

IS (Islamic State) and the Pakistani *Ṭālibān*: Historical Back Ground, Similarities and Allegiances

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Abstract

The new concept of “Islamic State (IS)” is as old as human history itself; and it has been a subject of discussion both academically and non-academically or even socially. This article examines the impact of the concept of IS on religious extremism in Muslim countries and Pakistan in particular. It discusses the alliance between the IS and the Pakistani *Ṭālibān* and examines its historical dimensions. It is pointed out that Pakistan is not a fertile land for the religious extremism as it is war-torn territories of the Levant. It is argued that IS and the Pakistani *Ṭālibān* remnants have aligned themselves with other splinter groups. Thus, the Pakistani *Ṭālibān* and IS understand each other and mutually express their allegiances. It is also argued that the IS phenomenon is an ideological war that finds its own place where there are ideological harmony and geographical resemblances. However, the IS ideology has no grassroots support but the Pakistani *Ṭālibān* ideology does. Yet, both ideologies are the denizens of the other organizations. They are supporters, facilitators, and financiers for each other. It is concluded that the IS is a weaker partner to the Pakistani *Ṭālibān*.

Keywords: Islamic State, *Ṭālibān*, Ideologies, Resurrection, Extremism, Resemblance

Introduction

Currently, the Islamic State (IS) phenomenon has dramatically had its visibility increased with Western media outlets such as CNN, BBC and FOX TV channels portraying IS fighters' pictures and videos. Some researchers considering it a complete new *khārijite* war against Islam and the Muslim World. According to their analysis, Super Powers are trying to create *khārijite* people to use them against Muslims. Moreover, some analysts hold other opinions about IS, and consider it the war for gaining political power for *Wahābī-Salaḥī* Islam and Shia-Islam. Some traditional Islamic Scholars have another analysis; that the wars in Arab Countries, Central Asia and South Asia are the big signs of the End of Time [Day of Judgment]. Some are using 'ifs' and 'buts' about the IS to declare it as the war of super powers to gain political hegemony over the Levant. However, the majority of Muslim scholars and academics and common Muslims are of the opinion that all the warriors with a *takfīrī* mindset are getting together in between Iraq and Syria to create an Islamic State in the Arabian Peninsula. This article analyses all these issues. To explore the reality and reveal the truth, the article aims to answer the following question relating to the possible links between the IS and Religious Extremism in Pakistan. Here we pose the question and explore it throughout this article:

What is the impact of the IS on religious extremism in Pakistan?

Islam is a *dīn* of moderation. It does not allow any kind of extremism and any of its manifestations like *Ghuluw* (Excessiveness). As the Prophet (S.A.A.S) said, "Beware of excessiveness in religion. Before you, they have

perished as a result of excessiveness.”¹ *Takfīrī* is a term that means excommunication. Highly learned and experienced religious authorities can pronounce it. It can be categorized in two. The first can be *takfīr al-‘ain*, which excommunicates an individual and, the second is *takfīr al-‘Ummoom*, which excommunicates the whole society. Moreover, *takfīrī* ideology goes to *takfīr al-‘Ummoom* instead of *takfīr al-‘ain*. On the other hand, distortion in words and meaning is common for interpreters. To avoid this aspect, it is necessary to follow the Holy Quran and the *Ḥadīth* of the Prophet (S.A.A.S). Allah (S.W.T) said, “(O Muslims) we made you the best *Ummah* (moderate and balanced nation) so that you may bear witness to the people and (our exalted messenger (S.A.A.S) bears witness to you” (2:143). The Prophet (S.A.A.S) said, “Knowledge will be carried from one generation to the other by the moderates who secure it from distortion, perversion, and misinterpretation.”² But people are seldom following that Qur’ānic verse and the Hadith.

The Islamic State (IS) and Pakistani Ṭālibān and their Allegiances

The Pakistani Ṭālibān and some other groups announced allegiance to the IS. Shāhid Ullah Shāhid who is the spokesperson of the Pakistan Tehrīk-e-Ṭālibān (TTP) said that now they were followers of Abu Bakr al-Baghdādī.³ The statement of Shāhid Ullah Shāhid pledging allegiance to

¹ Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Yazīd Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn-e Mājah*, trans. Nāsiruddīn al-Khattāb (Beirūt: Dār al-kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2007).

² Abū Bakr Ahmad bin Hussain Bayhaqī, *Al- Sunan al-Kubra*, (Beirūt: Dārul Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2003), 10: 209.

³ “Isis Ascent in Syria and Iraq Weakening Pākistānī Ṭālibān.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, October 22, 2014.

the IS was broadcasted to media on the 4th of October 2014.⁴ However, these reports were denied on the 6th of October 2014 and it was said that his statement had been misinterpreted. He added that the *Ṭālibān* was still aligned with Mullah Omar ⁵ and did not accept al-Baghdādī as a Caliph of the *Ṭālibān*.⁶ Moreover, on the 15th of October 2014, six different leaders of the Tehrīk-e-Ṭālibān Pakistan besides Shāhid Ullah Shāhid pledged allegiance to the IS. Their spokesperson said, “He would abide by all decisions...whatever the circumstances I shall be loyal to him and obey his directives”⁷. Anyway they have aligned with the IS to stimulate the

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/22/pakistani-taliban> spok esm an-isis-pledge.

⁴ Saud Mehsud & Maria Golovnina, “Pakistani *Ṭālibān* declare allegiance to Islamic State and global jihad.” *Reuters*, October 4, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/04/us-pakistan-taliban-idUSKCN0HT0HS20141004>. Accessed on 23 March 2015.

⁵ Saud Mehsud, ‘Pakistan Taliban say back all Syria militants, not just Islamic State’ *Reuters*, October 6, 2014. Accessed on 22 March 2015. <http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/10/06/pakistan-militants-syria-idINKCN0HV1B520141006>

⁶ Ahmad Rashid. *ISIS: The New Taliban*. *The New York Review of Books*, Accessed on 24 March 2015. <http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2014/jul/02/iraqs-new-taliban/>.

⁷ Saud Mehsud, ‘Pakistan Taliban say back all Syria militants, not just Islamic State’ *Reuters*, October 6, 2014. Accessed on 22 March 2015. <http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/10/06/pakistan-militants-syria-idINKCN0HV1B520141006>.

force. Different statements on a number of occasions show that there is fragmentation and dispute over the issue of leadership in the Ṭālibān. However, all terrorist outfits, outlawed organizations, and Jihadi organizations have complete harmony for the sympathies and loyalties with the IS. Secondly those who have soft corners and indirect love for all extremist organizations, they too have amity and respect towards the IS. According to one survey of Italian academics, published in The Guardian Post, Tweets, Facebook and other social media 35% Pakistani (Salafi, Wahābī, Deobandī and well-wishers) were sympathetic to the IS.⁸ It is a fact that the IS has no practical existence in Pakistan but symbolically it has presence in the form of extremist organizations and well-wishers, as it appeared in pamphlets and graffiti.⁹ Booklets in Pashto and Dari languages were distributed in Afghanistan and in Peshawar, a border city of Pakistan. It was written:

“We do not accept compromise or humiliation. We will become either captors or martyrs. We want either honor and liberty or death with nobility and martyrdom. On the path

⁸ Shiv Malik, ‘Support for Isis stronger in Arabic social media in Europe than in Syria’, *The Guardian*, November 27, 2014; <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/28/support-isis-stronger-arabic-social-media-europe-usthan-syria> 22 Declan Wal

⁹ Declan Walsh. (2014). Allure of ISIS for Pakistanis Is on the Rise. Accessed on 24 March 2015 http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/22/world/asia/isis-pakistan-militants-taliban-jihad.html?_r=1

of Allah, we consider imprisonment worship, we consider extradition vacation, and we deem death martyrdom.”¹⁰

There is intense argument on this issue with the statement of core commander Peshawar of the Pakistan Army Lieutenant General Hadiatur-Rahmān. He said, “There is no difference between Daish (IS or ISIS or ISIL) and Ṭālibān in Pakistan”. He added more that “in ... our country, second name of Ṭālibān is Daish” (express news). He expressed sadly that ideologically the Pakistani Ṭālibān and IS are the opposite sides of the same coin. He commented on the IS problem that the Pakistani army was fighting an ideological war against the Ṭālibān and against all others who were involved in terroristic activities. These are the same comments, which were discussed by senior analyst Ayaz Amir. He said, “The fight against the Ṭālibān is not just a military struggle. It is also an ideological struggle between moderate and takfīrī Islam”¹¹. When the new war started in the Levant, religious extremism in Pakistan increased because they have to get new bases where they can easily target their enemies. Due to this phenomenon, the fragmented groups of the Ṭālibān and other groups are joining Tehrīk-e-Ṭālibān Pakistan (TTP) again and reorganizing under the TTP. This is a very serious threat for not only Pakistan but for other neighboring countries as well, although the

¹⁰ Najib Sharifi, “ISIS Makes Inroads in Afghanistan and Pakistan”. The South Asia Channel. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/10/01/isis-makes-inroads-in-afghanistan-pakistan/>. Accessed on 24 March 2015

¹¹ Ayaz Amir, ‘What’s Wrong with the World of Islam’, *The News International*, March 31, 2015. <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-309861-What%E2%80%99s-wrong-with-the-world-of-Islam> Accessed on 01 April 2015

Pakistani army is committed and dedicated to demolish all kinds of terrorism and radicalism from the country. Moreover, it has capability to crush all the terrorists from Pakistan. The banned and outlawed group of Lashker-e-Islam (LI) has merged itself with TTP and its militants are being reorganized under TTP. Religious minorities were not being targeted in Pakistan just sporadic incidents. At one time, at an Ahmadī place of worship there was an attack and two times at churches in Peshawar on 16 March 2015 and in Lahore. On the same day when the bomb exploded near the church, the people in Lahore burned two innocent shopkeepers alive and hanged their burnt dead bodies on road fences.

Without any ambiguity, the Pakistani Ṭālibān and all militants and extremists have increased their relation with the IS. As far as the Arab world is concerned, they are playing a role on the battlefield. However, Pakistan is not a battlefield for IS militants as it was alleged, where they could fight as they are fighting in Iraq and Syria. However, Pakistani extremists and IS extremists have somehow similarities, who joined the IS in Iraq and Syria. First, the newly enrolled fighters of the IS and the newly converted Pakistani extremists are not experienced. Their first interest is in getting married to the women like the Yazīdī women, and others whom the IS arrested and force into marriage. Second, most of the extremists went there to get dual citizenship of the Islamic State (IS). Third, they want to hold power in the Islamic State as some news broadcasted that they were fighting with each other for power. Fourth, both the IS extremists and the Pakistani extremists have a religious mindset. They are fighting with old war styles holding black flags as shown in movies. In such movies when the commander of the army is killed, the first army

gains victory and then the rest of the army are killed ruthlessly. This is the same with the Pakistani *Ṭālibān*. In Pakistan, when the *Ṭālibān* leadership was targeted and killed in air strikes they then consequently dispersed and fled into Afghanistan. There is other opinion; that the IS fighters are not easy to eliminate because opponent armies have suffered heavy losses. Due to this, they are seriously weakened and cannot have the capability to destroy the IS leadership. However, there is one drawback, most of the fighters aggregate from all over the world, and hence; they have different colours, different cultures, different ethnicities and different languages. They are not as unified as the *Ṭālibān* are, because the *Ṭālibān* have similar culture, ethnicities, colours, region, and similar languages. However, it is very difficult for the armies of collapsed states to eliminate the extremists from their land. Its need constant venture and will for its complete elimination.

Financial Aid and Extremists Understanding

Local Pakistani *Ṭālibān* expressed direct support to the IS.¹² It has been said that Islamic State (IS) is getting financial aid from Pakistan by selling oil at cheap rates in Pakistan. Some news alleged that oil was sold to Kurdish merchants and, it was shipping to Pakistan at a low rate. This news has no authenticity or solid proof. However, the extremists in Pakistan directly support them financially because the *Ṭālibān* and other splinter groups collect money through extortion in the tribal areas of Pakistan.¹³ Secondly, they earn a lot of money through drug and narcotics

¹² Li Wei, *Near ISIS threat: Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham seeks to extend its presence to Central Asia and beyond*. Beijing Review, 5 March 2015.

¹³ Daily Dawn, 20 September 2009.

that they sell in different cities and even out of the country.¹⁴ Moreover, they earn money through direct and indirect taxation¹⁵. They are free to do any activity to enhance their budget, which is why they use criminal activities for collecting money¹⁶. Furthermore, they abduct wealthy people and use them as bargaining chips for ransom. As far as the foreign secret intelligent agencies are concerned, the Pakistani Ṭālibān gets money from them as well, such as RAW.¹⁷ Militants in Pakistan have another source of money, they give security to those shopkeepers who ask them for security and they charge security fee on monthly bases. These are some means, through which they fulfill their own needs. Furthermore, they send money to IS fighters in Syria. Secondly, wealthy people of some Arab Countries are IS donors.

When the Pakistan Army started operation “Zerb-e-‘Azb” against all terrorist groups in North Waziristan, they were destroyed. Some fled to Afghanistan and Syria, while the rest blended into normal society. Since that day, their activities have become seriously dented as compared to the past days. The escaped terrorists were getting together in Afghanistan to rejoin the TTP. Eḥsān Ullāh Eḥsān (who recently turned himself in to Pakistani forces and admitted that Ṭālibān and Jamāt-ul-Aḥrār had been and still have been coordinating with Afghan and Indian agencies and are

¹⁴ Daily Dawn, 20 September 2009.

¹⁵ Daily Dawn, 20 September 2009.

¹⁶ The Herald, Karachi, October 2008.

¹⁷ Daily Dawn, 20 September 2009.

infiltrating into Pakistan¹⁸), Mullāh Fazal Ullāh, Mangel Bāgh and Omar Khālid Khuraāsānī have the intention to continue their activities mutually due to their new unification.

Without any doubt, many people have direct relations with militants and terrorists, whom they give protection and provide with facilities. The terrorists who killed 145 innocent school going children, spent the whole night in one Deobandī Masjid Imam's home. This information was released by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) of the armed forces of Pakistan. When the IS phenomenon first appeared in the news in Pakistan, since that day takfīrī mindset (as analyzed above) got more rigidity in their behavior. All the terroristic groups in Pakistan, such as, the Tehrīk-e-Ṭālibān Pakistan (TTP), the Muqāmī (Local) Tehrīk-e-Ṭālibān (MTT), the Lashkar-e-Islam (Horde of Islam) (LI), the Punjabī Ṭālibān (PT), the Tehrīk-e-Nifāz-Shariat-e-Muhammadī (TNSM), the Tanzīm Amr Bil- Ma'rūf Wa-Nahī Anil Munkar (The organization of promotion of virtue and prevention of vice) , the Sipāḥ-e-Ṣaḥāba Pakistan, the Lashker-e Jhangvī (Jhangvī's Horde) LEJ, have affiliation and loyalties with one another and they are obliged to the TTP, as Jabhat al-Nusra, which is an extension of IS in Syria. Al-Nusra Front is fighting in the Syrian territory. Before 2013, Al-Nusra was accused by the IS that, they could not sentence people who disobeyed the Sharī'ah. As it has been mentioned above, they have similar ideologies. The IS sometimes accuses the al-Qā'ida that they should be more firm and forceful towards enemies because this is the case of ideology and on ideology one cannot compromise anything.

¹⁸ Webmaster, "Former TTP & JUA spox claims terrorist organizations being used by India and Afghanistan" Dawn 27 April 2017.

Pakistan's case is completely different. Pakistan is facing all kinds of extremism and militancy in the form of different outlawed and banned organizations due to the Soviet-Afghan war in 1979. The Ṭālibān and the IS are successors of al-Qā'ida in Pakistan but it does not mean that al-Qā'ida has finished in Pakistan. Militancy did not come in religious base in Pakistan as it came in Afghanistan but it was due to the exceeding impact of the West on Pakistan. There was no religious militancy in Pakistan before the Soviet invasion.¹⁹ When the Soviet invasion started in Afghanistan, the CIA and other countries brought *Mullaism* (theocracy) to Pakistan. This fact has been admitted by former Secretary of the foreign Affairs of the United States Mrs. Hillary Clinton. She said, "We also have a history of moving into Pakistan. The people we are fighting today, we funded them twenty years ago. We did it because we were reluctant about that struggle with the Soviet Union, they invaded Afghanistan and we did not want to see them control Central Asia and so we went to work. President Reagan dealt with the Pakistani ISI and military, and recruited the Mujahedeen. The Wahhabi brand of Islam was imported from state of the Saudi Arabia and from other places also. Billions of dollars were wasted to demolish the Soviet Union."²⁰ It is possible to argue, that

¹⁹ Natasha Underhill, *Countering Global Terrorism and Insurgency: Calculating the risk of state failure in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq* (Palgrave: Macmillan Publishers, 2014).

²⁰ Hillary Clinton Tells Truth About US Funding of Saudi Wahhabis & Taliban. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZFREguPBXs>. (2011). Accessed on 15 September 2016.

Pakistan was a land free of extremism and terrorism, and no militancy. The super powers brought both things.

One has to admit that Pakistan is not immune to the impact of the IS. Local groups have shown their loyalties with the IS, and its sympathizers. IS flags have been shown in the remote tribal areas of Pakistan. In 2013, it was denied by Pakistan's government that any extremist or terrorist was leaving for Syria or Iraq. However, Pakistan's military personnel and intelligence officers were aware about this reality and they revealed that al-Qā'ida, TTP, Sulemān's group and Lashker-e-Jhangvī militants were leaving Pakistan. Moreover, it was revealed by some Syrian people that Pakistani militants were seen fighting along with other Arab militants²¹.

As far as the Punjabī *Ṭālibān* (PT) are concerned, they have already established their hideouts in Pakistan. The PT can easily change their disguise to Punjabī and Pashtūn because they are fluent in the Pashtu Language as well. The Punjabī *Ṭālibān* are local people who are living in the rugged tribal mountainous border areas of Pakistan. The North Western Province of Pakistan Khyber Pukhtūn Khah (KPK) is badly affected by *Ṭālibān*ization, which is why people are bolder in showing their allegiance to the *Ṭālibān* and IS. Moreover, many leaflets and booklets have been distributed in different areas of FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) and KPK.

Jundullāh is another terrorist splinter group of the TTP, which took responsibility for the suicide attack of November 2014 near Lahore at

²¹ Zarar Khan & Sebastian Abbot, *Islamic militants leave Pakistan to fight in Syria*. Associated Press, Islamabad. 2013 <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/islamic-militants-leave-pakistan-fight-syria>. Accessed on 20 March 2015.

Wāgah Border and Shikārpur in January 2015 that pledged allegiance to the IS.²² The IS people have created direct relation with Jundullāh. Moreover, they have visited the Baluchistan Province near the Iran border under the leadership of Zubair al-Kuwaitī. However, terrorist activities have decreased. This is largely due to military operations in South & North Waziristan. Due to the IS phenomenon in Pakistan, extremist empathy, understanding and the extremist approach and its impact is significantly increasing. Thus, the Pakistani army and Government decided to make a national plan, so that terrorism and extremism could be eliminated. The national plan was mutually accepted by Parliament. However, some *madāris* (seminaries) raised objection to the national plan and demanded to lift checks and balances on *madāris*. Many unregistered *madāris* were working under banned organizations. Moreover, some *madāris* made objection on registration and syllabus.

The IS is not facing any problem in gaining assistance from Pakistani extremists. That is why they have direct relation with them. During the Afghan war, many Arabs got married in the tribal areas of Pakistan. This is still occurring in the tribal and border areas of Pakistan. The IS gives orders to local extremists and they obey them. Moreover, new strategies are being planned to create trouble for the Pakistani military. It has been discussed on air in NBC News that the IS is creating a ten-man strategic plan, so that they could wage a war against the Pakistani military. It has been mentioned by news sources that the IS wants to create a messy

²² Al-Zubair al-Kuwaitī, *Jundullāh Vows Allegiance to Islamic State*, November 18, 2014. *Dawn*, Dera Khān, Pakistan. <http://www.dawn.com/news/1145310>. Accessed on 02 April 2015.

sectarian environment to stir up sectarian unrest by using outlawed organizations²³.

Finally, the paper proposes that if individuals, groups, organizations, the country, the Arab countries or the rest world want to abstain from all kinds of civil strife and killings of the innocents, then they must adhere and stick with the majority of the nation or *Ummah*, who have one opinion. The Prophet (ṢAAS) has discussed this reality, which is the solution of all today's problem. The Prophet (ṢAAS) said, "Verily, my *Ummah* will never agree upon misguidance. If you see differences, then you must stay with the vast majority of the people (Sawād al-‘Azam)²⁴"

CONCLUSION

One can understand the phenomena of the IS and the *Ṭālibān* in the contemporary times by discussing the very nature of Islam. We argued in the beginning of the article that the IS phenomenon is not today's problem but it rather has a historical background. It has been analyzed that undoubtedly the IS excommunicate all those who do not follow them. They have hardline religious background, which is why they are determined, according to their own claim, for the supremacy of the Islam. They certainly believe in their own interpretations and assertions, to hoist the flag of Islam around the world. Therefore, it is

²³ Mujeeb Ahmed, 'ISIS Has Master Plan for Pakistan, Secret Memo Warns', NBC News, November 10, 2014; also available at:<http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/isis-has-master-plan-pakistan-secret-memo-warnsn244961>. Accessed on 22 March 2015

²⁴ Ibn-e Mājah, Al- Hafiz Abi Abd Ullah Muhammad bin Yazeed al-Qazvīni. Sunan Ibn-e Mājah, Kitāb al-Fiten; Chap. No 8. Sawād al-‘Azam. Vol. 2. P. 1303. Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-Ilmiyah

important to know the true nature of Islam because fabrications and out of context interpretations create somehow problems for the beginner to understand Islam with its real sense. It has been identified that the IS and the Pakistani Ṭālibān have complete ideological harmony with each other and how both skillfully and deeply penetrate their ideas into the minds of young inexperienced people and they also recruit the young generation with their flowery words such as *Janaah* (paradise) to allure them. This research suggests that we should give the true picture of Islam on the media houses by presenting moderate propagators of Islam. This research also suggests we should present Islam's teachings instead of presenting any military group teachings. It has been pointed and it is understood from the history of Islam that, although jihad means to obtain supremacy of the peace and eliminate the terroristic activities but the terrorists misuse the term 'Jihad' for their barbarian activities. To date literature and syllabi for the counter narrative exists but still it has not been implemented and enforced. Therefore, this study offers to implement the counter narrative syllabi at not only national level but also it should be at international level for the sake of the humankind as Minhāj-ul-Quran introduced it.

It is pointed out that the IS and the Ṭālibān's different groups such as, Jundullāh, Punjabī Ṭālibān and other outlaws outfits and terrorist organizations have expressed complete affiliation, loyalty and allegiances with the IS, even TTP, Sulemān's group and Lashker-e-Jhangvī militants have joined the IS in Iraq and Syria. On the other hand, moderate class have rebutted and issued fatāwa against the IS and the Pakistani Ṭālibān. It is also argued that when Pakistan accepted the exceeding impact of different countries militancy increased at large because it is a land where ideology counts a lot. We argued in the article that ideological war is harsher than any other traditional war because people do not

compromise on their ideologies. This has been analyzed that the ideological war is being fought within the country and without the country to gain the powerful political and religious interests. We argued that this ideological war could be diminished by open debates. If the policymakers see this study seriously and implement it then may be this giant of the violence could be minimized.