

Iran against Islamic State (Daesh): Political Impacts on Pakistan

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Abstract

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), is said to be a Takfiri group, is mainly grabbed from Sunni areas of Syria and Iraq. Some other Muslim states also have their participation in IS by different means. Saudi Arabia and Turkey are in list of countries that were in foundation of Islamic State. In start they were in Syria and Iraq but now have their affiliations in many regions and countries. The Islamic State (IS) is a big threat to Middle East and world. It is argued that many European and Pakistani nationals are also part of Islamic State. Pakistani Taliban's have affiliations with Baghdadi, and it is trouble for Pakistan in future. The proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia is problem for Pakistan and Muslim world because both are supporting their allies and muscles. 300 Saudis have killed in Syria in February 2014, which also is the highest number of loss of life among Saudi nationals. In March 2014, a Saudi official said that 1,200 Saudi citizens have traveled to fight the Assad regime. US has also its role in IS and following dual policy against IS in Iraq and Syria. Russia is strong supporter of Assad and has launched a military and air strike against anti Assad forces. The main purpose of this research is to analyze process of evolution of Islamic State (IS) and its impacts both political and strategic not only on the Middle East but on Pakistan also.

Keywords: Islamic State, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Takfiri

Introduction

The ISIS is said to be a unit of Takfiri and Wahabi Muslims captured mainly from Syria, but a large majority is from foreign countries like Iraq, the Gulf States, and the Arabian Peninsula. ISIS has control on Sunni populated areas of Iraq and Syria. The ISIS is a big threat to Middle East and world. It is argued that many European and Pakistani nationals are also part of IS (Rana, 2015). IS has some issues with Al Qaida. In April 2013, the covert enmity between IS and Al Qaida appears on media when Baghdadi announced the name of Islamic State and declared himself Caliph, and announced that we are spreading IS into Syria (Zelin, 2014). Islamic State (IS) has strong bases in Iraq and Syria, and control over many Sunni populated areas of both countries. And their aim is to spreading it in world, especially in Muslim world. So it is a great threat to regional and international security. Pakistani Taliban's have affiliations with Baghdadi, and it is trouble for Pakistan in future. The proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia is problem for Pakistan and Muslim world because both are supporting their allies and muscles. Saudi Arabia is supporting Sunni extremists and Iran is supporting Shia's to fight their proxy war. "Pakistan provides a ripe environment for potential growth of ISIS or similar groups in these arenas.

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Dozens of Pakistanis had travelled to Syria in recent years to participate in the Syrian conflict and many of them shifted to the Iraq theatre in recent months.” (Abbas, 2014) Islamic State has its own media department, and advertise its activities by own means. IS has also a strong economic system. IS has its “Religious Police” (AL Hisba) department which maintain the law and order in under control areas. IS has also its own judicial system, Social welfare department, Education system and medical department which are working in under controlled areas.

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Theoretical Framework (Proxy War Theory of Realism)

This trend conventional international system as a central point and to clearly state in which reality was, with the proxy war may appear irreconcilable. Therefore, the power of states and non- state actors like the freedom of scientists to conventional reality may seem intuitive to give. Respect for the principles of sovereignty and international cooperation at least on the basis of the nominal liberal contemporary international system, direct military conflict between states rejected the idea of increasing. Moreover, destructive innovations in military technology over the last decade, with the intensity of the military conflict for most countries become prohibitive costs.

Quite simply, proxy wars are indirect interventions. To complicate matters, and proxy wars against the beneficiary uses a specific target agent is indirect interventions. To direct the parties involved in the war used the "client" labels and " Home " and " vanguard" to " guardian " is different from the block and the basis for the building of the Cold War , helping to struggle . But history proxy war, for a long time, almost mythical, and complicated Privacy heavy archival, and foreign policy as a weapon of psychological warfare used against the concept of the Soviet Union, George Kennan, with subtle.

In case of IS, US and Arab States are using IS against Shia's and Iran to counter them. US is funding anti-regime groups in Syria which have connection with IS. And Arab States like Saudis, Qatar, Kuwait, Turkey and UAE are supporting IS and using it against Iran and Shia's to achieve their own interests in region. US and Arabs are using IS as proxy against Iran because direct intervention in Iran is not favorable for US and Arabs. And Iran has strong diplomatic relations with Russia, China and some other South American States. And showing world that they are against IS and trying to counter it.

The proxy war is easy for them instead of direct war. On other side, Iran is also using its proxies against Arabs to achieve its own interests and to maintain its hegemony in the region.

Organization and Basic goals of Islamic State (ISIS)

Organizational structure and Formation

The group first formed in 2003 against US invasion by some military person of Iraq army. They belong to “Baathist” party which was the party of former president Saddam Hussein. Firstly it was operated under the title of “Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad.” In the start lead by Zarkawi and many terrorist activities operated under the Zarkawi command like Al Askari mosque attack in 2006 and some other holy places of Shia Muslims. Then the group name change into Islamic State of Iraq and Abu Bakar Al Baghdadi became the leader in 2010. After the arrival of Baghdadi some differences came into existence between ISI and Al-Qaida. Then in 2013 its name change into Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Al Nusra front emerge into ISIS declared by Baghdadi. But the claim denied by Nusra later and some differences came into existence between two groups. In February 2014 Al-Qaida stated that ISIS is no longer part of Al-Qaida. Then at June 29, 2014 Baghdadi again change the name into Islamic State (IS) and declared himself as “caliph” of the State. “In this author’s view, the estimate is likely to bear a good degree of resemblance to the reality on the ground, but it would be erroneous to conclude from it that ISIS is primarily a group of foreign fighters. Baghdadi has successfully challenged Zawahiri in that in practice ISIS is now accepted as a reality on the ground.” Al-Tamimi, 2013). Now they have control over many Sunni populated areas in north of Syria and Southern Iraq. The ISIS is extremist Sunni coalition against Iraqi newly born government and Syria and has control on Sunni populated areas of Iraq and Syria. The ISIS is also a big threat to Middle East and world (Blanchard, Humud, Katzman, & Weed, 2015). The presence of ISIS is creating socio-political vacuum in the society by which terrorist groups are getting benefits. ISIS has its roots in Jordan and Afghanistan (Lister, 2014). It is argued that Europe has also its role in ISIS formation and working. “More than four hundreds English Nationals have travelled to Syria to join Islamic State, foreign Secretary William Hague says.” (Press TV, June 17, 2014). And more than six thousand (6000) European nationals have joined ISIS. And 1350 French nationals also have travelled to Syria to ISIS to participate in Jihad. After this it is clear that the ISIS have diversity of nationalities. Islamic State is group of foreign fighters, because a large number of foreigners are present in it.

Within the western policy, mostly funding given by the Saudis, Qatar and Kuwait by organizations and individuals both. The Turkish government is also controversial in this issue (Abbas, 2014).

Islamic State (IS) divides its structure mainly in two parts: Administration and Muslim services. “Islamic outreach, Sharia institutes, elementary education, law enforcement (both local and religious), courts, recruitment, and tribal relations” are the administrative category of IS. And the “provision of services, including humanitarian aid, bakeries, water and electricity” are under department of Muslim services (Charles, & Samuel, 2014).

Islamic State governs sophisticatedly, which areas are fully under control like Raqqa. Raqqa is best example of their administration and good governance. And which areas are not fully controlled by IS are less governed by IS. Deirez-Zour is best example of such areas which are not fully under control of IS and govern less sophisticatedly. Aleppo is the well-known province of Syria and is electricity office and traffic office of the IS. Islamic State has its “Wilayat” system in controlled areas. Wilayat means “State or Mandate” in Arabic. IS has also Wilayat for Damascus and some other areas which are under control.

Islamic State has its own media department, and advertise its activities by own means. IS has also a strong economic system. IS has its “Religious Police” (AL Hisba) department which maintain the law and order in under control areas. IS has also its own judicial system, Social welfare department, Education system and medical department which are working in under controlled areas.

Basic Goals:

These are the main goals of Islamic State according to some writers

To divide the Muslims into Shia and Sunni

To launch a sectarian war in the region

To counter Iran and its allies in region (Gerges, 2014)

To establish a Sunni extremist state by the name of IS.

To kill the Shia’s as a primary goal (Abbas, 2014)

The Islamic State short term goal is to capture the areas of Iraq and Syria and then goes for next in other Sunni States.

Role of Regional powers in Islamic State (IS)

Iran Role in Islamic State:

Islamic is extremists Sunnis coalition against Shia’s of Iraq and Syrian Alawite. Their goal is to establish an anti-Shia government by the name of Islamic State in this area. Iraq has 60-75 Shia population which is disturbed by IS. IS has mostly human cadre, which was the part of Baathist party in Saddam period and have strong opposition against present Iraqi Shia government. Iran is also a Shia government in region and has strong relation and affiliations with Iraq. And Iran is also supporting present government to make it stable. So Iran is supporting Iraqi government against IS. IS is not only threat for Iraq and Syria but also for all regional states, especially for Shia’s. It is sectarian war in the region against Shia’s by the help of some Arab governments. IS has policy to divide the Muslims into Shia and Sunni sects. The IS feels US and European as “far enemy” and take Shia’s as “Near enemy.” According to them the primary goal is to kill the Shia’s because they are not Muslims, and USA and European are secondary goal. So it is more important to achieve the primary goal.

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“Baghdadi has exploited the deepening Sunni-Shia rift across the Middle East, intensified by a new regional cold war between Sunni-dominated Saudi Arabia and Shia-dominated Iran.” (Gerges, 2014)

On other side a different point of view also exist that “Iran bears much responsibility for the rise of IS, having worked for a decade to undermine stability in Iraq by attacking American troops and Sunni Muslims, thus driving the latter into IS’s arms. If Tehran is now interested in fighting Islamic State, it is only in order to turn both Iraq and Syria into a giant fiefdom, and the Iraqi military into a proxy like Hezbollah” (Weiss & Pregent, 2015).

“Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said Washington had reached out through the Iranian embassy in Baghdad, requesting a meeting to discuss cooperation against Islamic State. I saw no point in cooperating with a country whose hands are dirty and intentions murky,” (Jason & Mehrdad, 2014)

After the failure of such talks America decide to counter IS by force and use Iran for this mission. On the other hand Iraqi forces are not able to counter the threat of IS by self-help, they have not enough power and sprit to crush it. Iraq calls Iran to help in crushing Islamic State threat from country. “Iraqi President Fouad Masoum has called for the continuation of cooperation with Iran to eradicate terrorism.” (Press TV, November 30, 2014)

After a formal request for help Iran went to help Iraqi government and Army to counter IS threat. Iran is supporting Iraq by Air power and ground forces. Ground forces build up with volunteers and local Shia militia. On the other hand if we see Syria situation, then all Arab countries and western power are against Asad’s regime, and helping Nusra in money and weapon both to destabilize the regime. Iran has close relations with Syria and Asad, so Iran is standing with Asad against all other countries. Iran confronting IS in different ways like propaganda, by air strike, by ground fighters and economic loses. Iran is using Hezbollah in Syria at large scale against Islamic State and anti-regime groups (Holmquist, 2015). Iran started a cartoon campaign against IS and Baghdadi. "In order to reveal the true nature of the Islamic State, we decided to hold this contest and have people submitted their cartoons or caricatures," contest manager MasoudShojaeiTabatabai stated on Press TV. "The Islamic State tries to associate itself with Islam but in essence it has no idea about Islam" (Tharoor, 2015). Due the anti-ISIS campaign it is no more popular among Muslims and it is weaker than the previous position (Gulmohamad, 2014).

Role of Saudi Arabia in Islamic State:

Arab states as a part of region have their role in Islamic State. Saudi Arabia and its allies Arab states have unfriendly relations with Syria regime and Iraqi Shia government. The declaration of khilafat in region captures the attention of both Iran and Saudi Arabia. This is perception that both countries have role in success of ISIS by activities in Syria, where the Iran-Saudi competition is a key element. By

supporting opposite sides in Syria became the main reason of conflict's development. Like Syria, in Iraq both are supporting different sides. Saudis are supporting Sunni pollution and Tribes, and on other side Iran is supporting local Shia militia and government party DAWA. "Both Saudi Arabia and Iran have a long history of financing and even arming foreign proxies in order to further their own interests, with deepened sectarian rifts as a byproduct. It is true that Saudi Arabia views Iran as its nemesis, and blames Iran for what is happening not just in Syria but also in Iraq. In terms of Iraq the Saudi regime believes it is the former Iraqi PM Maliki's non-inclusive policies, and the fact that Iran is allowed too great an influence over the Iraqi government that has created the current situation of popular discontent" (Holmquist, 2015).

But in current situation ISIS is also threat for Saudi Arabia because it is challenging the religious legitimacy of Saudi Arabia. And it is the stance of ISIS that there is no Islamic and justice government or state in world other than ISIS. And they feel that Saudi Arabia is not performing religious activities and failed to lead the Muslim world. But it is fact that Saudis are funding ISIS to counter Iran and its allies in the region. A former MI6 head Richard says that Saudi Arabia is supporting Islamic State to capture the north region of Iraq. Prince Bandar said him: "The time is not far off in the Middle East, Richard, when it will be literally 'God help the Shia'. More than a billion Sunnis have simply had enough of them" (Cockburn, 2014) "Thank God for the Saudis and Prince Bandar, and for our Qatari friends," the Senator Stated at the Munich Security Conference in January. McCain thanked Prince Bandar bin Sultan, head of Saudi intelligence agency and a former ambassador to the US, for supporting forces fighting against Assad in Syria (Cockburn, 2014).

It is stated that funding is giving by the Saudis, Qatar and Kuwait by organizations and individuals both. The Turkish government is also controversial in this issue. "In the garb of freedom fighters, to Syria to dismantle the Assad regime, has served to bring together thousands of hardcore Islamic terrorists, from as many as 50 countries, who have for years been funded and indoctrinated by the Saudis, Qataris, and Kuwaitis, with the "kill them all" Wahhabi-Salafi vision of Islam, to establish what ISIS calls the Islamic State (Maitra 2014)

Role of Extra Regional Powers in ISIS

Role of USA

It is fact that ISIS is big security threat to region but some extra regional countries are also having threat from Islamic State. US is world hegemony, and it feels that it is my responsibility to maintain the international peace. US is also a stake holder in Middle East, and have allies in region which are dependent on US for their security. Now Islamic State has control over land of two countries, Iraq and Syria. US has separate policy for both countries. In Iraq, US is supporting government against ISIS. And it is the first priority US to crush Islamic State. And US has launched an air strike to

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demolish their camps and training fields. US is supporting Iran to counter this threat. On this many Americans have issues that why US is relying on Iran to counter this threat, which will may create hurdles for US in future. "The United States does nothing. Some fear that this could open a vacuum to Iranian influence. This creates a serious issue for the United States, Western Europe, and Israel: competition among IS and AQ. The Islamic State could fall just as quickly as it ascended, but it very well could maintain its powerful influence in the jihadi world" (Tucker, 2014)

The battle of Takrit arises many questions on US, that who is leading and fighting the Iraq war US or Iran? On a question of Senator John McCain, Defense Secretary Ash Carter says that "It does. It does," Carter replied, adding, "We're watching it very closely."

"Obama Administration's approach, counterterrorism-focused plans seek to degrade and defeat the Islamic State. This end is sought by employing U.S.-trained and supported local forces in Iraq and Syria, augmented by U.S. airstrikes and Special Operations Forces" (Stuster, & French, 2015)

If we see in Syria, then US is standing against Asad's regime and supporting local groups to fight against regime. It is fact that US is supporting anti-Asad groups, providing them money and arms. Defense Intelligence report said that this aid and help will cause formation of IS and Iraq will suffer due to IS. And this non-state actor insurgency will cause to down the power of Shia's and especially Iran in region. In Syria Iran is supporting Asad's government. US was ready to launch a war on Syria last year but delay, and many American think tank says that war is more dangerous for US, and it will open a security challenge for world. And it is best option to settle issues with Asad through diplomatic ways and pressure (Cordesman, 2014). . This shows that this is a proxy and sectarian war against Shia's and Iran. But it is fact till now we have not seen any big achievement by US against ISIS. It shows that US is not sincere with ISIS. US is busy in Afghan withdrawal and its domestic economic crises. "Many competing strategic priorities: Afghanistan, Ukraine, Asia, U.S. domestic issues and budget" a writer says (Cordesman, 2014). So US role in ISIS is confused, US is not clear in its actions. US has strong relation with Saudis and Israel, and at same time US has anti ISIS strategy. And ISIS is threat for Iran and Lebanon. And fighting at Lebanon border with Hezbollah, and Hezbollah is enemy of Israel, so the situation is very complex. And US is playing a double game with Middle East.

Russia against ISIS

In war against ISIS, Russia was against west policy in supporting Syrian rebels. Russia is a strong supporter of Asad in this war. Russia starts its military intervention in Syria against ISIS and other anti Asad forces to save regime in September 2015. Russia play very smartly in Syria, ground forces, air attacks and carrier is also present at Syrian waters. "The Russians were in charge of artillery fire and provided artillery cover, not just air strikes. The coast battle was theirs," said one of the sources. "The

Russian role in participation, in planning and executing military operations is being reinforced all the time. It is participation, not management," said the source.

"The Russians take part in the ground and air planning, but at the end, the Syrian officers are the ones who know the land, the fronts, and the geography better" (Mariam, 2016). According to Russian official, their main purpose in Syria is to control the terrorist groups, which are global threat to humanity (Mariam, 2016). After a successful war in Syria, Russia announces to take its forces from Syria, but our reserve forces will be there to control the situation. "We see how efficiently our pilots and intelligence agents coordinate their efforts with various kinds of forces – the army, navy and aviation, how they use the most modern weapons," Putin said.

"I want to stress that these are by far not all of our capabilities," he said. "We have more military means. And we will use them, if need be" (Graham-Harrison 2015). When Russia came here in Syria then most of area was under anti Asad forces and Asad was going to lose his position, but now Asad is at very strong position, and regime is taking back its territories. ISIS got a unbearable loss by Russian air strike and they fleeing from Syria. Peter Ford, (former UK diplomat to Syria) stated to BBC, "He's in control of two-thirds of the populated areas of Syria, he has not been defeated on the battlefield, he has the support of all the minorities, as well as the secular Sunnis." "its absurd to think that the Russians have come so far with this process only to throw Assad under the bus; it's not going to happen" (Graham-Harrison 2015). So now Asad is going to reconstruct its cities.

Islamic State Impact on Pakistan

Pakistani Taliban's have affiliations with Baghdadi, and it is trouble for Pakistan in future. The proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia is problem for Pakistan and Muslim world because both are supporting their allies and muscles. Saudi Arabia is supporting Sunni extremists and Iran is supporting Shia's to fight their proxy war (Qandeel 2014).

Pakistan is country which provides a safe and suitable environment for growth of non-state actors like IS. And it is fact that many Pakistani have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join IS and Baghdadi. In the Pakistan, weak government, poor and weak counter terrorism policy, and disconnection between states institutions have provide space to extremists flourish.

The increasing influence of IS and Baghdadi is a worrisome for Pakistan. After the affiliations with Baghdadi of Pakistani terrorists the country security situation will be more complex and hard. It would a dangerous security threat for Pakistan in future. The reason is that the Pakistani terrorists do not work in isolation, and it's a natural that new phenomenon attracts people more easily. As terrorists groups organize to enter into another stage of ideologically and operationally distorted jihadist discourse, the implications for Pakistan's domestic security would be dangerous. Behind

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security, this will increase the extremism discourse in the country and the performance of non-violent and unarmed religious organizations (Rana, 2015).

Top six TTP leaders have joined IS since 2014. The TTP leaders who have merged into ISIS, chief of TTP Kurram agency Dolat Khan, chief of TTP Orakzai agency Hafiz Saeed Khan, chief of TTP Hangu Khalid Mansoor, head of TTP Peshawar Mufti Hasan, and TTP Khyber Agency leader Gul Zaman and Shahidullah Shahid spokesman of TTP. And formally Hafiz Saeed Khan from Orakzai is the Head of Pakistan and Afghanistan IS, and Mullah AbdulRauf Khalid is deputy. Some sources claim that Malik Ishaq group (Lashkar e Jhangvi) had also affiliations with ISIS. And a meeting held at Quetta for the creation of ISIS. And it is said that Malik was finally going to join ISIS but he were killed by security forces at Muzaffargrah, Punjab. It is show that IS has planned to spread it into Pakistan and Afghanistan in future. So it would be a challenge for Pakistan. And the people, who have travelled to Syria and Iraq, will create trouble for country when come back. Tug of war between Al Qaida and IS may divide Pakistani terrorists into two groups and they start fight for separate causes, this will an issue for Pakistan.

Conclusion

Islamic State is serious security threat to region and especially to Pakistan in future. Pakistan is already suffering from terrorism for last fourteen years. Pakistan has potential to counter this threat, but it is more important than how to avoid this threat. And Pakistan should take serious steps to avoid this threat. It is the responsibility of regional powers to take serious action against IS, and go back from proxy war and help suffering states against IS because it is not threat just for some countries but also for all regional countries. And US should clear its policies about IS and stop its proxy war in the region. And US should follow same policies on Syria and Iraq against IS.

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