al-Qaeda to Islamic State

- Abu Usama Musaid ibn Bashir al-Sudani⁵
- Abdullah al-Faisal al-Jamaiki⁶
- Bilal Chaouachi of Ansar al-Sharia Tunisia⁷
- Mamoon Hatem of Ansar al-Sharia (part of AQAP)⁸
- Abdal Mujeed al-Heetari⁹
- Shaikh Abu Wardah Santoso al-Indoneesi¹⁰
- Anjem Choudary¹¹
- Musa Cerantonio¹²
- Ulema of Jund al-Khilafah in the Philippines¹³

It is imperative to discuss each group to measure the strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis Al-Qaeda affiliates.

⁵“Shaykh Muhaddith Abu Usama Musaid bin Bashir, a well-respected Scholar in Sudan give bayah to IS”, Veooz Pakistan Edition, available at: <http://www.veooz.com/photos/mHJLNhC.html>

⁶“Shaikh Abdullah al-Faisal who supports ISIS pleads for Alan Henning’s life”, 5 Pillarz: What Muslims are thinking?, September 24, 2014, available at: <http://www.5pillarz.com/video/sheikh-abdullah-al-faisal-who-supports-isis-pleads-for-alan-hennings-life/>

⁷See official Twitter statement of Bilal Chaouachi available at: <https://twitter.com/BlackFlagNews/status/483612418111971328>

⁸Abdullah Suleiman Ali, “Global jihadists recognize Islamic State”, Al-Monitor English, July 3, 2014, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/07/syria-iraq-isis-islamic-caliphate-global-recognition.html#>

⁹Peter Lloyd, “Young Islamic State robs Al-Qaeda of militant prestige”, Reuters US Edition, July 23, 2014, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/23/us-iraq-security-qaeda-idUSKBNOFS0RB20140723>

¹⁰Mark Colvin, “ISIS leader calls for Muslims worldwide to take up arms”, ABC News, July 2, 2014, available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2014/s4037890.htm>

¹¹“The radical Imam who warned Hannity that ‘Sharia Law is coming’ was just arrested in Anti-Terror raids”, Fox News Insider, September 25, 2014, available at: <http://foxnewsinsider.com/2014/09/25/radical-imam-anjem-choudary-who-appeared-hannity-arrested-london-terror-raids>

¹²“Possible terror group links for Australian cleric”, The ISIS Study Group, August 5, 2014, available at: <http://isisstudygroup.com/?p=527>

¹³[http://www.siasat.pk/forum/showthread.php?283896-Salafi-Scholar-Shaykh-Abdul-Muhsin-Al-Abbaad-On-the-Alleged-Khilafah-Abu-Bakr-Al-Baghdadi-\(ISIS\)&p=2683086#post2683086](http://www.siasat.pk/forum/showthread.php?283896-Salafi-Scholar-Shaykh-Abdul-Muhsin-Al-Abbaad-On-the-Alleged-Khilafah-Abu-Bakr-Al-Baghdadi-(ISIS)&p=2683086#post2683086)

1. Tehreek-e-Khilafat Pakistan

The very first group to pledge allegiance to ISIS just after the announcement of Islamic State was Tehreek-e-Khilafat Pakistan (TKP). Little is known about TKP. What we do know is that the TKP has a small network in Karachi and had perpetrated one terrorist incident in Karachi. It was considered part of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) a tribal area based group and an Al-Qaeda affiliate in Pakistan. The TKP spokesperson announced the affiliation in a statement,

From today, Sheikh Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi shall consider Tehreek-e-Khilafat and Jihad mujahideen fighters of Pakistan as one of the arrows among his arrows which he has kept for his bow. We are praying from the almighty Allah to give us chance in our lives to see the expansion of Islamic State boundaries toward the subcontinent and Khurasan region in order to hoist the flag of Islamic State here.¹⁴

In a way the TKP defected to ISIS as it used to be part of Al-Qaeda-linked TTP¹⁵. Though the TKP move does not inflict any damage to TTP or Al-Qaeda but shows a new developing trend among Pakistani jihadi groups. Establishing a caliphate in Pakistan is one of the most important agendas of almost all Pakistani jihadi groups. The concept of Khurasan is widely discussed issues even among Pakistani Islamist parties and carries attraction for Islamists.

2. Indonesian Mujahedeen, East Timor

Indonesia remained turbulent for long especially after the commencement of Global War on Terror (GWOT). The country's Islamist networks produced a number of high profile Islamist terrorists such as Isam ud Din Hambali, Noor ud Din Top and Omar Patek. Al-Qaeda presence was quite visible in early 2000s but successful counter terrorism strategies prevailed and no major terrorist attack reported after the Bali incidents of 2004. After several high profile attacks by Al-Qaeda affiliate Gamma Islamiya, the Indonesian government launched a severe crackdown against the jihadi outfits and managed to break their backbone.

¹⁴Rob Crilly and Saleem Mehsud, "Pakistani terror group swears allegiance to Islamic State", The Telegraph, July 9, 2014, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/10955563/Pakistani-terror-group-swears-allegiance-to-Islamic-State.html>

¹⁵Sam Webb, "Pakistani terror group becomes first jihadi group to defect to ISIS outside of Middle East as leader Baghdadi influence grows", Daily Mail, July 9, 2014, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2686009/Pakistani-terror-group-jihadi-group-defect-ISIS-outside-Middle-East-leader-al-Baghdadis-influence-grows.html>

Despite the fact that the Indonesian government is still maintaining a tight control in curbing jihadi activities it is reported that more than 66 Indonesian Islamists have travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight alongside the ISIS during 2014¹⁶ and according to New York-based consultant Soufan Group the number is estimated to be 200.¹⁷ According to National Police Chief of Indonesia Sutarman, the jihadis travelling to Levant are mostly from Poso, Ambon in the Maluku Islands, and eastern and central Java¹⁸. Poso region remains the most vulnerable as most of the jihadis are from there. Poso is also home to Mujahedeen Indonesia Timor. Led by veteran jihadi Santoso, the group has pledged allegiance to Caliph Ibrahim of ISIS (Baghdadi's adopted name after becoming the leader of IS). Mujahedeen Indonesia Timor (MIT) attempts to impose Sharia law in Indonesia and wants to merge the country with the global caliphate under the leadership of Baghdadi.

Besides the ambitions of MIT, more than 500 Indonesian clerics belonging to Sharia Activists Forum based at Indonesian Islamic University declared their support to ISIS in February this year. In another surprising manner Bekasi Ummat Islam Congress based in Bekasi City also pledged allegiance to Baghdadi's ISIS in the same month.¹⁹

3. Liwa Ahrar al-Sunna, Lebanon

Initially affiliated with ISIS's *bête noire* Jahbat ul Nusrah (Nusrah Front), the Liwa Ahrar al-Sunna later changed sides and joined the caliphate camp. Liwa is a Lebanon based small Salafi terrorist group, formerly used by Nusrah Front to target Hezbollah activists involved in Syrian Civil War by the side of Assad regime. In March early this year the Liwa sent suicide bomber to Hezbollah dominated Bekka valley. Two important Hezbollah commanders lost their lives in the suicide attack. The suicide operation was conducted after the defeat of Nusrah Front by government forces in Syria. Town of Yabrud near Lebanese border also fell to the forces loyal to Assad. Liwa proudly claimed the responsibility of suicide attack and said in a statement: "Liwa Ahrar al-Sunna in Baalbek officially takes responsibility for the heroic martyrdom (suicide) operation 'revenge for Yabrud' in the

¹⁶Agus Suhana and Neil Chatterjee, "Indonesia nabs suspected foreign militants on fake passports", Bloomberg, September 15 2014

¹⁷Richard Barrett, "Foreign Fighters in Syria", The Soufan Group, June 2014

¹⁸Op Cit. Suhana and Chatterjee

¹⁹Abu al Bawi, "Indonesian Islamic Activists in Bekasi Declare Support to ISIS", Abu al-Bawi blog-spot, 2014

village of Al-Nabi Othman.”²⁰

Why the Liwa changed sides is not clear. Apparently the two rival Islamist forces have been able to merge the minor Islamist jihadi groups involved in the Syrian conflict. The two bigs other than having enormous resources control territories in Syria and Iraq and resist the government onslaught for longer periods than the small or depleting groups.

4. Jamaat Ansar Bait al-Maqdis, Sinai, Egypt

Ansar Bait al-Maqdis, a Salafi violent Islamist group, operates in Sinai Peninsula, Egypt. Ansar Bait al Maqdis was founded by former Muslim Brotherhood imprisoned inmates who managed to escape amidst Egyptian law in order crisis of 2013.²¹ The group was responsible for scores of terrorist attacks on Egyptian police, military, Israeli troops patrolling the border, rocket attacks on Israeli city of Eilat, and destruction of oil pipe lines passing through Sinai desert. The group also claimed responsibility for bombing of tourist bus of South Koreans, near the city of Taba in Sinai resulting in the death of four tourists.²² A recent major incident claimed by Ansar was beheading of four Egyptians ‘accused of being Israeli spies’ in Sinai desert.²³ The filmmaking and conduct of the executioner in the video was in ISIS-fashion.

Initially, the Ansars were interested in seeking Al-Qaeda franchise as it was more useful for getting media coverage and logistical support from other Al-Qaeda-linked groups in the proximity to Egypt. With the advent of ISIS and its consecutive victories Ansar Bait al-Maqdis spokesperson on its official social media website announced the allegiance to ISIS Emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The announcement says:

We are at the service of our Emir, Baghdadi. There was no discussion in pledging allegiance and all mujahidin in Egypt must pledge allegiance. Whoever violates the pledge of allegiance will cause us no harm but there is no excuse for him as Allah is the arbiter of success.²⁴

²⁰“Two Hezbollah members killed in Bekaa valley blast”, Al-Arabiya News, March 17, 2014

²¹“Ansar Bait al-Maqdis members escape to Gaza, Marsa Matrouh”, Egypt Independent, December 9, 2013

²²David Barnett, “Ansar Jerusalem claims tourist bus bombing in Egypt Sinai”, The Long War Journal, February 17 2014

²³“Video shows beheading of four Egyptians in Sinai”, Al-Arabiya English, August 24, 2014

²⁴See statement at Sada Elbalad, June 30, 2014, available at: <http://www.el-balad.com/1024731>,

Despite the fact that the Ansar is a small group with limited area of activities the group's initiative to join hands with ISIS may strengthen its financial and recruitment networks. The group may provide a new recruitment ground for ISIS as thousands of disgruntled Muslim Brotherhood activists may become a useful lot of ISIS.

5. Jaish al-Sahaba, Iraq and Syria

Jaish al-Sahaba or the Army of the Companions is part of 23-member alliance of Iraqi armed resistance umbrella organization Supreme Command for Jihad and Liberation, active in Iraq since 2007 against the US and Iraqi defense forces. The umbrella organization comprises over secular, nationalist, Baathist and Islamist groups. Currently, Jaish al-Sahaba is active in Syrian civil war. Very little is known about Jaish apart from the fact that it was part of Supreme Council.

According to Charles Lister of Brookings Doha Center, Jaish al-Sahaba was the first one to pledge allegiance to Caliph Baghdadi right after his announcement of Caliphate. Lister describes the group as 'very small'.²⁵ Jaish announced joining ISIS in a very short statement, "Army of the Prophet's Companions, declares loyalty to Sheikh Baghdadi, may Allah protect him."²⁶

Though number wise insignificant, Jaish appears committed to reinvigorate in order to prove its vitality in Iraq where once it had to move into Syria. As it appears that standing by the side of bigger and resourceful ISIS could bring better opportunities for Jaish and benefiting from ISIS could also astray chances of falling apart, a disease quite common for the demise of terrorist groups.

6. Al-Huda Battalion (aka The Soldiers of the Caliphate), Syria

Al-Huda Battalion is part of Jund al-Khalifa, an Islamist violent non-state actor involved in Syrian Civil War. The Al-Huda Battalion of Jund is composed of Alge-

for English translation see "Ansar Beit al-Maqdis pledges allegiance to ISIS Emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi", The Edinburgh Arabic Initiative, July 2, 2014, available at: <http://edinburgharabicinitiative.wordpress.com/2014/07/02/ansar-beit-al-maqdis-pledges-allegiance-to-isis-emir-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi/>

²⁵Patrick Goodenough, Pledge allegiance to New 'Caliph', ISIS demands of World's Muslims in Ramadan Declaration", CNS News, June 29, 2014, available at: <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/patrick-goodenough/pledge-allegiance-new-caliph-isis-demands-world-s-muslims-ramadan>

²⁶ibid

rian veteran Islamists, previously part of Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (SGPC) which is a splinter group of ultra-extremist Takfiri Group Islamic Army (GIA), a primary Islamist violent non-state actor in Algerian Civil War (1991-2000). Jund al-Khalifa was established by Abu Omar al-Kuwaiti soon after arriving in Syria during the early days of the war.²⁷ Al-Kuwaiti pledged allegiance to Baghdadi shortly after the proclamation of the Islamic State and the creation of caliphate.²⁸ Al-Kuwaiti has developed differences with the IS high command despite his allegiance. According to reports, Al-Kuwaiti proposed to bring in Abu Mohammad al-Riffai, a London-based Islamist cleric as the caliph of Islamic State. Another point of difference was Al-Kuwaiti's demand for publicly issuing takfir for Al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri for his alleged silence on killing of Shias in Iraq and Syria.²⁹

Al-Huda Battalions suffered a massive blow when their key commanders Omar al-Hayjaneh and Ammar Awad were killed during an ambush by Syrian army near the town of al-Shafounyeh in the last week of August.³⁰ In another development Abdul Malek Droudkel, leader Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has refused to recognize the Islamic State/Caliphate of Baghdadi and not only that renewed his oath of allegiance to Zawahiri³¹.

7. Abu Sayyaf Group, the Philippines

The Philippines-based Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) is the oldest of all Islamist terrorist groups having pledged allegiance to the ISIS³². In a video uploaded on YouTube by ASG media wing, Isnilon Hapilon, a senior leader of ASG is seen reading out a statement and pledging allegiance to Baghdadi and IS³³. Speaking in fluent Arabic, Hapilon swore allegiance to Baghdadi and affirmed his support, "loyalty

²⁷"IS disciplines some emirs to avoid losing base", Al-Monitor, August 2, 2014, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/security/2014/09/is-takfiri-caliphate.html#>

²⁸Ibid

²⁹Ibid

³⁰"Syrian Arab Army continues successfully operations against terrorism", Syrian Free Press Network, August 29, 2014, available at: <http://syrianfreepress.wordpress.com/2013/08/29/syrian-arab-army-continues-succesfully-operations-against-terrorists/>

³¹Mawassi Lachen, "ISIS woos Ansar al-Sharia in Libya", Magharebia, Casablanca, July 31, 2014, available at: http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/features/2014/07/31/feature-01

³²"Philippine militants pledge allegiance to ISIS", The Daily Star, Lebanon, August 15, 2014, available at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Aug-15/267358-philippine-militants-pledge-allegiance-to-isis.ashx#axzz3EZ0uwRjz>

³³Ibid

and obedience in adversity and comfort.”³⁴

The ASG has long standing ties with Al-Qaeda and its founder Osama Bin Laden. Bin Laden’s brother-in law Mohammad Jamal Khalifa was once stationed in Manila, and provided seed money to Khalid Shaikh Mohammad (the 9/11 mastermind) and Abdul Basit Abdul Karim aka Ramzi Yousaf (1993 WTC attack mastermind) in launching Bojinka Plot³⁵. Ramzi Yousaf, the 1993 World Trade Center bomber, also had close links to ASG which he developed during Afghanistan training camps, and perhaps that was one reason he decided to stay in the Philippines after escaping from the US in 1993.

ASG was founded in 1991 by a veteran of Afghan War Abu Bakar Janjalani. Janjalani was trained by Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf, leader of Itihad-e-Islami, a Wahabi/Salafi Afghan Mujahedeen group, involved in fighting the Soviets during the Afghan war (1979-89). The Saudi funded Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf had a plethora of training camps where he trained thousands of radical Islamists from all over the world.³⁶ After Abu Bakar Janjalani’s death in a shootout with Filipino military in 1996, his brother Khaddafy Janjalani took over the reins of ASG who faced the same fate in 2006. Since then the ASG is led by Abdul Qadir Zoher, Radullan Sahiron and Isnilon Hapilon (with \$5 million bounty). One of the deadliest terrorist attacks launched by Abu Sayyaf was bombing of a tourist ferry in Manila Bay in 2004 causing deaths of 100 people.³⁷

The ASG’s recent kidnapping of German couple from the South China Sea in April has sparked tensions as the ASG demands a ransom of \$5.6 million and an end to German support to US-led bombing campaign against ISIS. The group has threatened to kill the Germans by October 10 if their demands are not met³⁸.

³⁴Rosemarie Francisco and Stuart Grudgings, “ISIS ‘brand’ gains ground among Asian militants”, *Al-Arabiya-English*, September 26, 2014, available at: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/features/2014/09/26/ISIS-brand-gains-ground-among-Asian-militants.html>

³⁵A planned large scale terrorist operation planned by Ramzi Yousaf and Khalid Shaikh Mohammad in Manila in 1995 to bomb 11 US-bound airliners, assassinate visiting Pope John Paul and assassinate President Bill Clinton.

³⁶Rommel Banlaoi, *War on Terrorism in Southeast Asia*, Rex Book Store, Quezon City, 2004, pp. 1–235

³⁷Rosemarie Francisco and Stuart Grudgings, “ISIS ‘brand’ gains ground among Asian militants”, *Al-Arabiya-English*, September 26, 2014, , available at: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/features/2014/09/26/ISIS-brand-gains-ground-among-Asian-militants.html>

³⁸Ibid

8. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, the Philippines

Another Filipino Islamist terrorist group Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF)³⁹ swore allegiance to IS and Baghdadi alongside Abu Sayyaf Group. BIFF splintered out of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2008. The MILF fights for the liberation of Mindanao from the Philippines and to establish an Islamic republic in southern Philippines. BIFF opposes MILF-government peace talks and stresses over the continuation of decades old armed struggle against the Filipino government⁴⁰.

BIFF spokesperson Abu Misry Mama confirmed the allegiance and said, “We have an alliance with the Islamic State and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi But if they need our help, why not?”⁴¹

BIFF is led by Al-Ustaj Umbra Amiril Kato and its estimated strength is few hundred with no consolidated terrorist infrastructure. Sixty Seven year old Kato studied in Saudi Arabian and adheres to Wahabi/Salafi school of thought, an obscure ideology ISIS also espouses to.⁴²

The Philippines Army spokesperson described BIFF a band of extortionists in a statement issued after BIFF announcement of pledging allegiance to IS and rejected rumours about BIFF sending Filipino Muslim youth to Syria and Iraq for training at IS-run training camps⁴³.

9. Ansar al-Khilafah, the Philippines

The third Filipino group to swear allegiance to Islamic State is Ansar al-Khilafah (Supporters of the Caliphate)⁴⁴. The relatively unknown group surfaced in Syria

³⁹Bangsamoro means Moro people. Muslims constitute 9 % of the Philippines population and inhabits areas of Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan.

⁴⁰“BIFF, Abu Sayyaf pledge allegiance to Islamic State jihadists”, GMA News Online, Manila, August 16, 2014, available at: <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/375074/news/nation/biff-abu-sayyaf-pledge-allegiance-to-islamic-state-jihadists>

⁴¹Ibid

⁴²“MILF: Umbra Kato’s group not acceptable”, ABS-CBN Central Mindanao, February 2, 2011, available at: <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/regions/02/16/11/milf-umbra-kato%E2%80%99s-group-not-acceptable>

⁴³“Philippine jihadists pledge support to Islamic State”, RT News, August 16, 2014, available at: <http://rt.com/news/180736-philippine-jihadists-support-isis/>

⁴⁴“Ansar al-Khilafah in the Philippines pledges to IS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi”, SITE Monitoring Service, August 13, 2014, available at: <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/ansar-al-kihila-fah-in-the-philippines-pledges-to-is-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi.html>

while fighting alongside ISIS against the force loyal to President Assad. Comprising of Salafist Filipino Muslim youth from Mindanao, the group managed to capture small Syrian town Khan al-Asal near Aleppo in July in alliance with Nusrah Front. Later the Ansar changed sides and pledged allegiance to ISIS. The group is considered to be small and an offshoot of either MILF or ASG both active Islamist insurgencies in the Philippines.

10. Boko Haram, Nigeria

According to Inter Center's ranking of worldwide terrorist groups by virtue of their strengths and destructive spree in terms of human and material losses, Boko Haram (235 points) stands third in the list. Only ISIS (812 points) and Somali al-Shabab (285 points) could manage to surpass Boko Haram⁴⁵.

Came into being as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad), in 2002. More commonly known as Boko Haram (Western education is forbidden) because of their abhorrence of anything western. The group was founded by Mohammad Yousaf in Maiduguri, Northern Nigerian State of Borno on the inspiration provided by ideological and religious teachings of Yan Tatsine an ultra-radical Wahabi/Salafi cleric⁴⁶. Though active in random acts of violence since 2002, the Boko Haram launched its concerted campaign of terror by 2009 after the death of its founder Mohammad Yousaf in a gun battle with security forces. Abu Bakr Shekhu, the new leader of the group then launched hundreds of terrorist strikes all across Nigeria⁴⁷. Boko Haram is estimated to have killed more than 5,000 Nigerians. In a recent wave of kidnappings, the Boko Haram militants abducted 300 girls as young as 12 from local boarding schools in Chibok, northern Nigeria.⁴⁸

Boko Haram is considered a traditional ally of al-Qaeda and has developed links to Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The consecutive ISIS victories in Iraq and Syria have definitely affected Boko Haram and this helped Abu Bakr Shekhu voicing support for ISIS. He said, "*My Brethren ... may Allah protect you.*"⁴⁹

⁴⁵"Top 10 Most Dangerous Terrorist/Rebel Groups: Group Threat Index (GTI), Intel Center, September 15, 2014

⁴⁶Toni Johnson, "Backgrounder: Boko Haram", Council on Foreign Relations, August 31, 2011

⁴⁷Farouk Chothia, "Who are Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamists?", BBC News, January 11, 2012

⁴⁸"Boko Haram insurgents kill 100 people as they take control of Nigerian town" Guardian, July 19, 2014

⁴⁹"Boko Haram voices support for ISIS' Baghdadi", Al-Arabiya News English, July 13, 2014

Perhaps Shekhu might be considering a ‘wait and see’ policy for shifting sides. His statements show a clear tilt towards the ISIS. The Boko Haram’s sense of competition is also growing vis-à-vis ISIS. The group announced establishment of Caliphate in northern Nigeria, following the footsteps on Baghdadi and ISIS. According to one recent report on Boko Haram:

While the West has since concentrated its focus on the “caliphate” or religious fiefdom declared by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (Isis) in Iraq and Syria, a similar announcement by Boko Haram’s leader Abubakar Shekau – and a series of territorial gains – has passed largely unremarked outside Nigeria.⁵⁰

The ISIS also, in a friendly tone, offered Boko Haram advice on religious and strategic issues for the establishment of African Caliphate in northern Nigeria⁵¹. It is believed that Boko Haram has carved out more territory under its control in Nigeria than ISIS in both Iraq and Syria. As far as jihadi ambitions are concerned both ISIS and Boko Haram intend to establish their respective caliphates on the Salafi/Wahabi model. Both are no different in strictly enforcing Wahabi-inspired Sharia laws in their spheres of influence and treatment of women and minorities is also identical. There stands a huge possibility of both joining hands but in a more equal-footing manner. The ISIS has to entertain Boko Haram in a different way rather than other small groups becoming satellites of ISIS.

11. Okba Ibn Nafaa Battalion, Tunisia

Though the core groups, part of Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) remained undeterred to ISIS’ calling but there are exceptions such as small militant faction Okba Ibn Nafaa Battalion, based in mountainous regions between Tunisia and Algeria. Okba Ibn Nafaa is part of Ansar al-Sharia, Tunisia and long associated with AQIM. Ansar al-Sharia and its associated groups have been perpetrating terrorist attacks after the fall of President Zein al-Abideen regime as a result of beginning of Arab Spring in Tunisia. In a statement Okba Ibn Nafaa’s spokesperson pledged allegiance to the ISIS Emir Baghdadi (aka Caliph Ibrahim) and offered full unconditional support.

⁵⁰Cahal Milmo and Tom Withrow, “Boko Haram closes in on its dream of an African Caliphate—and ISIS gives its blessings and advice on strategy”, *The Independent*, September 8, 2014, available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/boko-haram-closes-in-on-its-dream-of-an-african-caliphate--and-isis-gives-its-blessing-and-advice-on-strategy-9719519.html>

⁵¹Ibid

The mujahideen brothers in the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade from... (Tunisia) are supporting, endorsing, and strongly sustaining the State of the Islamic caliphate.⁵²

Okba Ibn Nafaa Battalion was involved in deadly terrorist attack on Tunisian army, near Algerian border causing the deaths of 15 Tunisian soldiers⁵³. The addition of Okba would allow ISIS to extend its reach in North Africa. Small militant Islamist groups usually become recruitment outlets for bigger and stronger terrorist and insurgent groups.

12. Al-Tawheed Brigade in Khorasan, Afghanistan

Another small group, splintered out of Al-Qaeda Core (based in Pakistani tribal areas) has pledged allegiance to Islamic State. Nothing much is known about the group, its leadership and strengths, except that it is based in Pakistan-Afghanistan tribal belt and previously connected to Al-Qaeda. The group is so new that in its statement of allegiance the spokesperson has also sought advice from the Caliph (Baghadi)⁵⁴.

13. Ansar al-Sharia, Yemen and Ansar al-Sharia in Libya

Some Al-Qaeda-linked groups are indecisive about joining the ISIS. The sudden rise of ISIS and its accomplished feats are indeed inspiring for jihadi community. It is easier for small and new groups to take the decision whereas for strong and large entities it is difficult to decide. Ansar al-Sharia in Yemen is part of Al-Qaeda franchise Al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula, headed by Nasir al-Wahushi. Ansar al-Sharia, in recent past, has been quite successful in getting hold of large chunk of territories in Yemen. The group is comprised of hundreds of thousands of Al-Qaeda followers, heavily armed and trained. On the announcement of Islamic State, Ibrahim al-Rubaish an Ansar al-Sharia ideologue issued a statement congratulating Baghdadi and his Islamic State, he said,

I congratulate all the Mujahideen on all battlefronts and all Muslims on the victories that our brothers in Iraq have achieved against the

⁵²"Al-Qaeda Tunisia offshoot offers backing to ISIS: SITE", The Daily Star Lebanon, September 20, 2014, available at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Sep-20/271372-al-qaeda-tunisia-offshoot-offers-backing-to-isis-site.ashx#axzz3EqZXPa9Q>

⁵³"Tunisian soldiers killed in attack near Algerian border", BBC News, July 17, 2014, available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-28341318>

⁵⁴"Al-Tawheed Battalion in Afghanistan-Pakistan region pledges to IS", SITE Monitoring Service, September 27, 2014

puppets of the [Iranians], Who does not rejoice in the victory of the Sunni Muslims and the defeat of the gangs of [Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-]Maliki, which had tormented the Sunnis?⁵⁵

The statement appears to be more of anti-Shia strategy which both ISIS and Ansar al-Sharia follow. Shias are in majority in Iraq and in Yemen they constitute a significant minority. Yet both Ansar al-Sharia Yemen and Ansar al-Sharia in Libya have not been able to decide their future course of action. The Libyan Ansar al-Sharia's Shura Council has also expressed support for ISIS and its Caliph Baghdadi and did not pledge solemn allegiance to the Islamic State⁵⁶.

14. Shahidullah Shahid Group of TPP

The most recent new comers to join the fold of Islamist State were some leaders of TPP Fazalullah Group who defected to ISIS. The TPP-Fazalullah has supported the ISIS stances for establishing the Islamic State; on the other hands the rival Jamaat al-Ahrar (new group emerged out of TPP after factional fighting among contenders for the slot of Emir) renewed its allegiance to Mullah Omar the supreme leader of Emirate of Afghanistan (the Afghan Taliban). Jamaat al-Ahrar also issued a reconciliatory statement but not declaring allegiance to the Islamic State, the spokesperson said,

“We respect them. They are our Mujahideen brothers. If they ask us for help, we will look into it and decide.⁵⁷”

On the hand TPP-Fazalullah faction showed his tilts towards ISIS in a reconciliatory tone:

Oh our brothers, we are proud of you in your victories. We are with you in your happiness and your sorrow. In these troubled days, we call for your patience and stability, especially now that all your enemies are united against you. Please put all your rivalries behind you ... All Muslims in the world have great expectations of you ... We are with you, we will provide you with Mujahideen [fighters] and

⁵⁵“Yemeni Al-Qaeda leader hails ISIS gains in Iraq”, Al-Arabiya English, August 13, 2014, available at: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/08/13/Yemeni-Al-Qaeda-leader-hails-ISIS-gains-in-Iraq.html>

⁵⁶“Libyan Jihadi Group Expresses Support for ISIS”, *SITE Monitoring Service*, June 23, 2014.

⁵⁷Amir Mir, “TPP’s support for IS disturbing for Pakistan”, *The News*, October 6, 2014

with every possible support.⁵⁸

In a surprising development Shahidullah Shahid the spokesperson of TTP along with chief of TTP Orakzai tribal region Hafiz Sayed Khan, TTP Khyber Agency leader Gul Zaman, chief of TTP Peshawar Mufti Hasan, TTP head of Hangu Khalid Mansoor and chief of TTP Kurram agency announced pledging allegiance to Islamic State caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. In his statement Shahid said:

I declare allegiance to the Caliph of Muslims, Amirul Momineen Abu Bakar al Baghdadi al Qarshi al Hussaini. I will listen and follow his every instruction whatever the situation may have been. This allegiance is neither from the TTP or its leader Maulvi Fazlullah. This is only from me and five leaders, I appeal to the Ameerul Momineen to accept my allegiance.⁵⁹

Marred with factional infighting the TTP received a severe blow when its key leaders left the agglomerate of tribal Islamist groups to form Jamaat al-Ahrar in August.⁶⁰ The TTP high command had developed major difference over the leadership slot after the death of former Emir Hakeemullah Mehsud in a drone strike in November 2013. The defection of TTP (Fazalullah) is a major setback for Al-Qaeda as Fazalullah, the notorious butcher of Swat valley was one of the key Al-Qaeda operative in northern Pakistan. On the other hand the shifting of sides Fazalullah Group leaders is also disturbing for Pakistani security analysts.

Conclusion

The phenomenal growth of ISIS has shocked everyone. The sudden and unchecked march of ISIS militants has amazed the jihadis worldwide and many as a result are eager to join ISIS. A little indulgence may be due to analyse reasons for joining ISIS. A good number of jihadi groups have pledged allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and more are calculating their options.

Above all things let us not forget that ISIS is not a new phenomenon and has been in jihadi business (as Al-Qaeda franchise before parting ways with Al-Qaeda in 2013) since 2003. All the signs of the time indicate that the ISIS would push

⁵⁸"Pakistan Taliban pledges support to ISIS as coordinated West-hatred gains momentum", RT News, October 5, 2014, available at: <http://rt.com/news/193268-isis-islamic-taliban-pakistan/>

⁵⁹Tahir Khan, "TTP spokesperson, five other leaders declare allegiance to Islamic State", The Express Tribune, October 14, 2014.

⁶⁰Bill Roggio, "Taliban splinter group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar forms in north-western Pakistan", The Long War Journal, August 26, 2014.

Al-Qaeda for further competition. On the other hand the fact of the matter is that the jihadi universe of Al-Qaeda is too vast (more than 60 countries) and may not be able to get influenced easily. The jihadi groups joining ISIS are either too small or novices in the field of Islamist terrorism and pledging allegiance to ISIS in order to get fame and brand value. Therefore it would be wise to say that ISIS must endeavour to lure in bigger and more influential jihadi groups into its fold in order to dethrone Al-Qaeda.

Al-Qaeda's Resurgence: Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent

Dr. Farhan Zahid

On September 6, 2014, when national Defense Day was being celebrated across Pakistan, four officers of Pakistan Navy entered the Pakistan Naval Ships (PNS) Dockyard, located near Karachi harbor and attempted to take over warship PNS Zulfiqar. The terrorists planned to hijack the heavily armed destroyer of Pakistan Navy and then to move towards international waters in order to attack US or Indian Naval vessels. The carefully planned attack failed miserably. All terrorists (in-service and retired naval officers of Pakistan Navy) were subdued and arrested by the security forces from the ship and some who managed to escape were later arrested near Quetta while they were trying to flee to Afghanistan. A week later on September 11, Al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) Amir, Asim Umar claimed responsibility of attack. (The Express Tribune, September 11, 2014)

Days earlier, Al-Qaeda Amir Ayman al-Zawahiri announced the establishment of Al-Qaeda's newest branch AQIS. Zawahiri in his 55-minute video message, while celebrating the formation of new chapter of Al-Qaeda describes AQIS as,

This entity was not established today, but it is the fruit of a blessed effort for more than two years to gather the mujahideen in the Indian subcontinent into a single entity to be with the main group, Qaedat al-Jihad, from the soldiers of the Islamic Emirate and its triumphant emir, Allah permitting, Emir of the Believers Mullah Muhammad Omar Mujahid. (Message translated by SITE Intelligence Group, September 2014)

Parallel to this development Al-Qaeda has also inaugurated its new English language magazine "Resurgence". The first issue of Resurgence (released October 2014) primarily focuses on Indian Subcontinent, with Al-Qaeda Central's official spokesperson Adam Gadahn penning the cover article defining the Al-Qaeda objectives. Gadahn wrote,

America considers Islam to be its main enemy and a threat to the foundations of its existence. It has waged an incessant war against Islam and Muslims that has become increasingly overt over the last two decades. It considers itself to be its foremost duty to crush every Islamic movement struggling for the ascendancy of Islam. It is the patron-in-chief of Israel and the real cause of the existence of the

oppressive Zionist entity. And last but not the least the United States of America is equally responsible for every single act of oppression carried out against our brethren in Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Mali, Burma, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan as well as the rest of the Islamic world.(The News, Islamabad, October 25, 2014)

Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent's spokesperson Usama Mehmood in a separate statement signifies the importance of PNS Mehran attack and marveled the ferocity of 'mujahideen' who carried out the attack.

The goal of the PNS Dockyard attack was to take control of two important warships of the PNS Zulfiqar and the PNS Aslat. There were several mujahid brothers aboard both ships and they were provided with necessary weapons and explosives required for this operation. The first Al-Qaeda team was on board PNS Zulfiqar, which departed Karachi on September 3 and was allegedly scheduled to be refueled by USS Supply, which is one of the most important American naval ships after aircraft carriers. While PNS Zulfiqar was to be refueled, some of the Mujahid brothers present on board were to target and destroy the American oil tanker [USS Supply] with the 72 mm anti-aircraft guns on their frigate. Al-Qaeda operatives on board PNS Zulfiqar were to target the American frigate protecting USS Supply using anti-ship guided missiles. If they were successful, the al-Qaeda team was to then use whatever weapons were left to attack or destroy any US or coalition warship present in the vicinity and fight on until attaining martyrdom. A second AQIS team was present on board PNS Aslat with weapons and explosives. According to the plan, the second cadre of AQIS jehadis was going to take over PNS Aslat, which was near the shores of Karachi, and steer it towards Indian waters in order to attack the Indian warships with anti-ship missiles. If any of the ships got in their way, including the American warships, the AQIS crew on board was to use the PNS Aslat to attack them instead(*The News*, Islamabad, October 25, 2014).

The establishment of AQIS is the second important strategic decision Zawahiri has taken after the death of former Amir Osama Bin Laden in May 2011. The first one was the appointment of Nasir al-Wuhashi as the Amir of Al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula (AQIP) and upgrading his position to 'General Manager' in Al-Qaeda

(Newsweek Pakistan, August 15, 2013). It appears that Zawahiri is all set to compete with the newly surfaced Jihadi challenger the Islamic State, a splinter group of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi whom Zawahiri has cast out of Al-Qaeda in favor of his favorite Mohammad al-Joulani of Nusrah Front. The emergence of IS as a competitor to Zawahiri's Jihadi throne, seems quite perturbing for him and has compelled him to reorganize his 26-year old transnational jihadi outfit.

Objectives

Zawahiri, in his video message alongside newly appointed Amir of AQIS Asim Umar and spokesperson Usama Mahmoud also stated the objectives of AQIS, which are slightly different from the AQ Central's objectives.

- Establishment of global caliphate in the Khurasan (i.e. Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Burma, Central Asian Republics, and Bangladesh)
- Imposition of Islamic Sharia Laws in the Indian subcontinent
- Taking over 'apostate' Muslim regime (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Central Asian Republics, Bangladesh)
- Reconquering Muslim lands now being ruled over infidel (India, Burma)
- Driving out 'infidel' forces from Islamic lands
- Protecting the Muslims 'under siege' in the Indian States of Kashmir, Assam, Gujrat, Ahmedabad, and defending the ones in Burma and Bangladesh

Asim Umar: Amir of AQIS

Zawahiri appointed Asim Umar as the Amir of AQIS, who also featured in the same video and stated salient objectives of AQIS. Umar is a known jihadi ideologue from Pakistan, and a former high ranking leader of Harkat ul Jihad-e-Islami and later Harkat ul Mujahideen (Awaz Today, September 11, 2014). Acknowledged as a skilled propagandist in jihadi circles of Pakistan, Umar has been releasing video statements and press releases for Al-Qaeda and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) for the last two years. Umar is also fond of writing books on Dajjal (Anti-Christ). His books such as *World War-III and Dajjal, Bermuda Triangle and*

Dajjal, Lashkar of Dajjal: The Black Water in Pakistan, and Friends and Foes of the Messiah are widely available at jihadi book stores in Pakistan. Umar's long association with Al-Qaeda Core is evident from the fact that before being elevated to position of Amir of AQIS he served as head of AQ's Sharia committee in Pakistan. After taking charge of AQIS, Umar has reaffirmed his stance by declaring the US as prime enemy and emphasized over to defeat US and its allies everywhere. In his message to the Indian youth he said:

“From the land of Afghanistan, a caravan is heading toward India ... not on someone's directive. Not on the basis of some governmental policy. But simply on the basis of abiding by God's command.” (ARY News, Karachi, September 10)

Umar, because of his long jihadi career in Afghanistan, Kashmir and Pakistan, is fluent in Arabic, Urdu, Uzbek and Pashto. He is not only considered a good orator but also well versed in Islamic clerical issues. However, little is known about his jihadi credentials as far as jihadi activities are concerned. According to one source he is more of an ideologue than actual fighter. (Interview with a local journalist in Islamabad).

Umar appears to focus on already ongoing but jihadi activities in Indian Kashmir, Assam, Myanmar and Pakistan. He seems to galvanize support from Islamist radical youth in order to raise a new cluster of jihadists from the regions experiencing jihadi turbulence.

Interestingly Umar appears to be neither a Pashtun nor Punjabi but rather an Urdu Speaking from southern Pakistani port city of Karachi, known for its relatively secular environment than the rest of Pakistan. Now in his mid-40s Umar received his early education from Jamia Uloom-ul-Islamia, Karachi, a madrasah noted for its jihadi credentials.

Mufti Nizam ud Din Shamzai, the former head of the madrasah and widely recognized jihadi cleric was an ardent supporter of the Taliban movement, patron of Pakistani jihadi organizations Harkat-ul Jihad-e-Islami (HuJI), Harkat-ul Mujahideen (HM) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM). Shamzia issued a fatwa against the US invasion of Afghanistan and called for jihad against the US, inspiring thousands to reach Afghanistan amid US invasion in October 2001.

HuJI is considered the oldest jihadi group in Pakistan emerged in 1983 during the Afghan War (1979-89). HuJI was led by Qari Saifullah Akhter and Fazal ur

Rehman Khalil. Few years later in 1987, Khalil parted ways with Akhter and formed his own group HuM with focus on Islamist insurgency in Indian Kashmir. HuM further splintered into Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) after the successful swapping of hijacked Indian Airline passengers in 1999 for jailed propagandist of HuM Masoud Azhar in India along with Ahmed Omar Saeed Shaikh (British born, LSE drop out member of HuM) and Mushtaq Zargar of Al-Badr Mujahedeen.

After the 9/11 attacks and Pakistani government's decision to become part of US-led alliance HuM's new splinter HuM-al-Alami surfaced in Karachi with two consecutive assassination attempts on President General Pervez Musharraf in 2002.

In February 1998, HuM organized Bin Laden's press conference in Khost, Afghanistan where he proclaimed his fatwa against the US and allies and also announced formation of Islamic Front against Jews and Crusaders.

Umar also studied at Darul Uloom Haqania madrasah, located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan and reckoned as Jihad factory because of its decades' old practice of sending students to Afghanistan to fight against the Russian and later American forces. More than 10,000 strong student body the madrasah is headed by Sami ul Haq, leader of Deobandi sect Islamist party Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam. Half of Afghan Taliban cabinet considered Darul Uloom Haqania as their alma mater. Mullah Omar the supreme commander of Afghan Taliban had reportedly studied at the madrasah.

According to Hamid Mir, a renowned Pakistani journalist and analyst, Asim Umar is an Indian national and he claimed to have met him several times in Afghanistan. Mir also claimed that Asim Umar remained in close contact with Bin Laden till his death in May 2011. In an interview Hamid Mir said:

Asim Umar is an Indian Muslim, that's his only qualification for which he was appointed head of al-Qaeda's South Asia chapter. Yes, I have met Asim Umar... I met him for the first time in 2005, I was visiting Afghanistan. In those days, the Afghan Taliban were in control of Andar district of Ghazni province. I was visiting the tomb of Mahmud Ghaznavi. Somebody there contacted me, it was a taxi driver. He asked me, 'Oh, you come on Geo TV'. I said yes. He said 'Amir Sahib wants to meet you'. I asked him who Amir Sahib was. He said, 'Don't worry, don't worry. We will not harm you. We will give you a story'... .. In 2007, I met him again in North Waziristan. Then I

came to know that he was forced to leave Ghazni province because he had developed differences with some local commander. The local commander had alleged that he was an Indian spy. So the Pakistani Taliban protected him and he came to Pakistani tribal area. Now he is absent. But recently I received a lot of literature written by him, both in English and Urdu. So I had one meeting with him in 2005, and one again in 2007 (*The Indian Express*, October 19, 2014).

Affiliation with Former Jihadi Organizations

Zawahiri's decision to nominate Umar as the head of AQIS is tactical. In a way Zawahiri is trying to regroup the plethora of Pakistani Islamist/jihadist groups under the banner of AQIS. With HuM, HuJI, JeM and LeJ in despair in Pakistan, and Indian Mujahideen (IM) and Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) are indeed looking for a new brand to cover their failures. The need to reinvigorate their jihadi activities and AQIS could provide them a new setting for renewing their jihadi credentials. Disgruntled Rohingya Muslim community in Myanmar already tilting towards the Al-Qaeda-linked Itihadul Mujahideen of Arakan (IMA) may slide towards AQIS. Radical Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami in Bangladesh could also provide potential recruits for AQIS. Because of his long affiliation with Islamist terrorist groups active in Indian Kashmir the primary focus of Umar is expected to be Indian Kashmir, the only Muslim majority province in India. He reflected his thoughts in videos released earlier:

To wave Islam's flag over Srinagar's Lal Chowk... caravans are heading from Afghanistan to liberate India and it is not being done on instructions of any intelligence agency, and not as part of some governmental policy, but simply to abide God's command..., (First Post India, September 4)

On another occasion he said:

Those (Kashmiris) who swore to martyrs to walk their path till their last breath and vowed to continue jihad, who convinced them to shun jihad and dream about freedom of Kashmir by resorting to protests, shutdowns and democratic ways...?(First Post India, September 4, 2014)

Umar has repeatedly criticized Pakistani authorities for their failures to support ji-

had in Indian Kashmir. He denounced the Pakistani state, its intelligence agencies, military and law enforcement bodies for acting against ‘mujahedeen on behalf of ‘infidels’ (the US and allies). (In.com, India, September 4, 2014)

In his July 2013 video titled “*Why is there no storm in your ocean?*” Umar elucidated his approach regarding for the establishment of caliphate in accordance with Al-Qaeda,

“Jihad does not limit itself to any specific region, lives are being sacrificed in this jihad to defeat America and its allies everywhere”(July 2013 video message, translated by SITE Intelligence Group)

Reaffirming Allegiance to Mullah Omar

An interesting development, primarily to encounter the growing influence of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which recently announced the establishment of Caliphate, comprising of territories of Iraq and Syria, the AQIS reaffirmed its allegiance to Taliban supreme commander Mullah Mohammad Omar. Omar the self-proclaimed Amir ul Momineen of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan considers himself as the sole Amir (representative) of all Muslims, a claim which Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has also endeavored to do. Zawahiri while announcing AQIS also deliberated on Afghan Taliban and eulogized their efforts, calling them the ‘soldiers of Islamic Emirate’. Slain Al-Qaeda chief Osama Bin Laden had pledged oath of allegiance to Mullah Omar during his stay in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

My pledge of allegiance to the emir of the Believers [Mullah Omar] is the great pledge of allegiance, which is mentioned in the chapters of the Koran and the stories of the Sunnah. Every Muslim should set his mind and heart and pledge allegiance to the Emir of the Believers, Mullah Muhammad Omar, for this is the great pledge. (The Long War Journal, July21, 2014)The oath effectively made Al-Qaeda part of Afghan Taliban and their short-lived state Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. After the rise of ISIS and announcement of caliphate (Islamic State) by the ISIS leader Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi, the new Al-Qaeda chief, Ayman al-Zawahiri, in a carefully calculated move reaffirmed its allegiance to Mullah Omar. In a statement issued by Al-Qaeda, through its Al-Nafir news bulletin.

The first edition (Al-Nafir) begins by renewing the pledge of allegiance to

[the] Emir of the Believers Mullah Muhammad Omar Mujahid, may Allah preserve him, and confirming that al Qaeda and its branches everywhere are soldiers among his soldiers, under his victorious banner to the coming State of the Caliphate. (Translated by SITE Monitoring Services Group, July 20, 2014)

The New Challenge

Founded in the backdrop of Soviet defeat in Afghanistan after a long guerrilla campaign by Afghan Islamists backed by the US, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and scores of countries, the Al-Qaeda up till now has never challenged for reaffirming its jihadi credentials. The militant Islamist movement indeed managed to become an umbrella organization of Islamist terrorist organization across the world with branches and affiliates in more than 60 countries. Credited for masterminding and perpetrating the biggest ever terrorist attacks in the world and reaching out to Islamist terrorist groups within a span of quarter century, without losing momentum are some the feathers in Al-Qaeda's cap.

The splintering away of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (aka Al-Qaeda in the Land of Two Rivers or Islamic State of Iraq) under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has indeed challenged Al-Qaeda for keeping the throne of jihad. Al-Qaeda badly needs to reinvigorate in order to survive in the jihadi world. The jihadi sympathizers are now expecting much more from Al-Qaeda otherwise Al-Qaeda would not be able to tap in from younger generations of jihadis. On the other hand ISIS is in good shape to carve out many of Al-Qaeda's assets. Strategically speaking Al-Qaeda is on retreat, it is a tactical retreat and the competition between the two jihadi giants may result in catastrophic destruction.

The AQIS is one hastily planned Al-Qaeda endeavor to smoothen the feelings of its rank and file and sympathizers. The ill-planned terrorist attack at Pakistan Navy destroyer and attempt to hijack it depicts its very nature. It was untimely, badly-planned and executed, and shows the nascent state of AQIS.

Conclusion

Zawahiri is all set to compete with ISIS and its ambitious caliph, Abu Bakar al-Baghdadi. Baghdadi has clearly outmaneuvered Zawahiri in terms of gaining media attention. Even a bird's eye view at local and international news gives a clear picture of media's interest in IS and Al-Qaeda seems to be unprepared to deal with

IS. Zawahiri, a seasoned jihadi, knows the importance of coverage and like any other traditional terrorist believes in propaganda by deed. He must have studied average life span of terrorist organizations (8-12 years according to Audrey Cronin, for details see Audrey Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, Princeton University Press, 2010). AQIS is indeed a rejuvenating effort by Zawahiri to present a new brand of Al-Qaeda for supporters and sympathizers in India, Pakistan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Despite the fact the first attack resulted in utter failure, the newly established AQIS would provide an impetus to mundane existence of Al-Qaeda especially after the death of former Amir Osama Bin Laden. The subcontinent does contain a huge pool of disgruntled Islamist radicals for whom joining IS would be far more difficult than to join hands with already existing Al-Qaeda, only if it provides them a potent platform to execute terrorist activities.

Al-Qaeda's War on China: Pakistan's Role and Threat Perception

Abbas Ahmad

The economic giant China faces mounting threat from the Islamist East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) in its northwestern Xinjiang province, the Uyghur (pronounced weegar) Muslims majority autonomous region. (According to some reports, Muslims make up 45% of Xinjiang's population.) Following a crackdown by the Chinese authorities in the 1990s the leader of the group fled to Afghanistan where Taliban regime provided them shelter. After the ouster of Taliban regime in December 2001 in the wake of the US-led invasion, the ETIM fighters retreated into Pakistan's semi-autonomous Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) bordering Afghanistan. Ever since, the ETIM increasingly became influenced by Al-Qaeda's philosophy of global jihad. The first issue of 'Resurgence', a new magazine launched by Al-Qaeda in Subcontinent (AQIS) also reflects this close nexus between ETIM and Al-Qaeda. The organization spells out ten reasons to support its 'war' against China.

With the presence of Al-Qaeda affiliate ETIM within the borders of Pakistan and carrying out violent activities against China both inside China and in Pakistan against the vital interests of China is a grave concern in China-Pakistan relations, though officially not declared. This sudden focus on China follows on the heels of ISIS condemning China in July 2014, when Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi named China first in a string of 20 countries as battlegrounds to wage jihad, as well as threatened to occupy Xinjiang.¹ For China the dynamics of Islamic militancy seems changing as it faces growing incidents of armed attacks by Islamist militants since last three years and it is widely believed that these attackers are trained in the FATA region of Pakistan along other Islamist groups striving for broader goal enforcement of their interpreted form of Sharia (Islamic law).

Uyghur Militancy

Before explaining the ten points a brief background on the evolution of ETIM may not be out of place.

East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) was founded in the 1990s by Hasan Mahsum, who was killed by Pakistani troops in 2003 in the FATA's Waziristan re-

¹Christina Lin, "Al-Qaeda and ISIS have declared war on China – will Beijing now arm the Kurds? *The Times of Israel*, October 28, 2014 <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/al-qaeda-and-isis-have-declared-war-on-china-will-beijing-now-arm-the-kurds/>

gion. It seeks an independent state called East Turkestan that would include parts of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).

Mahsum's successor Abdul Haq was also a member of Al-Qaeda's Shura Council in 2005², who too was killed in a US drone strike in North Waziristan in 2010. Abdul Shakoor al-Turkistani succeeded Haq and led the organization until a US drone strike liquidated him in 2012. Abdullah Mansoor has since been leading the organization, occasionally issuing statements on the objectives of his organization.

In an interview with Reuters news agency, and as quoted in the magazine *The Diplomat*, Abdullah Mansoor called China "the enemy of all Muslims" and said that the "fight against China is our Islamic responsibility."³

Interactions between Uyghur militants and globally entrenched radical groups like Al-Qaeda are gradually leading to a synergy in strategy and technique. Roughly 1,000 Chinese jihadists are being trained at a base in Pakistan and thousands more have joined the fighting in Syria. These fighters abroad will pose "certain risks" when they return to China.⁴ Already, the increase in Uyghur-led attacks targeting civilians – such as strikes at Tiananmen Square (October 2013 Kunming railway station (March 2013) and a few other attacks in Urumqi in April and May –reflect a clear shift in ETIM's strategy. Previous attacks had largely targeted police or other security forces in the Xinjiang region but now they are increasingly targeting public places and civilians. This change in strategy has not only sent shockwaves across China but also caused unusual alarm within the Chinese security apparatus.

The group and its ties to Muslim fundamentalist organizations have compounded Chinese concerns about the rising threat of terrorism within the country as its restive western regions faced a spate of terrorist attacks in 2014.

The major attacks orchestrated by ETIM in China reveals that the group is getting considerable support in Xinjiang region to achieve its ends and destabilize the

²QE.E.88.02. Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, "Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaeda and associated individuals and entities, April 7, 2011 <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQE08802E.shtml>

³Shannon Tiezzi, "Chinese Involvement in Global Jihad, *The Diplomat*, June 25, 2014 <http://thediplomat.com/2014/06/chinese-involvement-in-global-jihad/>

⁴Ibid

internal security situation.

On October 28, 2013, a sport utility vehicle (SUV) driven by a Uyghur from Xinjiang province crashed into Tiananmen Square killing five people and injuring 38 others. ETIM later claimed responsibility for the attack on November 24, 2013, *The Guardian*, London, reported.⁵

On March 1, 2014, 34 people were killed and 130 injured in a mass stabbing attack at the Kunming railway station in Yunnan, China. Reports claimed as many as 10 black-clad assailants wielding knives and machetes attacked people at random. The event caused shock in China and around the world, with many referring to it as the Chinese 9/11 Just days before; an Al-Qaeda-affiliated group released a video threatening China. The Chinese State Press agency stated, flags of the "East Turkistan Forces" were found at the scene of the Kunming railway station attack. Five days prior, the ETIM published a video titled "We Are Coming O Buddhists," in which Abu Zar Azzam, the spiritual head of an Al-Qaeda offshoot based in Waziristan, threatened Chinese nationals and Buddhists.⁶ Four of the assailants were shot dead by police at the scene. Meanwhile, three people were sentenced to death by a Yunnan court for their role in the attack and the fourth defendant a pregnant woman was given a life sentence. *South China Morning Post* in its report states that, "Iskandar Ehet, Turgun Tohtunyaz and Hasayn Muhammad were found guilty of "organizing and leading a terrorist group" and intentional homicide after the one-day trial. Patigul Tohti, who was wounded and captured at the scene, was jailed for life after being convicted of taking part in the attack. According to the court, the group was influenced by religious fundamentalism and began to meet in December for physical training. Tohtunyaz helped them to acquire more than 10 knives used in the attack. They continued to meet in February at a hair salon in Gejiu, near Kunming, and plot their strategy, it said."⁷

On May 22, 2014 first attack of its kind in Chinese history occurred, when five suicide bombers blew themselves up in Urumqi, the capital of China's Xinjiang region, killing more than 31 and injuring nearly 100, Reuters news agency reported.

⁵Jonathan Kaiman, "Islamist group claims responsibility for attack on China's Tiananmen Square, *The Guardian*, November 25, 2013 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/25/islamist-china-tiananmen-beijing-attack>

⁶Rachael Levy, "Is China in Al-Qaeda's crosshairs? *Vocativ*, November 3, 2014 <http://www.vocativ.com/world/china/china-al-qaedas-cross-hairs/>

⁷Andrea Chen, "Three given death penalty over Kunming rail station attack, *South China Morning Post*, January 11, 2015 <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1590779/four-trial-killing-31-kunming-train-station-terrorist-attack>

Prior to that on May 1 two suicide bombers carried out an attack against civilians in Urumqi railway station killing nearly five people. This marked the first ever suicide bombing in China. The agency quoted Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hong Lei as, “Judging from the many terrorist attacks that have taken place and the relevant perpetrators, they have received support from terrorist groups outside China’s borders as well as religious extremist propaganda spread via the internet. He said the “terrorists” received training overseas from groups like ETIM and gained combat experience in Syria”.⁸

Previous attacks had largely targeted police or other security forces in the Xinjiang region. Chinese extremists are becoming increasingly involved in international operations. One thousand Chinese jihadists” are being trained at a base in Pakistan and thousands more have joined the fighting in Syria. These fighters abroad will pose “certain risks” when they return to China.⁹

Al-Qaeda’s Desires

The ETIM has been carrying out its activities under the banner of al-Qaeda for more than a decade, yet it has now openly turned its focus on the Uyghur autonomous region, explicitly explained in ‘Resurgence’, the first issue of AQIS’s latest publication. In an article titled “Did you know? 10 Facts about East Turkistan, the group underlines its shift in strategy to include China in its future operations as well apart from US and its allies.

Historically, East Turkistan has never been part of China. It is one of the territories colonized by the Han Chinese. It lies beyond the Great Wall, which was built to defend China from invasions, and west of the Jade Gate, which is described by most historical sources as marking the western limits of China. Naming the region Xinjiang/Sinkiang (New Dominion) does not change this historical reality.¹⁰

The Al-Qaeda’s propaganda arm further elaborated the cause by maintaining:

In the last two millennia, East Turkistan has remained independent of China for more than 1800 years. In the last 1,000 years of its Islamic history, it has remained independent for 763 years,

⁸Michael Martina, *Reuters*, May 23, 2014 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/23/us-china-blast-idUSBREA4L01K20140523>

⁹Teizi, *The Diplomat*

¹⁰Did you Know? 10 Facts About East Turkistan, *Resurgence*, Issue 01, Fall 2014

while 237 years have been spent under Chinese occupation at various intervals. In 1949, 93 percent of the population of East Turkistan was Uyghur (Turk Muslims), while 7 percent was Chinese. Today, as a result of six decades of forced displacement of the native population and the settlement of Han Chinese in their place, almost 45 percent of the population of East Turkistan is Chinese.¹¹

Furthermore, ETIM accuses China of polluting the environment of Xinjiang region by “conducting nuclear tests in the region” and “not allowing Muslims to perform their religious duties” and maintaining “a million strong security force in the region for committing brutalities against the Muslim populace.” Though Al-Qaeda did not declare open war on China, yet the articles in ‘Resurgence’ point to a strategic shift in ETIM’s view on China, which it says is perpetrating atrocities against Muslims in Xinjiang.

Rohan Gunaratna, a terrorism expert based in Singapore, as quoted in *Time* magazine, believes that

The threat of terrorism is very real for China, more than other powers on its borders; this is China’s number one national security concern. An ideology is being built by the al-Qaeda leadership to create an image of China as an enemy of the Muslims.”¹²

It is not the first time that al-Qaeda has issued such threats to China, back in 2009 on October 7, a top ranking al-Qaeda leader Abu-Yahya-al-Libi (killed in a US drone strike in Pakistan in June 2012) condemned China of ‘Oppression and Injustice’ against Muslims and looting their wealth. Libi was infuriated against the Chinese treatment of Uyghur’s. He urged fellow Muslims to help militant Uyghur’s. Libi said, “Chinese are hoping for the demise and destruction of Uyghur Muslims so that their numbers would decline and Islamic identity would dissolve”.¹³ CNN reported that Yahya-al-Libi urged Uyghur Muslims to “kill the Chinese communists where you find them, take them and besiege them and ambush them wherever you can.”¹⁴

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ishaan Tharoor, “Muslim World, *Time*, October 9, 2009 <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1929388,00.html>

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Saad Abedine, “Al Qaeda tells China’s Uyghurs to prepare for holy war

Moreover, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), a North African offshoot of the terrorist organization, urged attacks on Chinese nationals across the region as revenge for China's heavy-handedness with the Uyghurs, reported *Time*.¹⁵

Pakistan's Role

ETIM is also a potential though officially undeclared source of friction between China and Pakistan. Pakistani and Chinese leaders often talk about this friendship being "higher than the Himalayas and sweeter than honey", yet Pakistan's mountainous tribal regions are serving as a sanctuary for the ETIM. Privately, Chinese officials have often conveyed their concerns over the presence of ETIM in the border regions to Pakistani officials who meanwhile have publically talked off zero tolerance for all forms of militants including those of ETIM.

Chinese authorities had sent messages separately to the prime minister and army chief asking Pakistan to take action against ETIM militants hiding in North Waziristan. In a late May 2014 meeting in Shanghai, Pakistani president Mamnoon Hussain and Chinese president Xi Jinping agreed to "strengthen cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts". Hussain acknowledged China's concerns in particular about ETIM and called the group a "common enemy" of both China and Pakistan.¹⁶

In an interview Mushahid Hussain Syed, head of the Defense Committee of the Pakistani Senate and chair of the Pakistan China Institute, said that pressure from China played a role in the ongoing military operation in North Waziristan.¹⁷ Meanwhile, the government of Pakistan is determined in its resolve to fight terrorism and secure both China-Pakistan interests in the region.

Pakistan Army is conducting military operation 'Zarb-e-Azb' (smash of Prophet's sword), launched on June 15, 2014, to flush out the terrorist from FATA, but the porous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, fragile security conditions in Afghanistan and rising religious radicalism in Pakistan are some of the factors that facilitate the cross border movement of local and foreign militants, thus making it difficult for the security forces to root-out the terrorist infrastructure completely. So far, according to Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) more

¹⁵*Time*, October 9, 2009

¹⁶Zia Ur Rehman, "ETIM's presence in Pakistan and China's growing pressure," *NOREF: Norwegian Peace building Resource Centre*, August 2014 http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/381280b226170116bb6f07dc969cb17d.pdf

¹⁷*Ibid*

than 1,500 militants have been killed in the ongoing military operation in FATA's North Waziristan and Khyber agencies.

We are not putting a time frame to this operation because of its importance to the interests of Pakistan as well those of our friendly countries like Afghanistan and China, Pakistan Army spokesperson Major General Asim Bajwa told CRSS recently.

ETIM is currently believed to be operating alongside Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) an Al-Qaeda affiliate, participating in planning and execution of terrorist plots against China's vital interests within and out of Pakistan. Abdullah Mansoor the group's current leader issued a statement from an undisclosed location in Pakistan after the October 2013 Beijing's Tiananmen Square attack: "O Chinese unbelievers, know that you have been fooling East Turkistan for the last sixty years, but now they have awakened."¹⁸

Since 2004, the militants in Pakistan have staged attacks against Chinese interests, abducted and killed Chinese workers, mainly working in energy or mining sectors. In the meantime, tourists too have not been spared in the violent incidents. Some of the major incidents against Chinese citizens show the nature of threat.

Terrorism against Chinese workers started in May 2004 when a car bomb in Gwadar city in the Balochistan province killed three visiting Chinese engineers, reported Xinhua news agency as quoted in Pakistani English daily the News. In October 2004 two Chinese engineers working on the Gomal-Zam dam project in South Waziristan region of the FATA were abducted. One of them was rescued while other was killed by the militants. In February 2006 three Chinese engineers were killed in Hub town of Balochistan province. Furthermore, in July 2007 three more Chinese workers were killed by the militants in Peshawar, capital of the restive Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. In September 2008 two engineers were captured in Swat valley of KP province by TTP one of them escaped, whereas, other was freed by striking a deal. A Chinese woman was shot dead in Peshawar in February 2012; meanwhile on June 22, 2013 two Chinese tourists were killed along with nine others at the base of Nanga Parbat, one of the world's highest peak in the Himalayas, TTP claimed responsibility for the attack.¹⁹

Not surprisingly, in solidarity with the Uyghurs, a splinter group of TTP, has

¹⁸Kaiman, *The Guardian*

¹⁹Sabir Shah, *The News*, April 19, 2014

warned Beijing against persecuting Muslim population in its far western province of Xinjiang otherwise the militant outfit would target “the centre’s of Chinese economic interests” in ways beyond the imagination of the Chinese government. Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan Jamaat-ul Ahrar (TTPJA) released the 9th issue of its official magazine *Ahya-i-Khilafat* (Revival of Caliphate) that carried an article by Ehsanullah Ehsan, a key commander and official spokesperson, under the title of “Hidden motives behind the Chinese investment in Pakistan.”²⁰

The Chinese government has recently intensified a religious crack-down on the Muslim minority in Xinjiang province. Men and women are being punished for following the basics of Islam like sporting beards or covering their faces respectively. Above all, these crimes are being touted as law. Pakistan is not only silent on the issue of the persecution of Chinese Muslims but it also enjoys the support of Beijing to carry out military operations against the Islamic insurgents hiding in the tribal areas of the country. Taking action against the Islamic insurgents hiding in the tribal areas of the country was one of the agendas during the supposed visit of Xi Jinping, President of China, to Islamabad which was postponed due to political rallies in Islamabad. He had to assure Pakistan of China’s full support during the ongoing military operation in North Waziristan especially to target the East Turkestan Islamic Movement’s members hiding in the tribal areas of Pakistan. Under these circumstances when China is involved in the genocide of Muslims we warn Beijing to stop killing Uyghurs. If you do not change your anti-Muslim policies, the time is not far when mujahideen (holy warriors) would target you.²¹

However, China has lauded Pakistan’s efforts to establish a national counter-terrorism plan to end the menace of terrorism and extremism from the region. In a statement issued by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, said that China was against terrorism in any form. The spokesperson stated China firmly supports Pakistan in the implementation of its anti-terrorism strategy in accordance with its own national situation, and welcomes its national anti-terror plan. The proceeding came after militants attacked Army Public School (APS) Peshawar, on December 16, 2014, killing more than 150 innocent people, includ-

²⁰Tahir Ali, *The Nation*, November 17, 2014

²¹*Ibid*

ing 140 schoolchildren.²² In the wake of terror attack on APS Peshawar, Pakistan amended its constitution through the twenty-first constitutional amendment. The new law provides for the establishment of military courts for the speedy trial of terrorism-related cases. The prime minister also lifted the moratorium on death penalty that was imposed in 2008 and started executing convicted terrorists.

On the economic front, China currently has a bilateral trade volume of \$13 billion with Pakistan and expects this figure to cross the \$15 billion mark by 2015. Whereas, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to China in November 2014 yielded a rich harvest of agreements and contracts between the two sides. The agreements mainly centered on the energy sector (one of Pakistan's grave concerns) with Chinese companies. According to the Dawn newspaper, "Out of total \$101 billion foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2013 only \$90 million found its way into Pakistan is a reflection of how Pakistan has failed to leverage its unique and special relationship with its great north-eastern neighbor. This is as good a time as any for Pakistan to woo strategic investments by China."²³

While briefing on the Iron Brotherhood between China and Pakistan to CRSS, the Chinese ambassador, Sun Weidong, provided an overview of the Sino-Pakistan ties to the context of Pakistani Premier Nawaz Sharif's recent visit to Beijing in November 2014, and explained Chinese views on various international and regional issues. Pakistan-China signed some 19 agreements on economic cooperation and infrastructure investment projects. China would also invest in energy sector with 13 of the 19 agreements designed to address Pakistan's crippling energy crisis. The flagship project between the two sides is the continued building and strengthening of the economic corridor. The China-Pakistan Project is of utmost importance to the Chinese, and a mandated national priority. The Maritime Silk Road that connects Gwadar, already benefits from a \$40 billion Chinese "silk fund". Moreover, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) potentially worth \$42 billion was signed between the two sides, across a wide variety of disciplines, most notably the energy sector.²⁴

²²China lauds Counter Terrorism efforts of Pakistan, *CRSS*, <http://crss.pk/story/china-lauds-counter-terrorism-efforts-of-pakistan/>

²³The PM's China Visit, *CRSS*, <http://crss.pk/story/the-pms-china-visit-2/>

²⁴Zeeshan Salahuddin, The Iron Brotherhood, *CRSS*, November 17, 2014 <http://crss.pk/story/the-iron-brotherhood/>

Threat Perception

A strategic perspective is required to ascertain the nature of threats from al-Qaeda and its affiliates in future. Rather than focusing on conventional terror plots, al-Qaeda seems to shift its strategy as envisioned by its leaders to use the trade routes in seas to hit at the economic front of its enemies. As far as China is concerned its trade can be greatly affected if its interests are attacked in Strait of Malacca or future planned economic corridor passing through Pakistan linking Gwadar port, in Balochistan to China.

In the aftermath of the war on terror post 9/11, the north western part of the Pakistan has fell into deep chaos, where writ of the state has been challenged on many occasion by the militants fighting under the name of Islam. The radicalism is on the rise in Pakistani society, though throughout the country; from the southernmost Karachi, capital of Sindh province to north-west rugged Balochistan and KP, Punjab too is affected with a lot of seminaries operating in its south advocating radical Islam. However, as a matter of fact FATA remains a safe haven for every type of militancy (religious, sectarian and criminal mafia), from being a training ground to the command and control center of al-Qaeda linked armed groups of different nationalities, including Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and ETIM. As reported in a Pakistani newspaper Express Tribune, Pakistan has suffered a loss of \$80 billion in counter-terrorism efforts over the past decade.²⁵ A war economy has evolved for militants not only in the FATA, but also in other parts of the country for funding of the militancy against the state through smuggling (drugs and weapons), abductions for ransom, extortion and looting mainly banks.

Given the fact that proposed economic corridor will pass through an area affected by the Islamic militancy (north-western Pakistan) and instances in front, like of Chinese engineers and workers being abducted for ransom and killed, adds worry in the recognition of threat. Under the prevalent security conditions in Pakistan not only Chinese workers could be a target for militants, but the mega infrastructure projects could also be high-value targets.

For the bilateral projects of economic growth go unhindered, provision of security to the Chinese workers and safeguarding the economic corridor and clearing the area from militants' influence is a prerequisite. Furthermore, for the establishment of state's writ within Pakistan, it has to curb corruption, improve governance

²⁵Zahid Giskhori, "Counter-Terrorism: The Cost of War for Pakistan, *Express Tribune*, January 6, 2015

and ensure the rule of law, treating every person equal under the law.

In a round table discussion at the CRSS on December 31, 2014 on National Action Plan (NAP) on counter-terrorism, former diplomats, military and government officials, members from civil society and media personnel agreed unequivocally on a list of recommendations for the government. Those included, ownership of the war on terror with having no favorites in Taliban factions, developing a narrative against militancy, counter-radicalization measures, strengthening the police and paramilitary to counter terrorism and bringing the FATA within the ambit of Pakistani law, rather than keeping it under the British enacted Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) of 1901. Meanwhile, it was also stressed that peace in Pakistan is embedded with peace in Afghanistan.²⁶

Realistically, for a stable region a stable Afghanistan is the need of the day. Decades of war and political unrest in Afghanistan has allowed the flourishing of radical mindset and increase in the criminal activities. The rugged, porous and unguarded Pakistani border with Afghanistan of 2,560 km on its west make it easy for militants and criminal mafia to slip into Pakistani side of the border and create disorder.

A collective security approach is needed to tackle the issue of Afghanistan, a lesson that both Pakistan and China should learn from the US-led intervention in Afghanistan is that a security-centric, contractor-driven, selective approach instead of an-inclusive approach in conflict management and conflict resolution will never entail success. Unholy, short-term, tactical alliances with murderers/criminals in the name of security are extremely damaging in the long term. What is needed is an equal-handed, long-term, all-inclusive engagement with all stakeholders and only such an approach can help Afghanistan successfully handle its national reconciliation efforts.²⁷ In this regard, Khaama news agency of Afghanistan reported that a delegation of Taliban under Qari Din Muhammad from Taliban political office in Doha, Qatar, visited China in late November to discuss the Afghan situation, as China wants peace, development and economic growth in the region. China is anxious to ensure stability along its southwestern frontier especially since Beijing faces a growing problem with the Muslim Uyghurs who live

²⁶Countering Terrorism: What should Pakistan do? A CRSS Roundtable on NAP, CRSS, January 7, 2015 <http://crss.pk/story/crss-roundtable-on-national-action-plan/>

²⁷Imtiaz Gul and Abbas Ahmad, "China, Pakistan and Afghanistan: common security challenges require collective approaches, CRSS, October 22, 2014 <http://crss.pk/story/china-pakistan-and-afghanistan-common-security-challenges-require-collective-approaches-2/>

in western China.²⁸

Moreover, it seems from al-Qaeda's magazine 'Inspire' that the group can target China's interests elsewhere other than that of South Asia, like in Strait of Malacca in South East Asia. Its strategic importance for china can be gauged by the fact that nearly 80% of China crude oil imports pass through this strait from Middle-East and Africa.²⁹ The Chinese "Malacca Dilemma" can be exploited by militants looking to strike at China's interests out of its borders. *The China Youth Daily* reported on June 15, 2014 that, "It is no exaggeration to say that whoever controls the Strait of Malacca will also have a stranglehold on the energy route of China."

In terms of the sheer volume of trade however, the Strait of Malacca stands out as one of the most significant sea lanes in the world. Situated between the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia, the strait is the shortest route between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. It links the economies of the Persian Gulf region and India with China, Japan, Indonesia and the Pacific Rim. Every year, some 50,000 vessels carrying one quarter of the world's traded goods pass through this 805 km long water way. More than 15 million barrels of oil/day passed through the strait during 2011.³⁰

According to the International Maritime Bureau, the Malacca Strait is the world's most pirate-stricken region. For insurance purposes, it is considered a high-risk area. After this brief overview of the world's most critical sea lanes, one cannot fail to appreciate the strategic opportunity that geography presents for the muja-hideen.³¹

Even if a single super tanker were to be attacked in one of the chokepoints or hijacked and scuttled in one of these narrow sea lanes, the consequences would be phenomenal. A coordinated effort to disrupt enemy shipping in the future in all of these regions would not only hurt the enemy economically, but also stretch their resources further in this global war. It is worth noting that the damage caused to the global economy due to piracy (loss of ships, cargo and insurance payments) amounts to some 16 billion dollars annually.³²

²⁸Taliban delegation holds talks in China, CRSS, January 7, 2015 <http://crss.pk/story/taliban-delegation-holds-talks-in-china/>

²⁹*Reuters*, March 4, 2010 <http://in.reuters.com/article/2010/03/04/idINIndia-46652220100304>

³⁰Hamza Khalid, "On Targeting the Achilles Heels of Western Economies, *Resurgence*, Issue 01, Fall 2014

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*

With no significant presence of Chinese Navy in the region the potential Al-Qaeda threat of an attack in the strait can disrupt the huge energy transport through the area. Meanwhile, it can also be a constant headache for China's security in the region. The alternative routes of energy transportation can prove costly and time consuming, however, the proposed economic corridor through Pakistan linking Gwadar to China can ease much of its security concerns provided China, Pakistan and Afghanistan take a joint path in handling the political crisis in Afghanistan, while China's support in economic development of the region is vital for the stability.

Conclusion

Al-Qaeda in Indian subcontinent (AQIS) as described by many analysts is formed to broaden its scope to East Asia. To counter the threat from these terror outfits both China and Pakistan have to cooperate in intelligence sharing, China's support to people of Pakistan in energy sector and infrastructure can play a crucial role in making the people of Pakistan more friendly towards China. Moreover, China would have to shun practices like banning fasting in the holy month of Ramadan, offering prayers and other religious rituals in Xinjiang province as such activities hurt the sentiments of Muslims and can adversely affect the fight against terror.

Rise of an Islamic State in the Middle East and its Implications for Pakistan

Abbas Ahmad

Started as an offshoot of al-Qaeda in Iraq, sharing same ideology, vision and goal with strategic differences, the Islamic state (IS) gained world attention, when it declared caliphate on June 29, 2014 with Abu Bakr al- Baghdadi as their caliph. The IS started beheading spree of the westerners in orange jump suits like of Guantanamo detainees, winning territories both in Iraq and Syria and executing populace mainly Shia and other minority groups by the very extensive use of Takfir (excommunication).

On the Iraqi side of the border the Western provinces of Al-Anbar (Iraq's largest province in terms of territory) and Ninawa are under the control of IS. Whereas, in Syria the eastern province of Deir az Zor, northern province of Ar-Raqqa (It also serves as the IS capital) and some presence in the north-western province of Aleppo. However, recent events show IS has recalled its forces from Aleppo to fight Kurd Peshmerga forces in north-eastern Syria and Iraq.

The Islamic state has beheaded so far several foreign hostages when their ransom demands were not met. The recent incident which shook the world was burning of a captured Jordanian pilot Muadh Safi Yusuf al-Kasasibah alive in a cage in February 2014. Other high profile executions included beheadings of American, British and Japanese citizens.

IS has surpassed every Jihadi organization in brutality and violence the world has seen till date. Even al-Qaeda core and other radical clerics canonizing global Jihad have termed IS tactics un-Islamic and extreme at a level, which make them Khwarij (out of the fold of Islam). Abu Muhammad al Maqdisi who is regarded as an ideologue of the group also lamented IS for its brutal tactics and mass murdering Muslim population.

Irrespective of who thinks what of the IS, the ground reality tells it has territory; it has implemented the Shariah (Islamic Law) as they interpret it, and it is able to inflict fear among its opponents. Furthermore, the IS phenomenon has come up challenging those who have taught them and who inspired them to take arms, the section of extremist Jihadis who had made Islamic Front against Jews and Crusaders in 1998. Its leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi is carrying forward the legacy of Abu

Musab Zarqawi, the Jordanian terrorist who was killed by US airstrike in Iraq on June 7, 2006.

Further concerning is the fact that the IS is spreading spontaneously to other regions apart from Syria and Iraq. From Boko Haram, Wilayat Khurasan, Wilayat-e-Sinai, Wilayat-e-Qaukaz to Wilayat in Libya it has appealed groups sharing primarily the Sectarian view of the group's Islamic theology.¹

Islamic State Contest for Global Jihad Crown with Al-Qaeda

There's a "competition for jihadi leadership" in which the Islamic State disparages al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri and his lieutenants for hiding in the mountains as it tries to seize the global jihadi crown, said Derek Harvey, a former senior analyst on Iraq for General David Petraeus.² The dispute began on April 8, 2013 with a statement by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the head of al-Qaeda's affiliate in Iraq known then as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). Al-Baghdadi declared that Jabhat al-Nusra (or the Nusra Front), which operated solely in Syria against Assad, was nothing but "an extension" of ISI and that the two would now be known under the new name of ISIS.³ This declaration was quickly answered by a conflicting statement from the head of Jabhat al-Nusra, Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani, which affirmed the group had been generously supported by ISI in its jihad, but implied that he had in fact sworn his bay'a (oath of an allegiance) to Ayman al-Zawahiri. In his statement, Jawlani renewed his oath to Zawahiri and declined to become part of the new ISIS.⁴

Is Baghdadi's adventure into Syria and calling for merging Syrian group with ISI the only reason behind their split from al-Qaeda?

To ascertain rifts among al-Qaeda and Islamic state one need to go back to the roots of Abu-Musab Zarqawi, the ISI leader in Iraq. Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden in 2004 and merged his organization Jamat al Tawheed wal Jihad into al-Qaeda. He was himself not educated in religious studies and rather relied more on the Jordanian cleric Abu Muhammad al Maqdisi, whom he met in Jordanian prison. Furthermore, Zarqawi when was in Afghanistan back in late 90s

¹Wilayat can be termed as a province

²Terry Atlas and Indira A.R. Lakshmana, "Islamic State Challenging Al-Qaeda for Leadership, *Bloomberg News*, August 15, 2014 <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-08-15/islamic-state-said-to-challenge-al-qaeda-for-leadership.html>

³Ibid

⁴Ibid

did not pledge allegiance to Osama bin Laden, and established his own training camp in the Afghan city of Herat. After the US invasion of Afghanistan Zarqawi fled to Iran and then entered Iraq where US was about to launch an offensive against the Saddam Hussein regime in 2002.⁵

Even after pledging allegiance to Osama in 2004, Zarqawi did not play by the rules of al-Qaeda, he carried his own agenda and initiated suicide bombings against the Shias whom he considered Rafidins (those who reject the orthodox Islamic Caliphate) (apostates) and thus justified to be killed. As the security situation in Iraq worsened his group benefited and many former army personnel from the Iraqi army also joined Zarqawi apart from other young Jihadis coming across the North African and neighboring Middle Eastern countries to fight the US in Iraq. After the death of Zarqawi, ISI was headed by Abu Ayub al Masri who was killed in 2006 by the US, and then the command went to Abu Umar al Baghdadi who also got killed in a US airstrike in 2010. Afterwards the group is headed by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi.

The Jamat al Tawheed wal Jihad and al-Qaeda merger can be termed tactical, as Zarqawi wanted authentication and more flow of fighters towards his organization so it was necessary to come under an umbrella which was recognized by the radical Islamists worldwide.

Though standing on the same footing with al-Qaeda as far as ideology, vision and goal is concerned, however, Islamic state has serious concerns over Taliban leader Mulla Muhammad Omar. Here the clash is not only on strategic and tactical grounds but also on ideological, as Taliban follow the Deobandi school of thought and are termed Sufis by the Islamic State. Moreover, Mulla Omar and al-Qaeda core are also alleged of playing in the hands of Pakistani intelligence agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and thus being deviated from the right path, which is establishment of Shariah in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This view is reflected in a testimony written by Abu Jarir ash-Shamali published in the latest issue of IS magazine Dabiq.

Shamali is a comrade of Zarqawi, former member Jamat al Tawheed wal Jihad and now defected from al-Qaeda and back to its core group turned into the Islamic State. Shamali was arrested in Iran while trying to slip to North Waziristan, Pakistan, after the US invaded Iraq in 2003. He was released in 2010 from the prison

⁵Farhan Zahid, "The God father of ISIS, *CRSS*, November 10, 2014 <http://crss.pk/story/thoughts-and-ideology-of-abu-mohammad-al-maqqadi-the-godfather-of-isis/>

after which he came to Pakistani province of Balochistan bordering Iran and then entered Waziristan.

The first surprise and major shock for me was that I used to think the area of Waziristan was an area completely liberated in which a person would travel east, west, north, and south, not seeing the armies of apostasy and not hearing a sound from them. I had thought the mujahidin were the decision makers there and that the shar'ī laws were implemented by them there. But alas and sadly, the dominant law was the tribal laws. To the detriment of the Shari'ah laws, these tribal laws governed the people of the land. The Pakistani armies of apostasy covered every hill and mountain overseeing all clusters of people, and all villages and cities.⁶

Shamali stated blowing up of a statute of Budhha by the orders of Mulla Muhammad Omar in Bamiyan in 2001 and Osama bin Laden's decree against the Saudi regime after September 11 attacks in the US (calling them apostates and fighting them an obligation) eradicated all barriers for Jamat al Tawheed wal Jihad to join the ranks of al-Qaeda. However, Shamali alleges, that stance has been changed by the Qaeda and Mulla Omar after the passing of Osama bin Laden, "Shias are not Rafidin for them, they (al-Qaeda and Mulla Omar) had the duty to liberate the Muslims of that arena but they could not do that, instead they are busy categorizing different Mujahidin into Takfiri, extremely Takfiri, partilay Takfiri and Khariji. They only bring close to them those who are deeply into Irja (delaying)".⁷ He also alleges that al-Qaeda has turned into a secret society and no one has the reach to see higher ups. As far as Mulla Omar is concerned he is accused of giving an un-Islamic statement on Eid-ul-Fitar 2014, when he stated;

We assure the world and the neighbors as we assured them in the past that our struggles are aimed only at forming an independent Islamic regime and obtaining independence of our country. We are not intending to interfere in the (internal) affairs of the region and the countries of the world, nor do we want to harm them. Similarly, we don't tolerate their role to harm us and urge them to have reciprocal stance. I call on all Mujahideen in the frontier areas to protect their borders and maintain good relations with neighboring countries on the basis of mutual respect.⁸

⁶Abu Jarir Ash Shamali, "Al-Qaidah of Waziristan, *Dabiq*, issue 6

⁷Ibid

⁸Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, "Message of Felicitation of Amir-ul-Momineen (may Allah protect him) on the Auspicious Eve of Eid-ul-fitr, *Voice of Jihad*, July 25, 2014 <http://shahamat-english>.

Shamali was furious at Mulla Omar's statement, and regarded it un-Islamic and nationalistic in tone. Furthermore, he also objected the support of Mulla Omar to uprisings in the Middle East dubbed as Arab Spring because for Shamali Muslim brotherhood and all those out on the streets during Arab Spring were Secular. Mulla Omar's call to foreign fighters in the arena to move back to their own countries was also a cause of concern for him. Before quitting al-Qaeda Shamali raised questions;

The arena is full of armed mujāhidīn and they have the ability to take control of the land, so why is Allah's law not enforced upon it? Why were the tāghūtī tribal laws (Jirga) and other laws implemented without any remark or even attempt to advise the people? Why were there mujāhidīn entering and exiting the arena of Afghanistan via the Pakistani army when fighting the Americans?⁹

Strategically, the IS and al-Qaeda differ in how to go for operations; while al-Qaeda's reliance is picking up the high valued targets (both in West and within Muslim countries) and abstaining from violence at the societal level in Muslim countries, whereas, IS tends to reject this abstain and rather follow the doctrine of near enemy in which all the Muslim countries are on a false agenda, their governments apostate and in alliance with the forces of Taghut (evil), which according to them is NATO and United States and thus a Jihad be waged to dethrone them. Theologically, any Muslim who is not a Sunni is termed heretic, apostate and even justified to be killed. Moreover, not all Sunnis are honey to them; those Sunnis who contradict their interpretation are called bidati's (Innovators).

Young and enthusiastic driven by the ideology of violence and sectarianism are at the forefront of Islamic State. They can be termed as neo-Jihadis, a new generation of radical Islamists who are not only disregarding their seniors (al-Qaeda) but also ready to fight them for the overall control of global Jihad. Islamic state has come up as a brand of terror to which many ambitious groups are responding, mainly to come in the focus of the world media, which the IS has been able to attain.

Financial and Physical Support

According to Pew research center report Tunisia dominates the IS ranks by send-

com/index.php/paighamoona/47579-message-of-felicitation-of-amir-ul-momineen-may-allah-protect-him-on-the-auspicious-eve-of-eid-ul-fitr

⁹Al-Qaidah of Waziristan- A Testimony from Within, *Dabiq*, Issue 6

ing 3,000 Jihadists, followed by 2,500 from Saudi Arabia, 1500 from Morocco and some 800 Russian nationals¹⁰, while the estimated fighters from Central Asia are numbered 4,000.¹¹ Number of foreign fighters coming to Syria from the western countries has increased immensely. Strikingly, France tops the list with presence of 700 French nationals in IS files, 500 Brits, 320 Germans, 250 from Belgium, 150 Australians and Netherlands shares 120. Meanwhile, more than 100 fighters are from US and Denmark, while 51 are from Spain.¹² It is also reported that 500 Pakistani nationals are also fighting alongside IS in Syria, and many others with al-Nusra front.¹³

The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) earlier estimated the IS foot soldiers to be around 31,000 operating in Iraq and Syria.¹⁴ However, recent estimates by the CIA suggest otherwise, as reported by the CIA official only foreign fighters coming from western countries to Syria via Turkey are reaching 21,000, a worrying figure for security apparatus of European states and US.¹⁵

Besides the support it gets in numbers from Western countries, the terror network draws its huge physical and financial support from within Middle Eastern and Gulf countries.

For instance, “The United States believes that private individuals in Qatar are helping to finance this group and others like it. And it thinks the Gulf state is not doing enough to stop this”.¹⁶ Qatar’s security strategy has been to provide support to a wide range of regional and international groups in order to help shelter it from threats. This strategy has involved generously supporting Islamist organizations, including militant ones like Hamas and the Taliban. Allowing private local fundraising for Islamist groups abroad forms part of this approach.¹⁷ Moreover, the

¹⁰Kenneth Roth, *Twitter*, September 03, 2014, <https://twitter.com/KenRoth/status/506939280154185728>

¹¹Reid Standish, “Shadow Boxing with the Islamic State in Central Asia, *Foreign Policy*, February 6, 2015, http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/06/shadow-boxing-with-the-islamic-state-in-central-isis-terrorism/?wp_login_redirect=0

¹²Lee Ferran, “Britain Raises Terror Threat Level to ‘Severe,’” *ABC News*, August 29, 2014, <http://abc-news.go.com/Blotter/britain-raises-terror-threat-level-severe/story?id=25174939>

¹³Dabiq 7, *The Islamic State Monthly Magazine*

¹⁴Abdul Basit, Agha Shahi Lecture Series, *Foreign Office Pakistan*, February, 2015

¹⁵Ibid

¹⁶Lori Plotkin Boghardt, “Qatar and ISIS Funding: The U.S. Approach,” *The Washington Institute Improving the Quality of U.S. Middle East Policy*, August, 2014, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/qatar-and-isis-funding-the-u.s.-approach#.VAYSXaVJZwM.twitter>

¹⁷Ibid

captured oil fields in Iraq and extortion money also add to the finances.

The IS controls around a dozen oil fields both in Iraq and Syria. Crude oil produced at these fields is then smuggled out of its controlled territories to black markets and sold for \$25 to \$60 per barrel to kiln and refinery operators.¹⁸ The Wall Street Journal reported that IS produced 50,000 barrels crude oil per day in November 2014, while the opponent Kurds had a share of 40, 000 barrels a day, which they sell for as low as \$15 to oil traders. Apart from the oil fields IS has a control of a small oil refinery as well in Iraq. The reporters from Iraqi scene claim that three major oil fields of Iraq are under the practical control of IS and that US led airstrikes though have affected their production but have not been destroyed and it take a day or two to make them again operational. Whereas, Al-Omar and Al-Raqqa oil fields in Syria are also controlled by Islamic state.

In November 2014 a UN panel of experts monitoring sanctions on al-Qaeda confirmed that the IS group received \$35 million to \$45 million in ransom payments and that kidnapping for ransom is growing.¹⁹

Islamic State and Pakistan

In September 2014 a Pakistani group Tehrik-e-Khilafat based in Karachi, the provincial capital of the Sindh province pledged an oath of allegiance to IS,

“From today, Sheikh Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi shall consider Tehreek-e-Khilafat and Jihad mujahideen fighters of Pakistan as one of the arrows among his arrows which he has kept for his bow. We are praying from the almighty Allah to give us chance in our lives to see the expansion of Islamic State boundaries toward the SubContinent and Khurasan region in order to hoist the flag of Islamic State here.”²⁰

The split in global Jihad has spread to all regions where Jihadists are active. Likewise in Afghanistan-Pakistan border region different groups who earlier gave their

¹⁸The James Town Foundation, The Political Economy of Islamic State, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43221&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=faec-7ce36e19c93bdfa974086df603ce#.VNU9APmUfx4

¹⁹Edith M. Lederer, “New Sanctions Proposed for Islamic State Group Oil Trading, *Associated Press*, February 6, 2015, <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/sanctions-proposed-islamic-state-group-oil-trading-28776346>

²⁰Rob Crilly and Saleem Mehsud, “Pakistani terror group swears allegiance to Islamic State, *The Telegraph*, July 9, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/10955563/Pakistani-terror-group-swears-allegiance-to-Islamic-State.html>

oath of allegiance to IS independently went on to form a union of Mujahideen and pledged an oath of allegiance to Baghdadi, he accepted the pledge and declared the union of Mujahideen as a new Wilayat (province) of Islamic state, the Khurassan. Abu Muhammad al Adnani as quoted in issue 7 of Dabiq magazine for the month of February issued an official statement;

And in spite of the ongoing crusade, the gathering of those near and far against the Islamic State, and the war waged against it by those both close and distant, we bring the mujāhidīn the good news of the Islamic State's expansion to Khurāsān. Indeed, the mujāhidīn from amongst the soldiers of the Khilāfah have fulfilled the conditions and met the requirements for the declaration of Wilāyat Khurāsān. They have announced their bay'ah to Amirul-Mu'minīn (may Allah preserve him) Khalifah Ibrāhīm, and he has accepted it and appointed the noble Shaykh Hāfidh Sa'īd Khān (may Allah preserve him) as the Wālī of Wilāyat Khurāsān, and appointed as his deputy the noble Shaykh 'Abdur-Ra'ūf Khādīm Abū Talhah.²¹

Soon after Abdur Rauf was appointed deputy Wali of Khurasan a US drone strike took him on February 9, 2015.²² In the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where the constitution of Pakistan and its laws are inapplicable and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province the Pamphlets of IS are distributed asking people for support. Moreover, it is also stated that some of the Taliban groups mainly Salafi have pledged allegiance to Baghdadi.²³ Wall chalking, cursing founder of the nation Muhammad Ali Jinnah and praising Baghdadi are seen in many cities of KPK like Peshawar, Hangu, Kohat and most recently in district Mansehra, local newspapers reported.²⁴ Jihadi accounts on social networking sites in Pakistan are flooded with the videos, messages and successes of IS in Syria and Iraq, in a bid to inspire the youth.

As far as TTP is concerned it is a structure of different radical jihadi organizations knitted together loosely. With having no uniform bureaucratic structure, various groups carry out their operations independently using the brand name of Taliban since the US invasion of Afghanistan. These groups fight each other too for the

²¹*Dabiq* 7, Islamic State Monthly Magazine

²²*Guardian*, February 9, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/09/isis-militant-rauf-killed-afghanistan-drone-strike-guantanamo>

²³Shamim Shahid, "Spillover effect: ISIS making inroads into Pakistan, Afghanistan, *The Express Tribune*, September 3, 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/757186/spillover-effect-isis-making-inroads-into-pakistan-afghanistan/>

²⁴*Daily Shamal*, February 14, 2015

control of FATA territories.

Those who pledged allegiance to Islamic state and have operations in Pakistan are Tehrik-e-Khilafat and Jundullah, meanwhile, former TTP jihadis who have denounced Mulla Umar and joined IS include Shahidullah Shahid the former spokesperson of TTP along with chief of TTP Orakzai tribal region Hafiz Sayed Khan, TTP Khyber Agency leader Gul Zaman, chief of TTP Peshawar Mufti Hasan, TTP head of Hangu Khalid Mansoor and chief of TTP Kurram agency Daulat Khan.²⁵

Is Islamic State a real threat for al-Qaida-Taliban nexus in Pakistan?

The split in Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the formation of a new group TTP Jamat-ul-Ahrar (JUA), led by Molana Qasim Khorassani is interpreted by many security pundits as a shift in balance of power in FATA and that JuA pledged to Baghdadi. However, the group's spokesman Ehsan-ullah-Ehsan refutes news of pledging allegiance to IS and issued a statement on August 27, 2014 on his twitter account.

“We announce that we have no connection to any such news. We consider ISIS and every other Mujahid group as our brothers, but we also consider it important to mention that we are in a pledge of allegiance to Ameer ul Mu'mineen Mullah Muhammad Umar Mujahid Hafizahullah”²⁶

The Pakistani military launched a successful military operation “Zarb-e-Azb” in North Waziristan agency killing more than 3000 and capturing some 200²⁷ hardcore terrorists, whereas, 190²⁸ soldiers of the army got killed since the start of operation. This made TTP on the run to adjoining tribal areas, some fighters are believed to be escaped with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and some crossed the border to Afghanistan. The physical command and control structure of TTP in Waziristan has been disrupted, dismantled and destroyed with their leader Fazlullah's absence from the scene and reported hiding in Afghanistan's Nuristan province. The new group also claimed that because Fazlullah's vision is limited only to tribal belt and he is also not able to lead the TTP from front after the army has started military operation so it was necessary to form a group with the presence

²⁵*Dawn News*, October 14, 2014

²⁶Ehsanullah Ehsan, “Explanation, *Twitter*, August 27, 2014, <https://twitter.com/Ehsanullahihsan>

²⁷CRSS, PCT Annual Report, 2014

²⁸*Pakistan Tribe*, December 24, 2014, <http://www.pakistantribe.com/story/26586/army-chief-raheel-sharif-vows-to-hunt-down-every-terrorist/>

of command within area.

For Jihadis in Afghanistan-Pakistan border region Mulla Muhammad Umar holds a focal position. He is called Ameer-ul-Momineen (leader of the faithful). And he heads a de-facto “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan” So; the Taliban point of view is very clear “Emirate already exists”. Al-Qaeda itself was and continues to be subordinate to Mullah Omar, leader of the Taliban, through a loyalty oath from bin laden to Mullah Omar, which was reaffirmed last year by al-Qaida current leader, Ayman al Zawahiri.²⁹ And again Zawahiri has reiterated about his allegiance to Mullah Omar on September 3, 2014.

The Jihadist arena described as AF-PAK in the west or Khorasan in Jihadist circle is under Mulla Umar’s influence predominantly. This makes al-Qaeda and its affiliates in this region like Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), and TTP practically under the influence, command and Bay ’a (pledge) of Mullah Omer.

In Baghdadis aspiration to become a global Jihad superpower he asked for Jihadi groups all over the world to pledge allegiance to him. While, Sectarian, young and some newly formed Jihadi groups pledged allegiance, the older lot or experienced Jihadis and ideologues rejected the newly claimed IS caliphate. Not only they rejected the IS claims, they also issued rebuttal and letters to different Jihadi leaders to refrain from going IS way. After the IS burnt alive the Jordanian pilot, Muhammad Maqdisi once an ideologue of Jamat al Tawheed wal Jihad lamented IS and its leaders for such a cruelty and barbarism. In an interview with Jordanian TV Maqdisi said;

Ever since I heard about the Jordanian pilot falling captive into the hands of the group “Dawla” I have attempted to contact in order to achieve a Shariah benefit, to convince the rational ones among them, if at all they have rational people, to agree for exchanging the Jordanian pilot for the prisoner Sajida Rieeshawi, and I contacted them for that. These people have introduced many evil traditions. The first tradition which they introduced and claimed that it was a sunnah of the Prophet, was the tradition of slaughtering that they set up in front of the people. They use as evidence a part of the statement of Shaykh ul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah,

²⁹J. M Berger, “The Islamic State vs. al Qaeda; who’s winning the war to become the jihadi superpower,” *Foreign Policy*, September 2, 2014, https://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/09/02/Islamic_state_vs_al_qaeda_next_jihadi_super_power?utm_content=bufferee

cutting it off from what precedes it and what comes after it. They place the statement of Shaykh ul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah above the statement of the Prophet salallahu alayhi wa salam. The Prophet salallahu alayhi wa salam forbade from burning someone alive and he said “No one punishes with fire except the Lord of the fire”³⁰

In a significant blow to al-Qaeda, from within al-Qaeda a pledge known as ‘pledge of khorasan’ was witnessed, when nine of its operatives defected from al-Qaeda core and joined the Islamic state. However, none among those had key positions. The names obtained by the SITE intelligence group as quoted in the Long War Journal include Abu al Huda al Sudani, a Pakistani Abdullah al Punjabi, Abu Obeida al Lubnani, Abu al Muhannad al Urduni, Abu Jarir al Shamali (Abu Tha’ir), Abdul Aziz (Brother of Sheikh Abu Muhammad al Maqdisi), Abu Yunus al Kurdi, Abu A’isha al Qurtubi, and Abu Musab al Tadamuni.³¹

Following core reasons for leaving al-Qaeda group and joining the Islamic state are explained by ash-Shamali in his testimony in Dabiq magazine.

We disassociated ourselves from Tandhīm al- Qā’idah and from the shar’i lapses of adh- Dhawāhirī, and gave bay’ah to the Islamic State and its amīr, Amīrul-Mu’minīn Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī. This was due to what we saw of consolidation for Tawhīd and Sharī’ah, which was what we had been searching for. Yes, we gave bay’ah to Amīrul-Mu’minīn Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī after I already had a bay’ah of imārah to Mullā Muhammad ‘Umar and also had bay’ah to Shaykh Usāmah and likewise Dr. Ayman adh- Dhawāhirī, but only because of Mullā Muhammad ‘Umar and Dr. Ayman adh-Dhawāhirī’s nullification of the conditions of the bay’ah by what Mullā Muhammad ‘Umar wrote in his disastrous messages to the Muslims on the occasions of the Islamic Eid celebrations. As for adh-Dhawāhirī, then it was through his refusal to implement the shar’i laws (due to flimsy arguments such as the alleged “benefit”) and insisting on that, and turning a blind eye to his amīr Mullā Muhammad ‘Umar’s dangerous shar’i violations.³²

³⁰*Al Muwahideen Media*, “Interview with Shaykh Abu Muhammad Al Maqdisi (English Transcript), <https://almuwahideenmedia.wordpress.com/2015/02/09/interview-with-shaykh-abu-muhammad-al-maqdisi-english/>

³¹Bill Rogio, *The Long War Journal*

³²Shamali, *Al-Qaidah of Waziristan*

Nonetheless, in a retaliatory maneuver al-Qaeda sent a group of estimated 50 senior operatives to Syria known as “Khorassan group” led by Mohsin al Fadli, a senior al-Qaeda operative who was also a close aide of Osama bin Laden. The New York Times cited American officials as saying the group might be intending to plan attacks on the major western cities by influencing foreign fighters from the western countries in Syria.³³ The group is termed more dangerous than IS by analysts as its sole mission is to recruit possible would be Fidayen (Suicide bombers or fighters on a mission with no return) to hit key targets in West. The environment in Syria offers a plenty of scope for al-Qaeda’s such operations while Islamic state is busy consolidating the land it holds and tough fight it faces by Kurdish Peshmerga forces armed and backed by US in the north-eastern part of Syria and north-western Iraq.

In a recent development al-Qaeda head Ayman-al-Zawahiri announced the formation of new affiliate Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent on September 3, 2014. The Washington Post reports, “Zawahiri designated Umar Asim, a militant with ties to the Pakistani Taliban, as the new al-Qaeda branch’s head. Al-Qaeda’s desire for operational expansion eastward makes sense: There are roughly as many Muslims in South Asia as there are in the Arab world; there are more Muslims outside the Middle East than inside it.”³⁴ This step by Zawahiri shows the strategic and operational vision he has to not lose al-Qaeda as a Global Jihad super power. Moreover, his clandestine and introvert approach has kept him safe and still alive from US drone campaign, whereas, Baghdadi taking war too much open with having less strategic skills is only undermining the enemy which is much greater, the US. Furthermore, keeping in view the nerves of ordinary Pakistani citizens Zawahiri has played his cards eloquently, representing enemy as Hindu infidel unlike IS which is fighting everyone who is not IS.

The Zawahiri move represents a big strategic advantage for Pakistan which is being treated harshly by India after Narendra Modi’s rise to power. Pakistan feels marginalized in view of tough messages out of India - chiding of Pakistan army, cancellation of foreign secretary talks and cancellation of Made in Pakistan expo that was set to begin on August 31, 2014 in Mumbai - all ominous signs for an India regime that is ratcheting up tough stance on Pakistan. It’s a new threat to India.

³³*The New York Times*, September 20, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/21/world/middle-east/us-sees-other-more-direct-threats-beyond-isis-.html?_r=1

³⁴Ishaan Tharoor, “Why al-Qaeda is opening a new wing in South Asia, *The Washington Post*, September 3, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2014/09/03/why-al-qaeda-is-opening-a-new-wing-in-south-asia/>

Their core of operations centered in India is like Al-Qaeda South Asia Bureau in India - the way most INGOs and international media organizations used to set up their South Asia bureaus in New Delhi before 9/11.

Meanwhile, for further broadening the scope of al-Qaeda it has announced its official women wing also. Amir Mir an expert on Terrorism related issues reported that AQIS, led by Commander Asim Umar, has launched the women's wing of the international terrorist outfit led by Afinda Binte Ayesha who will seek guidance from Umaima Hassan Ahmed Muhammad Hassan, one of the wives of al-Qaeda chief, Dr Ayman Al Zawahiri. In 2014, a women group of Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) Islamabad supported IS in a video posted online to which a lot of hue and cry was made. Similarly, the Lal Masjid cleric Abdul Aziz had also warned of 500 female suicide bombers in their ranks. Abdul Aziz's words were given a reality and IS reach was neutralized by al-Qaeda by formation of this women wing which Mir reports to be representing 500 women.³⁵

Pakistan has altogether different geo-strategic issues. Al-Qaeda core and Taliban here are fighting US and its allies and the toughest of militaries in the Muslim world, the Pakistan Army for more than a decade now. Furthermore, the experience both Al-Qaeda and Taliban leadership have gained from engaging with world two superpowers firstly Former Soviet Union in 80s and now United States in combat have made them more sound in their policy and strategic doctrine rather than newly IS.

Although there might be challenges to Pakistan security by growing IS phenomenon but as a matter of fact, IS, principally is a Middle Eastern and western problem and does not pose a potential threat to state of Pakistan or Mullah Umar's shadow Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The deteriorating political and security conditions in Middle East have enabled IS to gain lime light and sufficient grounds both in Iraq and Syria where government writ is only limited to their palaces. The Pakistani challenge could be sectarian outfits operating within Pakistani borders like Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) sharing theological discourse with IS, however, that challenge too could not swell into a force what we see in Syria or Iraq. The announcement of IS wilayat of Khorasan might not gain grounds here, however, what IS can receive from this region are fighters specifically 'Sectarian' to fight alongside them in its so-called Caliphate. In the meantime, whether it is al-Qaeda or IS, both poses a potential threat to west. This

³⁵Amir Mir, *The News*, January 30, 2015

Jihadi competition can result in devastating consequences for the west. With so many western Jihadists in IS ranks who don't need a visa to enter western countries and al-Qaeda desire to carry out phenomenal attacks on west like its trade mark attacks of USS Cole in 2000, World Trade Center bombings in 2001, and Madrid and London bombings. Al-Qaeda demonstrated again when al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) claimed responsibility for the attacks on French Satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo on January 7, 2015.

The western powers could not accumulate and disseminate in a calculated manner the strategy to counter terrorism at a global level. Their containment policy succeeded against former Soviet Union by using religion but it backfired decades later challenging their own liberal democracy, and indeed, the freedom of religion, expression and thought in the western society has enabled terrorists to achieve those ends. And the support for ideology to inculcate Jihadi thought in 80s, after which a lot of Islamic centers were established in US, UK, and whole of the Europe have mushroomed the postmodern jihadis who are fighting their own states now.

Conclusion

The change dynamics of war in Iraq and Syria have limited the IS's geo-political and geo-strategic vision. Hypothetically, US led ground offensive against IS, resulting in elimination of Baghdadi will again make al-Qaeda to look for by remaining IS fighters. Al-Qaeda already holds a command at global level through their affiliates i.e. al-Qaida in Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), al-Qaida in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) mainly north Africa, As-Shabab, its affiliate in Somalia, East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) in China, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) a central Asian organization. IS, is a Middle Eastern and Western headache. Pakistan still has al-Qaeda connection and likely to remain so in the coming years.

Epilogue: Encroaching enemy vs. a fearful world

Imtiaz Gul

The preceding chapters unambiguously underscore the rapid criminalization of politics in the name of religion. Extremist religious ideologies, which often translate in acts of naked terrorism across the globe in the last two decades, have created dangerous fault lines – mostly rooted in religious narratives. This alarming situation represents a growing challenge to the concept of the nation state too.

As of 2015, Muslim majority territories from western China to Central / South to the Arabian Peninsula and Africa – Xinjiang, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Egypt Libya, Syria, Algeria, Nigeria, Yemen, Sudan – faced one or other form of violent conflict driven by regional or national religio-political groups who draw inspiration largely from the trans-nationalist al-Qaeda to peddle their militant agendas. Al-Qaeda Arabian Peninsula, Al-Qaeda Indian sub-continent, Al-Shebab, Boko-Haram, Taliban, the Islamic State (IS) are all but a few manifestations of an increasingly volatile political landscape. The IS, the latest entrant to the world of militant Islam, triggering fresh fears along new battle-lines. This violent entity is certainly stoking fears in major western capitals as the group continues to galvanize disgruntled youth, mostly those confronted with an identity crisis or those who feel isolated and marginalized in the western societies.

Foreign fighters are streaming into Syria and Iraq in unprecedented numbers to join Islamic State or other extremist groups, including at least 3,400 from Western nations among 20,000 from around the world, U.S. intelligence officials say in an updated estimate of a top terrorism concern.¹ Estimated fighters from European countries are; 550 Germans, 400 French and 600 British. Several hundred Belgian, German, French and British citizens – mostly of Arab and African origin - are still unaccounted for, according to a Reuters report published in the Jerusalem Post and several other papers.² A few hundred have already returned but they have all triggered unprecedented fear of turmoil within.

These numbers have sent shivers down the spines of most decision-makers in western capitals, following emergence of videos showing beheadings of western aid workers and journalists. The rush for joining the IS in Syria also prompted the

¹*Wall Street Journal*, February 10, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-estimates-20-000-foreign-fighters-heading-to-syria-iraq-1423605432>

²*Jerusalem Post*, <http://www.jpost.com/International/European-jihadis-find-travel-to-Islamic-State-increasingly-difficult-391784>

French, German and UK governments to deploy fresh legislation to prevent the exodus of their citizens to Syria.

That is why the outflow of fighters from Europe to the territories seems to have to be on the wane. Stricter security controls, elaborate immigration checks and a crackdown on aspiring jihadists are some of the reasons that seem to have arrested the exodus of European fighters.

“Now most of the (foreign) fighters are coming from Asian countries, like Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. They are tough fighters,” Reuters quoted an Islamic State militant as saying in the aforementioned report.

These countries have arrested people for recruiting for Islamic State and ramped up surveillance at multiple levels. Several countries have introduced new laws, which allow authorities to seize travel documents from those who travel to fight or are suspected to be headed to join the IS in Syria.

Governments in the Americas, Canada, and Australia are facing the same challenge; how to insulate their Muslim populations from the growing toxic narratives peddled both by al-Qaeda and the IS. A brazenly brutal attack on the French caricature magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris on January 7, 2015 that left 12 dead, followed by shootings in Copenhagen, Denmark a month later, not only raised alarm but also whipped up Islamophobia.

A primary fear for German security authorities, for instance, is that jihadists will use their battle experience from the Middle East for attacks in Europe. Officials in other capitals resonated similar fearful assessments while bracing for preventive strategies.³ In Spain, authorities at the Barcelona-El Prat Airport arrested a Moroccan woman Samira Yerou on suspicion of recruiting European and North African women to join the Islamic State group. The suspect, with her three-year-old son, was sent to Spain by Turkish authorities after they caught her trying to illegally enter Syria, Spain’s interior ministry said.⁴ Spain had issued an international arrest warrant for the woman. Spanish authorities, who believe Yerou was seeking to meet up with IS, took her into custody after she flew into Barcelona. Yerou “could have played an important role in recruiting and sending of women

³Jeanette Seiffert, “German jihadists on ISIS terror mission, June 17, 2014, *DW*, <http://www.dw.de/german-jihadists-on-isis-terror-mission/a-17710907>

⁴*Yahoo News*, March 7, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/female-islamic-state-recruiter-arrested-barcelona-airport-203736153.html>

sympathisers of the terrorist group in Europe and Morocco,” the ministry said.

Obama’s Clarion Call for Action

Clearly, history has moved full circle; the United States and its allies – all those who had once directly or otherwise supported non-state actors in the Middle East, South America, or Afghanistan to pursue their geo-political objectives in the war against the Soviet Union, communism and China – are now tasting the medicine they had dispensed to private militias through other countries, mostly in the name of anti-communism and religion.

A three day summit at the State Department on violent extremism, convened by President Obama in February 2015 also underscored the urgency as well as fears sparked by the barbarism of the IS. In the presence of representatives from over 60 countries, Obama snubbed the impression that the US was at “war with Islam” as an “ugly lie”. He also urged those in the audience to counter the threats posed by the IS by “expanding human rights, religious tolerance and peaceful dialogue.” Besides, Obama also appointed Rashad Hussain, an American of Indian origin, as the new coordinator of counter terrorism communication, to underline the importance of American Muslim in the dialogue with Muslims in and outside the USA. During the summit, Obama urged all the Arab and Muslim nations to jointly take on the IS threat, the ostensible objective of the meeting.

The president, in his strongly-worded keynote speech aimed to strike a balance between addressing the risk of the radicalization of disaffected youths and the need to reassure Muslim Americans that their communities are not being targeted as a source of terrorist plots.

“There is no one profile of a violent extremist or terrorist. It’s not unique to one group or to one geography or one period of time but we are here at this summit because of the urgent threat from groups like al-Qaeda and ISIL,” he said, using a term to refer to the Islamic State.⁵

Obama repeatedly spoke about the “need to be honest” about extremists and the diversity within the Muslim community, noting that many Muslim Americans have grown weary of hearing from federal officials on the issue of terrorism.

⁵Juliet Eilperin, “Obama announces initiatives to curb recruitment of terrorist groups, *The Washington Post*, February 18, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-announces-initiatives-to-curb-recruitment-of-terrorist-groups/2015/02/18/bc4800ca-b792-11e4-9423-f3d0a1e-c335c_story.html

“Engagement with communities can’t be a cover for surveillance. It can’t securitize our relationship with Muslim Americans, dealing with them solely through the prism of law enforcement,” he said as the audience applauded in response.

The president outlined a multi-pronged approach to countering the pull of terrorist groups, which included not just highlighting the perspectives of moderate Muslims, but also addressing the economic and political grievances disaffected youths may have. It also includes bolstering the resources of local communities so that they can compete with the savvy social media campaigns the Islamic State and al-Qaeda are waging.

Several online initiatives were launched in concert with the summit, including a digital communications hub that the United States and the United Arab Emirates established to push back against the Islamic State’s propaganda and recruitment efforts, a “peer-to-peer challenge” that the State Department is unveiling so that university students across the globe can develop digital content to counter violent extremist messaging. The United States also is joining with social media firms to organize several “technology camps” in the coming months to highlight alternatives to radicalism and challenge terrorist groups, the Washington Post said.⁶

All of a sudden, it seemed, leaders across the world had woken up to the looming threats and were groping for responses.

“Every community touched by violence faces the same questions, whether it’s Boston or Paris, Baghdad or Peshawar: How can we prevent people from embracing hateful ideologies before they turn to violence?” asked Lisa Monaco, adviser to the president for homeland security and counterterrorism, just before introducing Obama.

Salam Al-Marayati, president of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, said in an interview that he and other leaders in Los Angeles are pursuing a strategy of “prevention, intervention and then ejection” in which civic leaders try to reach youths before calling in law enforcement as a last resort.

Pakistan’s interior minister, Nisar Ali Khan, also attended the summit and attempted to allay fears that porous governance and poor counter-measures could provide the IS with a much-needed space for recruitment and training. He spelt out his country’s 20-point counter-terror National Action Plan, which he said,

⁶Ibid

was under implementation with full participation

But, the summit declaration drew criticism as well. The following excerpts from an article Saeed Naqvi, an Indian journalist, wrote for Pakistan's influential weekly *The Friday Times*, merit consideration because they echo both criticism as well as skepticism of the paradoxes of geo-politics, particularly policies pursued by the United States and its allies in the last three decades or so.

Elisa Massimino, President of the advocacy group Human Rights First who attended the meeting, for instance said:

“We’re sitting in that room with representatives of governments who are part of the problem – if the President believes what he’s saying, then the actions that these governments are taking are undermining our supposedly shared agenda. That has to stop. Or we can have summits every month, but we’re not going to win.”

There is another problem. Autocratic regimes have taken advantage of the war on terror by settling scores with their internal opponents in the guise of fighting the war. The obvious example is the Egyptian military regime cracking down on the Muslim Brotherhood. The reverberations of such a crackdown will be felt wherever there is a sizeable presence of the Brothers – Qatar, Turkey, Jordan, Gaza. Recruiting agents of the ISIS then go into action.

Prominent among Obama’s audience was Bahrain. It has a mind boggling human rights record. The regime treats 90 per cent of its population as the “opposition”. Years ago, about the time that the Arab Spring erupted in 2011, US diplomats had brought about a possible rapprochement between Bahrain’s Crown Prince and Shaikh Salman, leader of the Shia opposition. Before an agreement could be inked, Saudi Armoured Personnel Carriers rolled down the 37 kms causeway linking the oil bearing Qatif region of Saudi Arabia with Bahrain.

It must be billed as an important Summit, but the White House will have to cope with a degree of credibility deficit with whatever US says on the Arab world these days. Misadventures in Iraq, Syria, Libya have all left US reputation in tatters.

Consider Syria for a moment. The Syrian opposition was falling apart and

there was still no sign of the promised regime change in Damascus. Having learnt a hard lesson in Iraq, the US, one thought, would be realistic in Syria. Instead we had the then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, demand with an imperious wave of the hand, “Assad, move out of the way”.

The US had occupied Iraq for a decade, destroyed all the instruments of the State, killed Saddam Hussain, only then was it able to depart, leaving a once perfectly, efficient dictatorship in a disgraceful mess. How then did Washington imagine that fierce and brutal cross border terrorism alone would affect regime change in Damascus?

Last June when the ISIS appeared with the suddenness of revelation, why did Obama drag his feet? Asked why he delayed taking action against the ISIS, he did not mince words. Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki had fallen foul of the US because he would not sign an open ended agreement exempting US troops from Iraqi law. He had to be shown the door. ISIS was at that stage advancing unchecked towards Baghdad. “Our strikes against ISIS at that stage would have relieved pressure on Maliki.” Military action against the ISIS picked up only after Prime Minister Haider al Abadi had replaced Maliki. Did the ISIS for that brief spell become a political tool? So, under certain circumstances terror is a diplomatic asset?

Then why blame Prince Bandar bin Sultan who for sheer audacity takes the cake. Having failed to affect regime change in Damascus, he turned up in Moscow on a hush-hush mission. He took Vladimir Putin’s breath away with his blandishments – take everything under the sun but give me Assad’s head. Then he made diplomatic history. The President of Russia would be able to hold winter Olympic games in Sochi without any fear of Islamic terrorism. Most terrorist groups, Bandar promised Putin, were under his control.⁷

Such probing questions had begun doing rounds already in September 2014, when President Barack Obama encountered fierce political backlash for singling out James Clapper, his director of national intelligence and other intelligence chiefs for being caught by surprise by the sudden rise of the Islamic State (Isil) terror movement in Iraq and Syria. “I think our head of the intelligence community, Jim Clapper, has acknowledged that they underestimated what had been taking

⁷*The Friday Times*, <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/credibilitydeficit/#sthash.qgMdwnUI.dpuf>

place in Syria,” Mr Obama told CBS News.⁸

Besides getting flak from opposition Republicans, Obama had to face criticism from policy experts too; Frederic Hof, the former State Department special adviser on Syria now with the Rafik Hariri Center in Washington, who argued for greater support for the rebels but later resigned in the face of White House opposition to the policy, said the intelligence community was not to blame.⁹

“I very much doubt that the intelligence community was asleep at the switch while Isil was gaining strength in Syria,” he told *The Telegraph*, “None of this was exactly hidden from view. No doubt President Obama and his advisors were perplexed when it came to policy options, and no doubt the scope and speed of the Isil thrust into Iraq were surprising. But I doubt that the US intelligence community is to blame for any policy shortfalls.”¹⁰

The Royal Kingdom Wakes Up

Internal disagreements notwithstanding, the roaring challenge posed by the IS has apparently shaken the Arab-Muslim world out of its slumber.

Special invitations to leaders from Turkey, Egypt and Pakistan by the new Saudi Monarch King Salman bin Abdul Aziz in February and March 2015 underscored the political storm the IS has kicked off in the Arab world.

The King, for instance, himself greeted the Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif at the Riyadh airport, triggering fears in Pakistan that the Royal Kingdom and the United States may again be vying for Pakistani military support to fend off the threats coming from the IS.

Islamabad is in a fix over whether to accept Riyadh’s request for support to preempt possible military incursions into Saudi Arabia by the Islamic State (IS), the ultra-extremist group which has made significant gains in both Iraq and Syria., reported the national daily *Express Tribune*.¹¹

⁸Peter Foster, “Fury as Obama blames intelligence agencies for Isil surprise, *The Telegraph*, September 29, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/11129473/Fury-as-Obama-blames-intelligence-agencies-for-Isil-surprise.html>

⁹Ibid

¹⁰Ibid

¹¹Kamran Yousaf, “Riyadh rendezvous: Pakistan in a fix over Saudi request for help against IS, *The Express Tribune*, March 9, 2015 <http://tribune.com.pk/story/850161/riyadh-rendezvous-pakistan-in-a-fix-over-saudi-request-for-help-against-is/>

The issue was a key item on the agenda during Shari visit to Saudi Arabia, where he received an unprecedented welcome from newly crowned, the paper quoted a senior government official as saying. This also triggered speculation in Islamabad that the Saudi rulers may be looking up to their closest allies, including Turkey, Egypt and Pakistan, to boost security at Saudi border in a bid to ward off the IS threat.

In return, the new Saudi monarch offered Islamabad an economic package, which includes supply of oil on deferred payment, said another official familiar with the discussion.

In deference to friendly relations with Iran, an ideological arch-rival of Saudi Arabia in the region, Sharif refrained from immediately committing military support.

Pakistan's Predicament

In late February, Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry told a panel on foreign affairs in the Senate – the upper house of the parliament - that Pakistan would not become part of any international coalition against IS. "It [Pakistan] should only support multilateral action against IS under the UN Security Council resolution under Chapter VII of the UN Charter," the top diplomat told the committee, suggesting that Islamabad intended to be careful in aligning itself with other countries on a issue which is ringing alarm in Pakistan itself; some of the anti-State terrorists have already vowed allegiance to the IS, led by Saeed Khan Orakzai. The IS – or DAISH Pakistan – is one of several splinters of the deadly terrorist outfit Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

These terrorist outfits stand out as manifestations of a policy that took birth with the CIA-ISI-led anti-Soviet Union jihad and found favor with the security establishment for its policies on India and Afghanistan. Although most of them are meanwhile banned and hunted by the state security apparatus, some of these groups do enjoy support within the social and political segments of the society, and thus remain a source of threat to the society at large in Pakistan.

But this threat was not sudden at all and stems from a skewed security paradigm and extremely porous rule of law. Part of the huge infrastructure comprising tens of thousands of mosques and some 20,000 seminaries throughout the country also serves as the social protection and shelter for the proponents of militant Islam.

The competition resulting from the caliphate declared by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, the Islamic State leader and al-Qaeda Central is not only directly affecting the triangle of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq but also casting its shadow on countries such as Pakistan with serious repercussions for the war against terrorism.

As discussed above, this Jihadi threat galvanized Muslim leaders to ponder joint strategies against radical Islamists. Jordanian and Egyptian military responses to IS forces also underline the new awakening within the Muslim world, where the ruling elites, driven by fears of survival, have begun calling for strict action against terrorism in the name of Islam.

Their challenge lies in reaching out to a new generation of jihadists - young enthusiastic individuals who are inspired by the ideology of violence and sectarianism in a world being increasingly closely knit by the social media. The Islamic State's rejection of the existing Muslim order and its contempt for the US-led West plays into the sentiments particularly of those youth who give credence to what is common both to IS and al-Qaeda; a narrative anchored in "the victimhood of Muslims at the hands of Zionists and their patrons i.e. the United States of America." Even Hizbut Tahrir, a pacifist entity vying for the restoration of Khilafa shares this narrative.

Together, they constitute a huge socio-political challenge; they are not likely to seize political power, yet they do possess the capacity to keep the entire world on tenterhooks and enlisting support among the youth with the help of their toxic anti-west advocacy. A formidable imminent challenge staring the world in the face.

About CRSS

One of the pioneers', Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) is an independent, non-profit, and non-partisan advocacy, program implementation and research organization based in Islamabad. It seeks to promote an informed discourse on crucial socio-political economic and security issues confronting Pakistan. It strives to realize its goals through a vast array of activities such as widely disseminated analyses on national and regional security issues, counter-terrorism and counter-extremism advocacy and conflict monitoring.

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Extremist religious ideologies, which often translate in acts of naked terrorism across the globe in the last two decades, have created dangerous fault lines – mostly rooted in religious narratives. This alarming situation represents a growing challenge to the concept of the nation state. Muslim majority territories from western China to Central / South to the Arabian Peninsula and Africa – Xinjiang, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Egypt Libya, Syria, Algeria, Nigeria, Yemen, Sudan – faced one or other form of violent conflict driven by regional or national religio-political groups who draw inspiration largely from the trans-nationalist al-Qaeda to peddle their militant agendas. The competition resulting from the caliphate declared by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, the Islamic State leader and al-Qaeda Central is not only directly affecting the triangle of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq but also casting its ominous shadows on countries such as Pakistan with serious repercussions for the war against terrorism and extremism.

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