

Global Terrorism Mid-Year Review 2016

Rohan Gunaratna

AQ-IS Rivalry: Battle for Supremacy in India

Vikram Rajakumar

Revival of Violence in Kashmir: The Threat to India's Security

Akanksha Narain

IS in Afghanistan: Emergence, Evolution and Expansion

Inomjon Bobokulov

Appointment of the New Taliban Chief: Implications for Peace and Conflict in Afghanistan

Abdul Basit

Is Al Qaeda Central Relocating?

Mahfuh Halimi



South Asia & Central Asia Focus

As we enter into the second half of 2016, South Asia remains a front line in the battle against terrorism. Regional rivalry for dominance between the Islamic State (IS) and Al Qaeda (AQ) has highlighted the likelihood of an increase in scope and frequency of terrorist attacks across South Asia. The establishment of Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) in September 2014 as well as the Islamic State's Wilayat Khorasan in January 2015 has transformed South Asia into an important focal point for both organisations.

As evidence of IS' focus on South Asia, the group released its latest issue of the English-language magazine, Dabiq, featuring a prominent interview with the purported IS chief in Bangladesh, Abu Ibrahim al-Hanif, speaking on launching a large-scale attack against India. Against the backdrop of the Islamic State (IS)' increasing inroads into India, the country remained a target of terrorist attacks, including terrorist operations launched by Maoist insurgents and domestic and transnational groups. In Afghanistan, terrorist attacks by the Afghan Taliban, Haqqani Network and IS contributed to the region's high casualty rates. Sectarian violence and attacks against religious minorities associated with the numerous factions of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have also adversely affected Pakistan's stability, even as targeted killings of celebrities and musicians continued in the country. Moreover, the unresolved Kashmir conflict continues to see a presence of domestic militant groups. In Bangladesh, killings of secular bloggers and minorities continue to shock the international community. On 1 July 2016, a deadly attack took place at a café in the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka, killing 21 hostages and 2 police officers. The attack, which killed Japanese and Italian nationals, was claimed by IS. The fallout from the attack, however, triggered a confused reaction from the Bangladeshi government, as the government continued to reiterate the absence of IS in the country. This was despite the group claiming responsibility for a number of attacks there.

In this issue, we examine how the regional threat landscape has evolved with IS' dominance on the global jihad scene. **Rohan Gunaratna** sheds light on how IS-inspired and IS-directed attacks witnessed in North America, Europe, Africa, Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia have demonstrated the growing threat of IS. While the anti-IS coalition is making strides in Syria and Iraq, he explains why the threat from IS will not be easily wiped out in the near future.

With both IS and AQ competing for pre-eminence, we also explore the likely outcomes of this battle. **Vikram Rajakumar** explains why this rivalry will be coupled with a growth in support for extremism and terrorist attacks carried out in the country.

Kashmir has been embroiled in militancy since 1987 and the conflict remains a point of contention between India and Pakistan. **Akanksha Narain** explains why India needs to move beyond the politics of blaming and into more proactive measures in order to effectively counter the Kashmiri insurgency.

In Afghanistan, the death of Mullah Omar and fractionalisation of the Taliban has provided IS with an opportunity to establish a stronghold in the region and increase its recruitment. **Inomjon Bobokulov** provides us with some insight into the range of domestic conditions in Afghanistan that have allowed IS to establish its presence in the war-torn country.

The death of the Afghan Taliban chief, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, in a US drone strike is thought to mark a new chapter in the Afghan militant landscape. **Abdul Basit** questions the possibility of peace under the current Taliban chief, Haibatullah Akhundzada, given his refusal to engage in peace talks with the Afghan government and given the increased insecurity among the local population due to the presence of foreign troops in the country.

With reports that Al Qaeda is making efforts to establish its first emirate in Northern Syria through its affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra, **Mahfuh Halimi** explores whether Al Qaeda Central (AQC), presently located in terrorist safe sanctuaries in the Afghanistan-Pakistan (AfPak) region, will relocate itself to Syria and participate in the battle head-on.

Global Terrorism



Mid-Year Review 2016

Professor Rohan Gunaratna

Introduction

In the first half of 2016, the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) dominated the global threat landscape by mounting attacks in North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Asia. At the forefront was IS' spokesperson, Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, who directed and inspired attacks worldwide, including those which took place during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. On 24 July 2016, a suicide bombing attack took place in the south German town of Ansbach. The attacker was a 27-year-old Syrian man who faced deportation to Bulgaria and who had detonated the device after being refused entry to a music festival. Investigations revealed that the suicide attacker had pledged allegiance to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in a video found on his mobile phone. IS has since claimed responsibility for the attack.

In May 2016, in an audio message purportedly from al-Adnani, the spokesman declared Ramadan a "month of conquest and jihad." He announced: "Make it, with God's permission, a month of pain for infidels everywhere" (Mowat 2016). The "Ramadan jihad" of IS killed at least 800, mostly Muslims, across five different continents (Drury 2016). Some of the attacks included those in Orlando (US), Nice (France), Bavaria (Germany), Istanbul (Turkey), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Kabul (Afghanistan), Mindanao (Philippines), Puchong (Malaysia), Solo (Indonesia), Medina (Saudi Arabia), Lebanon, Iraq and Syria. The spate of IS attacks were most intense during the last week of Ramadan when IS carried out an attack on Istanbul Airport, killing 45 people, detonated a truck bomb in Karrada, in Baghdad, killing 290 people, and carried out a suicide bomb attack in the vicinity of the Prophet's mosque in the Saudi Arabian city of Medina, the second holiest site in Islam, after Makkah.

The Context

Although IS has managed to build a global network, it is under severe pressure from numerous security actions and coalition attacks. It has already lost 47 percent of its territory in Iraq and Syria (Hudson 2016). Last month, it lost Fallujah, its valuable launch-pad for terrorist attacks against Baghdad. It is also at risk of losing Mosul, a city it occupied since June 2014. Coalition drone attacks, airstrikes and combat forces have depleted IS rank and file. Two weeks ago, IS also lost its most celebrated military commander, Umar al-Shishani in the Iraqi city of Shirqat (Al Jazeera 2016). At the time of his death, the Chechen commander was tasked by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi to prepare the defences of Mosul.

In the aftermath of IS' bombing of Istanbul Airport in June, Turkey denied IS its territory as a transit point to Syria, and a vital forward operational base to target IS' enemies. IS will now be forced to open new routes through Lebanon and operate covertly in Turkey. In addition to relying on its satellite provinces (wilayah), IS will rely on groups that have pledged allegiance to al Baghdadi. By using encrypted messages, IS will build more cells and networks outside Iraq and Syria to sustain attacks against its enemies.

The Threat to the West

After the tragedies of Paris and Brussels attacks, the world witnessed terrorist attacks unfold in Nice, Magnanville and Orlando. On 13 June, in Magnanville, France, Larossi Abballa, a French citizen of Moroccan descent stabbed to death a police officer and his wife (police secretary) and took their three-year-old child hostage. The attacker posted the video of the attack, including his pledge to al Baghdadi, on social network sites. On 12 June 2016, in Orlando, Florida, Omar Mateen, an IS supporter, attacked a gay night club, killing 49 and injuring 53 others. An American security guard, Mateen belonged to an Afghan family, and was previously known to the US government as an extremist (Kalamur & Ford 2016). The Orlando shooting attack is by far the deadliest terrorist attack in the US since the 9/11 attacks and the deadliest mass shooting attack by a single shooter.

On 14 July 2016, Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel drove a 19-tonne refrigerated lorry into a crowd celebrating Bastille Day. The 31-year-old French Tunisian delivery man, Lahouaiej-Bouhlel

“ Although IS has managed to build a global network, it is under severe pressure from numerous security actions and coalition attacks. ”

ploughed through two kilometres of the Promenade des Anglais before exchanging fire with the police (Beaumont & Fischer 2016). The attack, staged by IS, resulted in 84 dead and 202 injured; the death toll may increase as 25 of those critically injured are on life support. The attack was inspired by Adnani, who said in a message through al Furqan media to kill by any means.

The Threat to the Middle East and Africa

On 6 July 2016, three terrorists attacked the Istanbul Airport, killing 36 and injuring 147. With Turkey targeting the IS' infrastructure on its soil, Turkey has suffered from half a dozen reprisal attacks, which also involved the killing of ten Germans in January. This has affected both the country's tourism and foreign direct investment. With Turkey joining the fight against IS, it is likely that Turkey will face more attacks.

IS also struck Lebanon, which is another gateway to Syria. On 27 June, eight suicide bombers in two waves attacked Lebanon's Christian town of Al Qaa, killing five and wounding 11. In the Middle East, IS also launched an attack in Mukalla, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia where a number of attacks were prevented, including an attack against the US consulate in Jeddah.

In Africa, there are signs that IS is gaining the upper hand in the Maghreb and Sahel and infiltrating the Horn of Africa. The threat of IS is likely to persist in the Maghreb with pockets in Libya, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. The IS threat will also expand in the Sahel from Nigeria to Niger, Chad, Mali, and Mauritania, and spread

from the Horn into Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. On 4 July 2016, in a latest development, a breakaway faction of al Shabaab – Jabha East Africa – urged Kenyan and Tanzanian members to defect to IS (SITE 2016). Separately, despite French-led efforts, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) expanded its operations into the Greater Sahara Region. AQIM's Sahara division also raided the Mali army check-posts on the border between Mali and Burkina Faso.

The Threat to Asia

In South Asia, IS expanded its operations in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the traditional turf of Al Qaeda. Although the Government of Bangladesh was firm in its resolve to fight terrorism and extremism, the country witnessed both Al Qaeda and IS attacks. During the first half of 2016, IS mounted eleven attacks, including those on Hindus in Bonpara, Dhaka, Jhenaidah and Rangpur, Christians in Bonpara, Kushtia and Rangpur, and a Buddhist party leader in Jhenaidah.

The worst attack in Bangladesh was on the last Friday of Ramadan. A five-member IS team attacked the upscale Holey Aristan Bakery in the capital city, Dhaka, in the diplomatic enclave of Gulshan. The IS team herded the hostages and attacked after separating the Muslims from non-Muslims. The attack resulted in the killing of 20 civilians and two police officers. Over 50 were injured, with foreigners being the primary targets; the terrorists killed nine from Italy, seven from Japan, one from India and one from the US. The Bangladesh government continues to deny that IS was responsible for the attack. Unless Bangladeshi political elites focus their attention on the terrorist threat, the menace will grow and affect its economy, social stability and national security.

In Southeast Asia, IS successfully mounted attacks in Indonesia in January, Philippines in April and in Malaysia in June. Singapore also arrested, deported and prosecuted IS supporters. The IS also appointed Isnilon Hapilon, the former leader of the Basilan-branch of Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), as the leader of IS Philippines. The newly-formed IS Philippines led by Hapilon was joined by nine groups from Lanao del Sur, Sarangani, Sulu, South Cotabato, Isabela and Basilan. IS Philippines was also joined by Jund ul Tawhid led by Amin Baco (Malaysian), Islamic State Lanao led by Abdullah

“ IS strategy is to declare a wilayat in Southern Philippines. ”

Maute and Ansar Khilafah Philippines led by Tokboy. IS strategy is to declare a wilayat in Southern Philippines; it has called on those who cannot travel to Iraq and Syria to travel to South Philippines and join the IS fighters there.

In Northeast Asia, IS groomed its support network in Xinjiang and established a route for Uighurs to travel to Turkey through Southeast Asia. Uighur syndicates, some working together with Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), built a passage via Southeast Asia in reaction to the Central Asian governments disrupting their travels. Although TIP remains most influential, IS seeks to expand its influence in Xinjiang.

The Threat to Latin America

As of July 2016, IS has successfully infiltrated all the continents, including Latin America. This includes the Triple Frontier concentrated in the Tri-Border Area of Ciudad del Este in Paraguay, Puerto Iguazú, Argentina and Foz do Iguaçu in Brazil where 50,000 Arab, Asian and African immigrant communities live. A group called Ansar al-Khilafah Brazil pledged allegiance to al-Baghdadi, and promoted IS propaganda on its Telegram channel (Bearak 2016). Aside from posting the pledge of allegiance in Arabic on 17 July 2016, the group has also released fourteen issues of IS flagship magazine, Dabiq, disseminated English and Portuguese translations of IS spokesperson al-Adnani's May 2016 speech, and printed posters by the pro-ISIS Granddaughters of Aisha Foundation publicising the attacks in France. Specifically, the Portuguese translation of al-Adnani's speech was forwarded from the Telegram channel of an IS activist, Ismail Abdul Jabbar al-Brazili. On 17 July, Ansar al-Khilafah Brazil also posted a Portuguese message questioning the training of Brazilian police by French police officers, when the French were unable to prevent domestic attacks by IS fighters (Bowater 2016). In order to prevent IS from taking root in Latin America, South and Central American governments will have to identify the emerging cells and dismantle them at an early stage.

IS Propaganda

IS continues to place great emphasis on propaganda and information management. It produces the slick, glossy and well-composed online magazine Dabiq, now into its 14th issue (since 5 July 2014). Amaq news agency acts as IS' official mouthpiece, alongside several other official media outlets which include, An-Naba', Maktabah Al-Himmah and Ajnad. IS media outlets and publications are all geared towards glorifying the IS, boasting about its conquests and achievements, extolling the many acts of martyrdom, and vilifying its enemies, particularly the US and its allies, as well as the Shiites and Muslims who oppose them. These publications also contain battlefield news and photographs of various militant groups supporting IS all aimed at attracting new followers and boosting the morale of existing fighters and members.

More insidious is its dissemination of erroneous religious teachings, calling on Muslims to join IS, hijrah (migrate) to IS-controlled territories, and participate in violent and genocidal jihad against its enemies, distorting and misinterpreting religious texts, justifying acts of extreme cruelty and the revival of abolished ancient practices, and conjuring up images of End of Times and epic battles between IS believers and non-believers.

IS' publications also provide technical details on bomb-making. Going by the thousands who have made their way to IS territories, the militants who continue to pledge allegiance to al Baghdadi, and the self-radicalisation cases in the East and West, these publications have had some resonance among the disgruntled and alienated groups and individuals.

Conclusion

Although IS has been on a rampage in the last few weeks, the fact remains that it has suffered serious losses in Iraq and Syria. Coalition air strikes have killed over 25,000 IS fighters. Many of its key leaders have been killed by precision drone attacks and Coalition or US Special Forces. IS has suffered the loss of cities, towns and territories in both Iraq and Syria. Its revenue has been reduced by bombing raids on IS-held oil fields, and the number of recruits has declined because of tighter border controls. IS also faces pressure from the Muslim world which has denounced IS as unIslamic, deviant and even

“ IS continues to place great emphasis on propaganda and information management. ”

heretical.

The terrorism threat however remains challenging. IS remains committed to its operating slogan of “remaining and expanding”, fighting to retain control of existing territories or recover lost ones, and declaring provinces where there are substantial local support. In its latest video entitled “The Structure of the Khilafah” produced to commemorate the second anniversary of the formation of the Islamic State, it claims to have 35 provinces. It has co-opted militant and separatist groups which have sworn allegiance to al Baghdadi, calling them “Junud Al-Khilafah” or Soldiers of the Caliphate. Should IS lose its strongholds in Iraq and Syria in the coming months, it would go underground or move to its ‘provinces’ like Libya where there is already a sizeable IS presence. Unless IS' top leadership is eliminated and the movement degraded and destroyed, it will continue to expand, territorially and ideologically.

Attention should also be paid on the threat from Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda-centric threat groups remain active in the Sahel, Maghreb, Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Indonesia, Philippines and China. For instance, most Chinese Uighurs have joined Jabhat al-Nusra, the Al Qaeda branch in Syria. Additionally, in March 2016, Al Qaeda-centric groups in the Sahel mounted an attack in Ivory Coast, which killed 15 civilians and three security forces personnel (Fortune 2016).

Al Qaeda and IS have competed to enlist members, supporters and sympathisers. Although al-Nusra is fighting against both IS and the Syrian regime, it will be a mistake for Middle Eastern governments to sponsor al-Nusra. Considering the long-term implications of supporting armed non-state actors, governments should exercise caution and restraint in

empowering one group to weaken another.

Another looming threat is the possible merger of IS and Al Qaeda if either Abu Bakr al Baghdadi or Ayman al Zawahiri is killed. The current dispute between IS and al-Nusra is a clash over leadership and not only ideology. If these two powerful terrorist movements merge, they will present an unprecedented threat to the countries where they are operating and beyond. As such, the global response should be against both Al Qaeda and IS and their associates.

The scale, magnitude and frequency of IS attacks increased in the first half of 2016, creating a gulf between Muslims and non-Muslims. Although more Muslims suffered in the IS attacks, anger, prejudice and suspicion by non-Muslims against Muslims have grown. Islamophobia and the rise of right wing political activism in the US, Europe and Australia have sharpened divisions and raised tensions. To ensure harmonious relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, it is imperative for world leaders to engage all religious communities in order to bridge the divide. The IS strategy is to seed a culture of violence by inculcating hatred. As the centre of gravity of terrorism is ideology, the Arab and the Muslim World should build comprehensive campaigns to counter the extremist ideology and promote tolerance and moderation among vulnerable segments of the Muslim communities.

Despite various countermeasures, the threat has grown, due to the lack of global counter-terrorism leadership and non-resolution of various sources of political, social and economic discontent. The fight against IS and Al Qaeda will last several years due to the geopolitical and geostrategic disagreements among major powers as well as regional players. If major powers can collaborate across regions to build military, intelligence, economic and strategic communications capabilities, IS and Al Qaeda structures can be dismantled. The capabilities should be built and strengthened to fight both in and outside the battlefields. With IS exploitation of the cyber space, governments should build partnerships with technology firms and service providers. As long as terrorists use end-to-end encryption and governments have no visibility into the operational planning, terrorist attacks will continue. To contain, isolate and eliminate IS and Al Qaeda at their cores and in the peripheries, it is paramount to expand and unite the coalitions. In addition, positive action must be

“ The current dispute between IS and al-Nusra is a clash over leadership and not only ideology. ”

taken to deny IS and Al Qaeda opportunities to exploit political and socio-economic grievances. The promotion of inter-religious harmony and social cohesion is also imperative to prevent terrorists and extremists from sowing discord and disunity. Without greater understanding between nations, strong political will and better governance, IS and Al Qaeda will continue to make inroads into failed states and exploit vulnerable communities to cause chaos, death and destruction.

Rohan Gunaratna is Professor of Security Studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Head of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) in Singapore. He is also the editor of the [Handbook of Terrorism in the Asia-Pacific](#).

References:

- Al Jazeera. 2016. [Iraq: ISIL says Omar al-Shihani killed in air strike](#). Accessed July 20, 2016.
- Al-Monitor. 2016. [Lebanese Christian village hit with eight suicide attacks in one day](#). Accessed July 15, 2016.
- BBC News. 2016. [Who was French police killer Larossi Abballa?](#) Accessed July 18, 2016.
- Bearak, Max. 2016. [Brazilian extremist group uses Telegram to pledge allegiance to ISIS ahead of Olympics](#). *The Washington Post*, Accessed July 20, 2016.
- Bowater, Donna. 2016. [Brazil extremists declare loyalty to Islamic State in first public declaration](#)

[in South America, weeks ahead of Olympics](#). *The Telegraph*, Accessed July 21, 2016.

Calamur, Khrisnadev, Ford, Matt & Koren, Marina. 2016. [Orlando Nightclub Attack: What We Know](#). *The Atlantic*, Accessed July 19, 2016.

Drury, Flora. 2016. [Islamic State's 'four weeks of pain for infidels' claim more than 800 lives](#). *Daily Mail*, Accessed July 19, 2016.

Fortune. 2016. [Al Qaeda Gunmen Kill 16 in Ivory Coast Beach Attack](#). Accessed July 20, 2016.

Hack, Jens, Poltz, Joern and Strohecker. [German-Iranian Gunman Kills Nine in Munich, then Himself: Police](#). *Reuters*, Accessed July 23, 2016.

Hudson, John. 2016. [Top U.S. Official: Islamic State Has Lost 47 Percent of its Territory in Iraq](#). *Foreign Policy*, Accessed July 18, 2016.

Middle East Media Research Institute. 2014. [Responding To U.S.-Led Campaign, IS Spokesman Calls To Kill Westerners, Including Civilians, By Any Means Possible](#). Accessed July 15, 2016.

Mowat, Laura. 2016. [Islamic State slaughters more than 800 people in bloodiest Ramadan](#). *Express News*, Accessed July 20, 2016.

SITE Intelligence Group. 2016. [Pro-IS "Jabha East Africa" Says Shabaab in "Great Crisis," Urges Defection](#). Accessed July 15, 2016.

AQIS-IS Rivalry: Battle for Supremacy in India

Vikram Rajakumar

Al Qaeda in the Sub-Continent (AQIS) and the Islamic State (IS) have been waging a silent turf war in the Indian Sub-continent since 2014. As the battle for supremacy over jihadism in South Asia gains intensity, the question arises as to which group will emerge victorious and what the security implications would be.

Introduction

The involvement of Muslims from India with the Islamic State (IS) captured headlines in May 2014 when four Indian youth flew to Baghdad on the pretext of going on a pilgrimage but instead made their way to Syria to join IS (Mengle 2014). Their involvement with IS sparked a series of nationwide investigations by Indian intelligence agencies that unveiled IS' network within India. It also heralded the start of an unprecedented turf war between IS and the longer-established Al Qaeda in the Sub-Continent (AQIS).

Since the early 1990s, Al Qaeda (AQ) has established a base along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, making alliances with militant groups operating in India and Pakistan. Groups such as Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), Indian Mujahideen (IM) and Lashker-e-Taiba (LeT), came under the umbrella of AQ (Gunaratna 2002). Many of the fighters were trained in AQ's Afghan-Pakistan bases and had a close operational relationship with AQ (Roggio, 2014). The groups were provided with finances, weapons, and training (Reuters 2014).

By the 2000s, AQ had established itself as the patriarch of jihadism in India, during which it had, through its affiliated militant organisations, orchestrated spectacular terrorist incidents such as the attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001, the Mumbai train blasts in 2006, the coordinated Mumbai attacks in

2008 and the Hyderabad and Bangalore blasts in 2013, among others. By mid-2014, all Muslim militant organisations operating in South Asia came under AQ's influence, with their leaders swearing allegiance to AQ's leadership although this was not publicly announced by AQ until much later (Burke 2014).

IS' Penetration into India

AQ's pre-eminence in the Indian sub-continent did not, however, discourage pro-IS elements from organising themselves and challenging AQ. In May 2014, several months after IS captured large swaths of land in Iraq and Syria, they formed Ansar-ut Tawhid fi Bilad al-Hind (AuT), and a few months later (September 2014) pledged allegiance to IS. Animesh Roul writes that AuT propagates acts of violence against the Indian government, its foreign assets and economic centres and encourages Indian Muslims to participate in the ongoing Syrian and Afghan theatres of jihad (Raul 2014). Indian intelligence agencies estimate that there are "hundreds of fighters" from South Asian countries (Jain 2015). Further, on 25 May 2016, Bangladesh's IS chief, Shaykh Abu Ibrahim Al Hanif, declared the group's intention to use fighters from Pakistan and Bangladesh to mount attacks within India (Jain 2016). In Bangladesh itself, IS has demonstrated its muscle by the recent terrorist attacks in Dhaka, killing 23 people in the attack on a popular bakery, and three at a police checkpoint. On the western frontier of the sub-continent (Pakistan), five Pakistani Navy officers were convicted of IS-linked connections in May 2016; they allegedly hatched a plan to hijack a naval warship and use it to attack US assets (Asad 2016). IS' influence in South Asia has also permeated into the Indian archipelagic nation of the Maldives, where authorities are concerned about the number of individuals who have joined IS in Syria, currently estimated to be about 40 (The Straits Times 2016).

Indeed, after the first group (only four) of Indian fighters joining IS was detected in May 2014, at least 35 others have been arrested, intercepted and detained in rapid succession. Investigations into a pro-IS cell dismantled in May 2015 in Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh, revealed that IS has penetrated the Indian jihadi landscape (Ghatwari and Swami 2015). Several others were arrested from various parts of South India. Among them were Medhi Masroor Biwas who operated multiple pro-IS Twitter accounts, Salman

“ Indian intelligence agencies estimate that there are “hundreds of fighters” from South Asian countries. ”

Moinuddin, an engineer, Faizur Rahman who supplied T-shirts with IS slogans and Munawad Salman, a former Google employee. These individuals were highly radicalised and in some cases, were already on their way to Syria before they were intercepted (media reports 2015).

Inroads into Tamil Nadu

IS' penetration into Tamil Nadu is significant as it has been hitherto immune to the jihadist ideology. Two main reasons account for its relative immunity. One of them is the language barrier – the terrorist propaganda from India's terrorist hotbeds are mostly couched in Hindi which has not developed into a lingua franca in Tamil Nadu whose official language is Tamil (English is a second language).

Secondly, the militant struggle in Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeast insurgency do not hold great significance to the southern Tamil Muslims as they do to Kashmiri Muslims. In Tamil Nadu, loyalty to the state and attachment to Dravidian culture and the birthplace of the Tamil language outweigh other causes like international jihadism or Kashmir independence.

Yet these traditional 'firewalls' have not been able to withstand the onslaught of jihadist propaganda and allure of global jihadism in Iraq and Syria. In February 2016, officials from the Intelligence Bureau disclosed that there are 150 people under watch for IS-related activities, and that 90 of them are from Tamil Nadu. IS is now influential especially in areas with pockets of Wahhabi followers (Nanjappa 2016).

Counter Action by Al Qaeda Central

The formation of AuT and the growing support base for IS in the region jolted the AQ into action. On 3 September 2014, Ayman Al Zawahiri, the

current leader of Al Qaeda Central (AQC), released a video announcing the formation of Al Qaeda in the Indian Sub-Continent (AQIS). Zawahiri emphasised that AQIS will encompass all the jihadi groups operating in the region – from Pakistan, spanning eastward all the way to Myanmar. Security analyst Jordan Olmstead, in an article entitled “The Real Reason al-Qaeda Is Establishing an India Branch”, suggests that this was a deliberate move by AQC to announce that it is still present and active in the region (Olmstead 2014).

Coming in the wake of IS’ impressive military victories in Iraq and Syria and the establishment of the Caliphate in June 2014, AQC’s announcement was probably also an attempt to re-assert its authority and premier position in the global jihadist movement and in the region. It should be noted that AQC’s foremost position had by then diminished after Osama bin Laden was killed and its leadership challenged by IS, which had not only repeatedly ignored AQ’s directives to the group but had also asked AQ leaders to give bay’ah to the so-called caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (Cassman 2015).

After AQIS’ formation, the only major attack the group claimed was on the naval dockyard in Karachi on 6 September 2014. The group was relatively quiet after this attack leading to speculation that AQIS appeared to be deeply fractured and no longer effective (Chandran 2015). Consequently and also in response to IS’ rising influence in the region and encroachment on its turf, AQIS mounted coordinated attacks against the Indian Airforce base in Pathankot, northern Punjab on 31 December 2015 (Indian Express 2016). AQIS has also made several statements claiming the killing of Bangladeshi bloggers and Hindu priests; interestingly, IS has also made similar claims, raising questions as to which group was actually behind the killings (media reports 2016).

IS Exploitation of Social Media

Competition between AQIS and IS is also seen in the virtual world where IS is making good use of social media platforms for recruitment and propaganda. IS has demonstrated that its use of the internet is far more superior to that of AQIS, or AQ for that matter. IS’ ability to attract the youth is unmatched in South Asia and its influence is undoubtedly increasing as evidenced by the growing number of arrests made. In 2014, 35 IS-related arrests were made. In 2015, 42

“ After AQIS’ formation, the only major attack the group claimed was on the naval dockyard in Karachi on 6 September 2014. ”

individuals were arrested and between January to March 2016, 24 individuals were arrested; more are likely in the months ahead. The majority of those arrested claimed that they were influenced by IS’ online propaganda.

IS’ daring and outrageous attacks and military victories in Iraq and Syria are likely to have created a greater impression on the younger generation of jihadists. Vibrant jihadi-themed videos, fiery speeches by fighters and the projection of a pseudo-state have impressed many ill-informed and disgruntled youth across the world, including India.

On 23 May 2016, IS released a 22-minute video featuring Indian jihadists who have made their way to Syria to fight alongside the group. The video, in both Urdu and Arabic with subtitles in English, seemingly sympathises with the Indian Muslims, and attempts to lure them to leave their country and fight in Syria. One of them, Abu Salman al-Hindi, speaks approvingly of the virtues of living in the Islamic State where he said Shariah law prevails and their lives, honour and property are protected. He said they are able to “perform jihad” and do dakwah (preaching). Abu Salman also urges Muslims, particularly doctors, engineers and other professionals to hijrah (migrate) to and support the Islamic State. The video also deliberately attempts to provoke the majority Hindu population by mocking their religion. It also instigates Indian Muslims to avenge the destruction of the Babri Mosque and past Hindu-Muslim clashes and continued Indian ‘occupation’ of Kashmir (Miglani 2016). To project an air of certain victory, the

propagandists have circulated in social media an image of the map of India superimposed with IS' flag symbols.



Figure 1.1 Source from Facebook

According to the National Investigations Agency (NIA), IS has intentions to establish a caliphate in the Jammu and Kashmir region, the epicentre for Indian jihadism (Zee News 2016). It has also called for attacks on India's economic centres and foreign assets. At the same time, IS also appeal to Indians to leave India and fight in Iraq and Syria. This stands in contrast to AQIS which encourages Muslims to fight in India against their alleged oppressors. AQIS-affiliated jihadi groups rarely venture outside their areas of operations, showing clearly the difference in modus operandi between the two groups.

Al Qaeda's Indian Bastion

IS, however, is not likely to displace AQIS even if it makes inroads into the sub-continent. This is because AQIS has been able to infuse jihadism with local grievances and has established a firm base since the 1990s (Twitter 2016).

According to Dr. Ajai Sahani, Executive Director of the Institute for Conflict Management in New Delhi, the jihadist landscape in India can be categorised into three broad areas; (a) Muslim militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, North India, (b) militant groups operating along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border in Northeast India and (c) anti-Hindu and anti-Western jihadi groups that operate across India (Sahani 2014). AQIS is active in all three areas.

The Muslim militancy in Jammu and Kashmir has been the focal point of jihadism in India for the

“ According to the National Investigations Agency (NIA), IS has intentions to establish a caliphate in the Jammu and Kashmir region, the epicentre for Indian jihadism. ”

last five decades. The groups fighting in this region are interested in (i) seeking autonomy from India and in some instances (ii) becoming part of Pakistan. The violence and propaganda related to these militant groups, however, do not go beyond the state of Jammu and Kashmir; they are localised and do not affect the rest of the Indian states (Hakeem 2014).

In respect of the Northeast states of India, the Islamic insurgent groups aim to mobilise Muslim youth to fight for Muslim rights and eventually wage jihad against the Indian state to attain an independent 'Islamistan'. Although these groups have been known to draw inspiration from Pakistani militant groups, they are also known to have close ties with Bangladeshi terrorist organisations such as the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and the Myanmar-based Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) (Ahmed 2011).

Another group of jihadists is transnational and involves the group known as the Indian Mujahideen which Professor Stephen Tankel describes as *“loosely organised indigenous Islamic network”*. This group is closely affiliated with the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba, which has been accused of being involved in the 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament and the 2008 multiple attacks in Mumbai. The aim of these two groups is to (i) target western establishments and tourists in India and (ii) target non-Muslim Indians (Tankel 2014).

Challenge Faced by the Indian Government

The existence of these areas of conflicts and the varied jihadist groups involved pose a huge challenge to law enforcement and counter-terrorism efforts. They present opportunities for international terrorist groups (i.e. AQ and IS) to intervene in and exploit local issues and grievances, expand their influence, and perpetrate acts of violence.

Whether it is IS or AQIS, the Indian intelligence agencies are understandably concerned. Both groups have adversely impacted the security climate in the sub-continent substantially. The National Intelligence Agency (NIA), along with the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and Research & Analysis Wing (RAW), are working together to gather intelligence on the activities and progression of both terrorist groups. Due to IS's large social media footprint and bigger following, the agencies are finding it easier to arrest individuals and dismantle cells, such as the IS-influenced group in Karnataka (in southwest India) in May 2015 (Times of India 2015).

In respect of AQIS, however, due to its smaller online footprint, intelligence agencies have had to rely on more traditional methods of intelligence gathering in order to close-in on AQIS-linked members and modules. Between the two, IS poses a bigger challenge in South Asia due to the vast reach it has within the region and the rapid induction of members, making it a challenge for government agencies to keep up. IS members returning from Iraq and Syria pose a further security problem given their battleground experience and deeper indoctrination of jihadi-Salafist ideas and hard-line sectarian views towards Shias, non-jihadis and non-Muslims. The rivalry between IS and AQ, should it take the form of staging competing terrorist attacks, would gravely impact the security situation in the Indian sub-continent with possibly some ramifications also in Southeast Asia and countries with large numbers of Indian workers and migrants.

Vikram Rajakumar is a Senior Analyst at the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

References:

Ahmed, I. *The politics of religion in South and Southeast Asia*. Abingdon. Oxon: Routledge, 2011.

Asad, Malik. [Five 'IS-Linked' Navy Officers Get Death Sentence In Dockyard Attack Case](#). *Dawn*, May 24, 2016.

Burke, Jason. 2014. [Al-Qaida Leader Announces Formation Of Indian Branch](#). *The Guardian*, September 4, 2014.

Cassman, Daniel. [Jabhat Al-Nusra | Mapping Militant Organizations](#). *Stanford University*, October 1, 2015.

Chandran, Anurag. [Al Qaeda in The Indian Subcontinent: Almost Forgotten](#). *Critical Threats*, September 3, 2015.

Express Web Desk. [Pathankot Attack: Here Is What Happened In Last 42 Hours](#). *The Indian Express*, January 3, 2016.

Forrester, Duncan B. "The Madras Anti-Hindi Agitation, 1965: Political Protest and its Effects on Language Policy in India." *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 39 No. ½ (Spring – Summer, 1996): 19-36.

Ghatwai, Milind, and Swami, Praveen. 2015. [First Islamic State 'Module' Busted, 5 Held In MP: Police](#). *The Indian Express*, May 6, 2015.

Gunaratna, Rohan. *Inside Al Qaeda*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Hakeem, A. *Paradise on Fire*. New York: Kube Publishing Ltd, 2014.

Jain, Barathi. [IS Video Showing Indians A Patchwork Of Old And New Footage](#). *The Times of India*, May 25, 2016

Jain, Barathi. [Jihadi Outfit Ansar-Ut Tawhid Fi Bilad Al-Hind Starts Online Propaganda For ISIS In Bengali](#). *The Times of India*, November 18, 2015

Mengle, Gautam Sandip. [Mumbai Youths In Iraq: ATS Picks Up Laptops, Pendrives From Their Homes](#). *The Indian Express*, July 16, 2014.

Miglani, Sanjeev. 2016. [Isis Threatens Attacks In India And Urges Muslims To Travel To The 'Caliphate'](#). *The Independent*, May 23, 2016.

Nanjappa, Vicky. [In Tamil Nadu, The ISIS Problem None Are Talking About](#). *One India*, February 3, 2016.

Olmstead, Jordan. [The Real Reason Al-Qaeda Is Establishing An India Branch](#). *The Diplomat*, September 23, 2014.

Raul, Animesh. [Ansar-Ut Tawhid And The Transnational Jihadist Threat To India](#). *The Jamestown Foundation*, June 13, 2014.

Reuters. [Concerns That Al Qaeda Is Grooming Indian Militants For Big Attacks](#). *NDTV*, November 6, 2014.

Roggio, Bill. [Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent Incorporates Regional Jihadist Groups](#). *The Long War Journal*, September 5, 2014.

Sahani, Ajai. [Major Terrorist Groups Operating In India](#). *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, November 16, 2001.

Tankel, S. Indian Jihadism: the Evolving Threat. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Volume 37, Issue 7 (April 2014): 567-585.

The Straits Times. [Maldives 'Extremely Worried' About ISIS Recruitment: Official](#). *The Straits Times*, March 14, 2016.

TNN. [NIA Set To Probe ISIS Module Busted In Ratlam](#). *The Times of India*, May 8, 2015.

Zee News. [ISIS Wants Kashmir Under Its Caliphate, Not Pakistan: NIA Chargesheet Reveals](#). *Zee News*, June 11, 2016.

Revival of Violence in Kashmir: The Threat to India's Security

Akanksha Narain

Political instability in the Kashmiri cities of Handwara and Srinagar has given the impression of a resurgence of conflict in Kashmir. Along with poor economic indicators, the rise of Hindu right-wing nationalism and the increase in the number of youths joining militant groups are growing sources of concern for India.

Introduction

On 12 April 2016, the small township of Handwara in Jammu and Kashmir saw protests, stone-pelting, firing and tear-gas shelling, sparked by allegations that a school girl was molested by an Indian army soldier. The violence escalated, as four civilians were killed by the security forces and protests spread across the Kashmir valley, resulting in a complete shutdown in north and south Kashmir (Ashiq 2016).

Despite government statistics indicating an overall decline in the number of infiltration attempts from Pakistan and terrorist attacks over the past decade, the conflict remains a source of contention both between India and Pakistan and between New Delhi and the people of Kashmir. Various factors and trends point towards the resurgence of militancy in Kashmir. However, given the limited means and capability of local militants and the presence of a strong state apparatus, the conflict is bound to be one of low-intensity.

Background of Militancy in Kashmir

Since India and Pakistan gained independence in 1947, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has been a major bone of contention. In less than 70 years, the Kashmir issue has become the source of three wars between the two countries. The issue concerns Pakistan's and India's conflicting claims to J&K, a Muslim-majority state. Over the years, the situation has been further

exacerbated by political and administrative failures in India, coupled by the persistence of intra-state conflict between the state and the centre (Ganguly 1997). The breakdown of the state's political and administrative machinery facilitated the use of arms by the Kashmiris against the Indian state. This aspect of the conflict, coupled with India's refusal to grant J&K autonomy, contributed to the insurgency's rise in the late 1980s and 90s.

In 1953, India removed the then-leader, Sheikh Abdullah, for allegedly espousing an independent Kashmir and placed him under detention. The centre then installed a puppet regime before gradually diluting J&K's autonomy under the Indian and the state's constitution. A political compromise was made by Abdullah's party, the National Congress (NC), which allowed him to become the Chief Minister of the state. This was reflected in the signing of the 1974 Indira-Sheikh accord, which increased the powers wielded by the centre and recognised the dilution of J&K's autonomy. This, along with the rigging of elections by the NC-Congress alliance in 1987, proved to the people of Kashmir that they could not rely on peaceful measures to resolve the conflict (Sharma 2015). The democratic system was a let-down for the Kashmiris as their political leaders were now making deals with the Indian state, rather than opposing it.

The Pakistani military exploited existing tensions in J&K by allegedly financing and supplying its own arms to local violent groups. Similarly, weapons and Mujahideen fighters from the Soviet-Afghan jihad were sent to bolster the militancy in Kashmir (Narasimha Rao 2004). This further exacerbated the conflict in Kashmir against the Indian state. According to P.V. Rao, Pakistan exploited the Islamist fervour of the Afghan jihad to meet its own national ends (Rao 2004).

The insurgency in Kashmir that began as a movement for '*azadi*' (independence) changed its course by the mid-1990s. Post 1996, there were growing number of Pakistani rebels, along with some recruits from Afghanistan and Central Asia entering the conflict. However, the US-led "War on Terror" in Afghanistan shifted the militants' focus towards waging jihad against the foreign invasion. The attacks on the Indian Parliament also steered a vast troop mobilisation along the border by both India and Pakistan, which resulted in a military standoff between the

“ The insurgency in Kashmir that began as a movement for '*azadi*' (independence) changed its course by the mid-1990s. ”

two countries. Around this time, Pakistan also stepped up efforts to clamp down on the numerous terrorist outfits operating out of the country. This resulted in the drastic reduction of violence and terrorist incursions within the Kashmir valley. Even though militant groups like Harakat ul-Mujahideen (HuM), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), continued carrying out sporadic attacks on Indian soil, a certain degree of normalcy did return to Kashmir.

Factors Contributing to the Resurgence of Militancy

Post 2001, the support for militancy declined significantly and very few local Kashmiri youths were taking to terrorism. The Indian state successfully conducted three democratic elections, offering a political path towards ending the conflict. Nevertheless, J&K still remained highly volatile. For instance, crowds pelted stones during the Amarnath land controversy which erupted when the state government attempted to transfer land to a Hindu shrine in the Kashmir valley, provoking counter protests. A similar reaction was witnessed in the 2009 Shopian rape and murder case of two women (Khalid 2009).

Local Youths Taking to Arms

However, the positive political moves of the government have not dampened some local youths' attraction to armed conflict. Recent video releases showing young local Kashmiri militants calling people to join their "jihad" as India "is trying its best to suppress our revolution" raise new alarms (Kheer 2016). Young militants such as Burhan Muzaffar Wani, a 21-year-old regional commander of Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), have

managed to attract the disenfranchised youth. Over the past year, more than a hundred young Kashmiris have joined militant groups. In addition, a majority of current terrorists in Kashmir are not foreign, but local fighters. According to the state's Home Department, North Kashmir has 66 local and 44 foreign terrorists, whereas South Kashmir has 109 locals and seven foreign terrorists. The growing local recruitment along with the increasing sophistication of the local militants tell a chilling story.

One example is Zahir Rashid Bhatt, a 21-year-old civil engineering student who became a militant. The young Kashmiris already recruited are using social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube to spread their messages. To recruit more members, these militants have laced their rhetoric with Islamist calls and demands for *azadi* (freedom). They are also moving towards the mountains in Kashmir where they are receiving rudimentary training and low-grade weapons (Baweja 2015).

In addition, cases of Kashmiris mourning the deaths of terrorists have surfaced as well, a practice that for a decade had few takers. In October 2015, thousands gathered to attend the funeral of two HM militants, and many more across the valley mourned the death of Abu Qasim, a former LeT commander.

Military Excesses and Poor Economic Indicators: A Source of Frustration

This sudden change in the trend of local Kashmiri youth joining the militancy represents the frustrations of the Kashmiri people, particularly the youth. Despite relative peace in the valley, the lives of the Kashmiri people have not improved significantly. Distrust between the Indian state and the people continues, especially given the vast presence of the Indian army and human rights abuses committed by them (Mathur 2014). Despite protests by Kashmiris and other Indians, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), which grants the state's armed forces unprecedented power, has not been withdrawn. As a result, the custody deaths, and deaths of Kashmiris as a result of open firing by the Army often go unpunished. Though the Indian armed forces have made attempts to win the 'hearts and minds' of the people, the huge trust deficit is hard to overcome. Beyond the recent case of protests after the Handwara incident, the alleged beating of Kashmiris in an engineering college in

“ This sudden change in the trend of local Kashmiri youth joining the militancy represents the frustrations of the Kashmiri people, particularly the youth. ”

Srinagar for celebrating India's loss during a cricket tournament only make matters worse (DNA 2016).

Moreover, the lack of promising socio-political and economic indicators is also alarming. J&K's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which saw a steady growth 2004 onwards, has been falling since 2011. From 2014 to 2015, the state registered a negative growth rate of 1.57% while India's overall GDP grew at 7.2%. The unending conflict and insurgency has not only led to a loss of lives, but has also destroyed millions of dollars' worth of infrastructure and investment. Furthermore, the state has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, including nearly 48% of its youth. Perhaps most worrying is the increase in 'educated unemployment' wherein young and educated people are not finding avenues for gainful employment (Singh 2016).

An Unfortunate Political Alliance

The gains made by India's right-wing party, the *Bharatiya Janta Party* (BJP), during the state elections have made the situation in Kashmir more precarious. BJP, which is ideologically opposed to J&K's autonomous status, has been perceived as a Hindu-right wing and an anti-Muslim party. However, the BJP has now entered into an alliance with Jammu and Kashmir People's Democratic Party (PDP) – a

party opposed to AFSPA. The BJP supports the removal of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which grants special autonomous status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. As a result, the people of Kashmir find themselves in a situation wherein state politics is being dominated by a party that is ideologically antagonistic towards the Kashmiri cause. Unfortunately, much like the 1987 NC-Congress alliance, it is likely that Kashmiris will lose confidence in the PDP for allying with a mainstream party like the BJP.

Influx of Wahhabism

An additional factor contributing to a resurgence of militancy in Kashmir is the spread of Wahhabi ideology in the valley. The rhetoric has often been framed in terms of the subjugation of Muslims by India. Over the years, the Kashmiri Muslims in J&K have maintained a distinctly Sufi identity. However, the influx of Pakistan-based jihadists, radicalisation of Kashmiri youth imprisoned alongside jihadist terrorists and the spread of Saudi Arabian-funded religious seminaries (*madrassas*) and mosques have diluted this identity. Wahhabism has played a critical role in the spread of Islamist extremism in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and it could bolster the revival of militancy in Kashmir. However, it is important to note that even though the spread of jihadi-Salafism and Wahhabism is alarming, it has not attracted the majority of the people (Gupta 2015). It has been estimated that out of Kashmir's eight million Muslim population, approximately 16% are influenced by Salafism and Wahhabism. Regardless of the strength of these narratives, their incremental presence and attacks on Sufi shrines complicates the militant landscape.

External Causes for Concern

The growing instability within South Asia as a whole creates fertile grounds for a resurgence of violence in Kashmir as well. These factors include; the withdrawal of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops from Afghanistan and the growing chaos in Afghanistan.

First, there is a possibility that with the endgame in Afghanistan, Kashmir-based groups that had directed their focus towards Af-Pak during the US invasion might depict a renewed focus on J&K. Post-2001 multiple Kashmir-based militant groups had joined hands with terrorist groups based in Af-Pak in order to fight against Western intervention in Afghanistan. However, with the

“ An additional factor contributing to a resurgence of militancy in Kashmir is the spread of Wahhabi ideology in the valley. ”

withdrawal of Western troops from Afghanistan, a number of Punjabi militants and groups have expressed interest in rekindling 'jihad' in Kashmir. Furthermore, groups like LeT have exploited the chaos in Afghanistan to target Indian missions in the country. Similarly, LeT has focused its attacks on Kashmir, but also became active in the Afghan jihad, as evidenced in its targeting of the Indian consulate in Afghanistan.

Second, the instability in Afghanistan can also be exploited by non-local Kashmiri groups. The three groups in this regard – HUM, JeM and LeT – all attracted veterans who fought against the Soviets during their occupation of Afghanistan and received training in the country. Moreover, quite a number of militants active in Kashmir were trained in the same *madrassas* where Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters studied. Many also received military training at camps situated in Afghanistan during the control of the Taliban from 1996 to 2001. It was recently reported that HUM is presently operating terrorist training camps in eastern Afghanistan. Consequently, the thriving drug trade in Afghanistan allowing for the transfer of illicit weapons and funds through multiple trade routes has played a role in the recent Pathankot and Gurdaspur attacks in India. A similar pattern can be witnessed in Kashmir as well.

Afghanistan not only serves as a training ground for militants in Kashmir and a source of veteran jihadists, it also serves as an arena for India-Pakistan proxy war over Kashmir. In January 2016, the Indian mission in Mazar-e-Sharif was attacked and a 25-hour long shootout between the terrorists and the security forces ensued. This was the third major attack on an Indian mission since May 2014. The four terrorists who attacked the mission left a message on the wall

stating that the aim was to avenge the hanging of a Kashmiri separatist, Afzal Guru. The inscribed message was *Afzal Guru ka inteqam* (Afzal Guru is avenged) (Swami 2016).

Collectively, all these external and internal factors create conducive grounds for militancy to return to Kashmir. However, given the lack of operational capabilities of the young local militants, in terms of arms and training, along with the limited allure for an armed struggle among Kashmiris, the degree of militancy is not likely to reach to the levels seen during the late 1980s and 90s.

Conclusion

The burgeoning internal political discontent in Kashmir, coupled with economic and social strains will see the confirmation of low-intensity militancy in the state. While J&K has remained relatively stable over the past decade, India has been unable to capitalise on this stability to ensure a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

India will have to move beyond the “Pakistan and ISI” blame game in order to address the root causes of Kashmiri disillusionment with the Indian state. This will include boosting Kashmir's economy by creating jobs, strengthening the state's administrative machinery and countering Wahhabi influence through moderation and promotion of Sufi values. It also means addressing the draconian AFSPA and alleged human rights issues without which de-radicalisation and counter-terrorism initiatives will be futile. Most importantly, the government will have to address the aspirations of the Kashmiris for greater autonomy through constitutional means.

Akanksha Narain is a Research Analyst with the Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies (SRP) Programme, a constituent unit of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

References:

- Ashq, Perzaada. [Street Protests Shut Down Valley](#). *The Hindu*, April 15, 2016. Accessed July 07, 2016.
- Associated Press. [Indian Muslim accused of beef smuggling beaten to death](#). *The Guardian*, October 16, 2015. Accessed on April 29, 2016.
- Baweja, Harinder. [Kashmir's Disturbing New Reality](#). *Hindustan Times*, December 17, 2015. Accessed on April 29, 2016.
- Blank, Jonah. [Let's Talk About Kashmir](#). *Foreign Policy*, September 5, 2014. Accessed April 27, 2016.
- Ganguly, Sumit. *The Crises in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace*. New York: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press and Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Gupta, Brig Anil. [Countering Radicalisation in Kashmir](#). *Indian Defence Review*, December 3, 2015. Accessed April 27, 2016.

Jaspal, Zafar Nawaz. 2011. "A Pakistani Perspective on the 2002 Standoff." In *The India-Pakistan Military Standoff: Crisis and Escalation in South Asia*, edited by Z. Davis. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Khalid, Waseem. Shopian on boil after rape, murder of 2 women. *Rising Kashmir*, May 31, 2009. Accessed April 27, 2016.

Kher, Rashneek. [Are We Seeing a Redux of 1990s Militancy in Kashmir?](#) *DailyO*, February 24, 2016. Accessed May 01, 2016.

Kumar, Abhinav. [The Handwara Harbinger](#). *The Indian Express*, April 25, 2016. Accessed May 01, 2016.

Mathur, Subh. [Terror and Impunity in Kashmir](#). *Foreign Policy in Focus*, May 06, 2014. Accessed May 02, 2016.

Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. [Annual Report 2015-16](#). Accessed May 01, 2016.

PTI. [World T20: NIT Srinagar shut down as clashes erupt over celebrations after India's loss to Windies](#). *Daily News and Analysis*, April 01, 2016. Accessed on May 02, 2016.

Rao, J. Laxmi Narasimha. 2004. "Jihad and cross-border terrorism in South Asia." In *Terrorism in South Asia*, edited by A. Subramanyam Raju. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International.

Rao, P.V. 2004. "The Global Contours Of Terrorism: South Asian Predicament." In *Terrorism in South Asia*, edited by A. Subramanyam Raju. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International.

Roggio, Bill. [Harakat-ul-Mujahideen 'operates Terrorist Training Camps in Eastern Afghanistan'](#). *The Long War Journal*, August 8, 2014. Accessed April 27, 2016.

Routray, Bibhu Prasad. [Counter-Extremism in India: ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and Beyond](#). *Tony Blair Faith Foundation*, February 23, 2016. Accessed April 27, 2016.

Saini, Dr R.S. "Self-Determination, Terrorism and Kashmir." *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*. No. 2 (April 2001): 59-98.

Sharma, Deepti. 2015. The Kashmir Insurgency: multiple actors, divergent interest, institutionalize conflict. In *Ethnic Subnationalist Insurgencies in South Asia*, edited by Jugdep S. Chima. New York: Routledge.

Singh, Aarti Tikoo. [Unemployment a reason for surge in J&K violence?](#) *The Times of India*, April 16, 2016. Accessed on May 02, 2016.

Swami, Praveen. [Indian consulate attack: Before dying, Afghan attackers scrawled 'Afzal Guru avenged' on walls](#). *The Indian Express*, January 06, 2016. Accessed May 02, 2016.

IS in Afghanistan: Emergence, Evolution and Expansion

Inomjon Bobokulov

The declaration of IS-Khorasan in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region by the so-called Islamic State (IS) and the subsequent expansion of the group's activities in the region came against a backdrop of continuing instability in the region. Given the Taliban's established presence in the region, will IS extend its reach and influence to replace the Taliban?

Introduction

The declaration of Wilayat Khorasan (IS-Khorasan) in January 2015, marked the Islamic State (IS)'s official expansion into the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. Against this backdrop, the presence of the Taliban has served to challenge the legitimacy of the government in Kabul.

Afghanistan is at the front lines in the fight against IS. Some analysts argue that IS-Khorasan is operationally effective and has the potential to expand in the region (Gambheer 2015). A United Nations Security Council (UNSC) report published on August 2015 states that about 10% of the active Taliban-dominated insurgents are IS sympathisers. Moreover, IS' presence was noted in 25 out of 34 provinces in Afghanistan (UN 2015). On the other hand, some prominent Afghan politicians, including Amrullah Saleh, argue that IS will not be able to establish a firm footing in Afghanistan due to its violent Salafi ideology, which currently amounts to nothing more than "psychological warfare," and would not resonate with the Afghan people (Khaama Press 2015).

IS' Emergence in Afghanistan

The declaration of IS-Khorasan demonstrated IS' intention to expand beyond its traditional area of influence – the Middle East and the Arab world. Its emergence was triggered by small group of disgruntled commanders of the

Afghan and Pakistani Taliban who pledged an oath of fealty to the self-styled caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. On 11 January 2015, a group of militants across Afghanistan and Pakistan met at the Kurram Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and declared Hafiz Saeed Khan, a former commander of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) for Orakzai Agency, IS-Khorasan's emir. IS' official spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani accepted the pledge on 26 January 2016. Subsequently, Mullah Abdul Rauf Khadem, a well-known commander of Afghan Taliban, was selected as his deputy. Mullah Abdul Rauf Khadem was later killed in a US drone strike in February 2015.

IS was able to capitalise on the favourable conditions afforded by the security vacuum in the Af-Pak region in the following areas:

Geography

IS operates in eastern Afghanistan's Nangarhar and Kunar provinces, along its border with Pakistan. The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), backed by the US Air forces, carried out military operations to successfully drive out some IS militants from their strongholds. Although the remaining IS militants dispersed to neighbouring provinces such as Zabol, Ghazni, Paktika, Logar and Lagman (Forrest and Denaburg with Gambhir 2016), the group's position in these provinces is neither strong nor stable. This is because IS' efforts to penetrate territories and consolidate its power in Afghanistan has been encountered with stiff resistance not only from ANSF but also from the Afghan Taliban. The Nangarhar Offensive, a 21-day military operation of ANSF and US which took place in February and March 2016, together with clearance operations and drone strikes in the last several months, have not completely eliminated IS. Currently, the eastern Nangarhar province, mainly Kot and Achin districts, continues to serve as a foothold for IS in Afghanistan (Khaama Press 2016).

IS' presence in Afghanistan can be explained in terms of its military, territorial, economic and ideological reach and appeal. In terms of military planning, the geography of Kunar, Ghazni and Zabol is of significance because these areas are fortified by mountains. As such, the natural/geographical fortification provides IS with the ability to compensate for the technological overmatch of its relatively strong enemy force (Lewis McFate, Denaburg and Forrest 2015).

“ IS’ efforts to penetrate territories and consolidate its power in Afghanistan has been encountered with stiff resistance not only from ANSF but also from the Afghan Taliban. ”

Furthermore, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, known as the Durand Line, is porous and allows for mobility of the local people living in the region's Pashtun belt just across the border. Since the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, the country has served as a springboard for the Afghan *mujahidin* groups. Since then, the uncontrolled Durand Line is also being exploited by a myriad of militant organisations.

Additionally, the global counter-terrorism campaign in Afghanistan, and the military operation in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border areas altered the dynamics of the role of *maliks and khans*, who were the elders of clans and tribes. Tribal heads were intermediaries between the tribes and the government represented by political agents. In the 1980-90s, the radical Taliban ideology strengthened the status of the *mullahs* (religious leader), which was a position of secondary importance in traditional Pashtun society. As the *maliks* and *khans* were removed from the political scene by different means, including through assassinations by Taliban members, the traditional way of social regulation was violated (Sanderson, Kimmage, Gordon 2010; Taj 2011). Moreover, the tribal belt has never been fully integrated into the Pakistani society. On the contrary, it has been ignored both politically and economically. The combination of these factors made FATA a breeding ground for the various Islamist groups.

Another factor is the transit trade corridors of Nangarhar province. IS' presence in Nangarhar provides the group with significant economic benefits, including taxation and customs duties on goods moving across the border. Given the growth of drug production and trafficking in the region, particularly in Nangarhar, IS is likely to turn towards the exploitation of drug smuggling to sustain itself (Mahmood 2015).

Ideology

The prevalence of jihadist-Salafist ideology provides fertile grounds for IS' radicalisation. Salafism is not a new phenomenon in Afghanistan. Its origins date back to the 19th century, when followers of the Ahl-e-Hadith religious organisation spread Salafism through establishing *madrassas* (religious schools) in Attock, Akora and Kunar. From the 1950s, Ahl-e-Hadith indoctrinated many Afghan mullahs with the Salafist ideology, particularly in the provinces of Kunar and Badakhshan. In the 1980s, the graduates of *madrassas* materialised the idea of an "Islamic state" by creating "Islamic emirates" in the provinces of Kunar, Nuristan and Badakhshan (Roy 1994).

The most prominent of the emirates was the Emirate in Kunar established in January 1991 by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a former field commander of the Islamic Party of Afghanistan, and Jamil-ur-Rahman, known as Maulwi Hussein (Dorransoro 2005). Kunar's Salafists were the last among the armed groups in Afghanistan such as Haqqani, Mansur and Hales family, who recognised Mullah Omar as the leader of Taliban. In the post-Taliban era, some prominent Salafi commanders joined the government of Hamid Karzai. They included Haji Jandad Safi, who became the first post-2001 governor of Kunar and later a member of parliament; Haji Rozi, who received the position of a deputy governor post in 2002 and 2005; and Haji Rohullah, who participated in the 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga. However, their cooperation did not last long.

Currently, in many parts of Kunar and Nangarhar province, Salafism remains an integral part of the religious landscape (Osman 2015). Abdul Qahir Khorasani, who was from Kunar and Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost, who was from Nangarhar, both stalwart supporters of Salafism, were the first to declare support for IS in July 2014. They also became the founding fathers of IS-Khorasan. Both Muslim Dost and Khorasani maintained a close relationship with the Pakistani

“ The prevalence of jihadist-Salafist ideology provides fertile grounds for IS' radicalisation. ”

Taliban, a source of which enabled them to actively engage in recruiting Afghan refugees for IS in Iraq and Syria (Osman 2014).

Taliban infighting benefiting IS?

Following the announcement of Mullah Omar's death in 2015, the Taliban was plagued by infighting. Mullah Omar was succeeded by Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, resulting in a dispute among the rank-and-file of the Taliban. The internal strife within the Taliban led to the splitting and alienation of individual commanders from the movement. In November 2015, a number of commanders, including Mullah Muhammad Rasul, Mansoor Dadullah and Abdul Manan Niazi, established a new group called the "Higher Council of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan". Experiencing alienation from the Taliban leadership and owing to the perception that Mansoor was lacking in legitimacy as the new emir of the group, some members decided to abandon the Taliban.

Unlike the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), no prominent leader of the Afghan Taliban joined IS as a result of the infighting. An important exception among the prominent commanders is Abdul Rauf Khadem. By 2010, Khadem had been one of the most influential field commanders of the Taliban, a shadow governor of Uruzgan and the chief of the Taliban intelligence commission. In October 2014, he secretly travelled to Iraq. Upon returning, he worked actively among the militants of the Taliban in Farah and Helmand in order to recruit them for IS (UN Report 2015).

After Mansoor was killed in a drone strike in May 2016, Haibatullah Akhundzada became the new leader of the Taliban. His appointment was met with little criticism within the Taliban ranks. Many analysts argue that the undisputable nature of

nomination has helped boost consolidation and integration within the group. Promotion of Mullah Yaqoob, the elder son of Mullah Omar, and Sirajuddin Haqqani, the leader of Haqqani Network, as Akhundzada's deputies will provide the group with legitimacy in both the south and east (CNN 2016).

The Intra-Afghan Context

Political Instability

Politically, Afghanistan remains unstable. The Afghan government faces a prolonged crisis, and lacks the capacity to manage it. Dysfunctional governance has resulted in the creation of alternative power centres. Informal leaders like the leaders of tribes and ethnic groups and militia commanders, who hold political ties with influential politicians and external donors and have the material resources, are essentially in charge of the situation in the different parts of the country. At the same time, they compete with the official authorities for influence at the local level.

Overwhelming Presence of Irregular Forces

ANSF is also unable to deal with security threats effectively and it is dependent on air support from the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan. Under these circumstances, irregular forces have assumed great importance, in particular the Afghan Local Police (ALP) sponsored by the US and the UK. Prominent Afghan politicians and commanders and the US military leadership in Afghanistan consider the militia a crucial and effective fighting force against insurgent groups. In fact, ALP played a critical role in liberating Kunduz city in September 2015 from Taliban control, as well as fighting IS' militants in Nangarhar (Raghavan 2015; Pajhwok 2016).

The current Afghan government has plans to invest in the ALP and increase its numbers from 29,000 to 45,000. However, a report from the International Crisis Group (ICG) concluded that "the ALP and pro-government militias are cheap but dangerous, and Kabul should resist calls for their expansion." This is because ALP and other militia groups have carried out arbitrary and illegal activities. According to the report in 2014, the high death rate of ALP commanders resulted in extortion, kidnapping, and extrajudicial killings that instigated armed responses (ICG Report 2015). This has caused instability, deterioration of ethnic relations, and the government to lose its legitimacy. As a result, locals extend their

“ The Afghan government faces a prolonged crisis, and lacks the capacity to manage it. ”

support to the insurgents instead.

Taliban vs. IS

IS and the Taliban are divergent organisations in many ways. Taliban, unlike the IS, has no global ambitions; it is an Afghan-centric Pashtun movement whose ultimate goal is to create an Islamic government in the country. Ideologically, the Taliban belongs to the Deobandi sect of the Hanafi School of jurisprudence. In contrast, IS identifies itself as jihadi-Salafist. Operationally, Taliban has allied itself with Al Qaeda – IS' top enemy on the global jihad stage. IS considers Taliban a tribal-militant organisation, while the Taliban believes IS has hurt the cause of jihad by indiscriminately committing violence against civilians. Moreover, IS has a penchant for killing Shiites. The Afghan Taliban, despite being Deobandis, are not anti-Shiite per se.

In terms of international law, the Taliban, being one of the parties to the intra-Afghan armed conflict, has the status of a belligerent, i.e., the warring party. The other party, Kabul government, and the countries involved in the political dialogue recognise the Taliban in this capacity. The Taliban's quasi-legal status was legitimised by the creation of Taliban's political office in Qatar, whose role was to negotiate with the government. The Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) of Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and US was created to resume peace talks between the government and the Taliban. Its creation helped to further legitimise the Taliban as an important stakeholder in the Afghan theatre. The Taliban remains the largest military and political force with a presence in almost all provinces of Afghanistan. The group has steadily encroached upon strategically important administrative centres, both in the south and in southeast of the country. Therefore, it is difficult for IS to establish itself as a formidable entity capable of surpassing the Taliban.

Conclusion

Domestic problems related to tribalism and ethnic politics has constrained IS' growth in the country. IS' expansion, in terms of recruitment, and spread of its ideology among the local population has to be seen in light of the country's already complex security situation. This has been accompanied by the Taliban's stiff resistance. Given the situation, IS is not likely to displace the Taliban's traditional strongholds in the Afghan theatre of war.

Nonetheless, there are still areas of concern. The dysfunctional nature of National Unity Government (NUG), the lack of law and order, the growth of influence of informal leaders at the local level and the incapacity of ANSF to deal with national security threats could pave the way for IS activity in Afghanistan.

The complete removal of IS-Khorasan as a new actor from Afghan soil requires the following: internal consolidation of Afghan NUG government, prioritisation of the Afghan peace talks with the Taliban, active involvement of Afghanistan to develop its institutions, provision of basic needs to its people, and unambiguous regional and international efforts to combat terrorism in the country.

Inomjon I. Bobokulov holds a PhD in International Law and is an Associate Professor at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Uzbekistan.

References:

Bunzel, Cole. From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State. The Brookings. *Analysis Paper*, March 2015. Accessed April 15, 2016.

CNN. Taliban's new leader 'natural choice' to unite group, say analysts. *CNN*. May 26, 2016. Accessed July 3, 2016. *Dorransoro, Gilles. Revolution Unending. Afghanistan: 1979 to the present. London: Hurst, 2005.*

Gambhir, Harleen. ISIS in Afghanistan. *Backgrounder*, Institute for the Study of War. December 3, 2015. Accessed April 15, 2016.

International Crisis Group. The Future of the Afghan Local Police. Asia Report N 2684. June 4, 2015. Accessed July 3, 2016.

Khaama Press. Amrullah Saleh: ISIS in Afghanistan "Psychological Warfare". *Khaama Press*, April 15 2015. Accessed April 15, 2016.

Khaama Press. Over 200 ISIS loyalists killed in Nangarhar raids, officials say. *Khaama Press*, July 2, 2016. Accessed July 2, 2016.

Lewis McFate, Jessica, Denaburg, Rob and Forrest, Caitlin. Afghanistan Threat Assessment: the Taliban and ISIS. *Backgrounder*, Institute for the Study of War. December 10, 2015. Accessed April 15, 2016.

Mahmood, Sara. ISIS in Afghanistan: is a Growing Threat to Pakistan? RSIS Commentary, No 221 -19 October 2015. Accessed April 15, 2016.

Osman, Borhan. Beyond Jihad and Traditionalism: Afghanistan's New Generation of Islamic Activities. Afghanistan Analysts Network, June 25, 2015. Accessed April 15, 2016.

Osman, Borhan. Messages in Chalk: 'Islamic State' haunting Afghanistan? Afghanistan Analysts Network, November 17, 2014. Accessed April 15, 2016.

Pajhwok. Private Militias to be disarmed in Nangarhar: Gen. Shahim. *Pajhwok*, January 3, 2016.

Raghavan, Sudarsan. Afghan government turns to militias as Taliban gains strength. *Washington Post*, October 29, 2015. Accessed July 2, 2016.

Roy, Olivier. *The Failure of Political Islam*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

Roy, Olivier. Has Islamism a future in Afghanistan. In: *Fundamentalism Reborn?: Afghanistan and the Taliban*, edited by William Maley, London: C. Hurst & Co., 2001.

Rubin, Barnet. ISIL will not get very far in Afghanistan – for now. *Al-Jazeera news*, November 2, 2015. Accessed April 15, 2016.

Ruttig, Thomas. On Kunar's Salafi Insurgents. Afghanistan Analysts Network, January 14, 2010. Accessed April 15, 2016.

Sanderson, Thomas, Kimmage, Daniel and Gordon, David. *From the Ferghana Valley to South Waziristan: The Evolving Threat of Central Asian Jihadists*, A Report of CSIS Transnational Threat Project, March 2010. Accessed July 3, 2016.

Taj, Farhat. *Taliban and Anti-Taliban*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011.

UN Security Council Resolution. S/2015/648, August 26, 2015.

Appointment of the New Taliban Chief: Implications for Peace and Conflict in Afghanistan

Abdul Basit

The appointment of the new Taliban Chief Maulvi Haibatullah Akhundzada following the killing of former Taliban head Mullah Akhtar Mansoor will not have a major impact on the insurgent group's capabilities. Haibatullah, like his two predecessors, is unlikely to join the peace process with the Afghan National Unity Government. In addition, Haibatullah's appointment by the Taliban Supreme Council indicates that the Taliban will continue to fight until the complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan.

Background

On 25 May 2016, Maulvi Haibatullah Akhundzada was appointed as the Taliban Chief following the death of Mullah Akhtar Mansoor in a US drone strike in Pakistan's Balochistan province. Mansoor's refusal to join the intra-Afghan peace process, coupled with the US' growing frustration with his reluctance to participate in peace talks, contributed to his eventual assassination. Mansoor was killed less than a year after the revelation of the death of Taliban's founding leader, Mullah Omar, in 2014. Unlike the discord caused by Mansoor's appointment, Haibatullah's ascension has been conflict-free. In addition to Haibatullah's appointment, the Taliban supreme council has also selected Mullah Yaqoob, the elder son of Mullah Omar, and Siraj-ud-Din Haqqani, head of the dreaded Haqqani Network, as Haibatullah's deputies.

Haibatullah's appointment was unexpected by experts and analysts observing the Taliban movement, as the move represented a deviation from past

tradition of appointing a leader with previous combat experience and political skills. Prior to his rise as the founding leader of the Taliban movement, Mullah Omar fought against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979-89). He was a respected Afghan jihad veteran, charismatic and a highly revered figure within the Taliban membership. Similarly, Mansoor, before becoming the Taliban Chief, was regarded as a politically astute individual with exceptional diplomatic capabilities. Contrary to these qualifications, Haibatullah neither possesses the charismatic skills of Mullah Omar nor the political expertise of Mansoor.

Instead, Haibatullah served as a judge of the Sharia Court during the Taliban regime from 1996 to 2001. Even though Haibatullah is a less charismatic choice and arguably a weak leader, his two deputies are influential and actively involved in running the organisational affairs of the insurgent movement. Moreover, after Haibatullah's appointment, the Taliban Supreme Council, which comprises of religious scholars and military commanders, has also emerged as a stronger and more decisive authority in future decision-making processes. This was not the case under Haibatullah's predecessors. As such, it is apparent that Haibatullah's appointment is a symbolic one, with actual decision-making powers resting with the Taliban Supreme Council (Straits Times 2016).

Profile: Who Is Mullah Haibatullah?

Haibatullah is a religious cleric who belongs to the Noorzai Pashtun tribe. His father was a poor preacher and he was raised in the Panjwai district of Kandahar province in southern Afghanistan. Haibatullah also runs a seminary named Khair-ul-Madaris in Kuchlak – a town 20 kilometres from Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan. As a religious scholar, he is respected among Taliban's political and military commanders, who considered him their teacher and adviser.

Believed to be in his late-50s, Haibatullah was a senior judge during the Taliban rule, with ruthless verdicts that represent the crux of Taliban's extremist worldview. His rulings and edicts defined the religious, social, and political aspects of Taliban's worldview (Qazi 2016). For instance, he banned women from working, prohibited them from receiving formal education and called for confining them to their houses. In addition, he also supported the cutting of hands for theft and

“ Haibatullah served as a judge of the Sharia Court during the Taliban regime from 1996 to 2001. ”

stoning alleged adulterers to death. At the time of the fall of the Taliban in 2001, he was the Chief Justice of the group.

Haibatullah was involved in the anti-Soviet resistance during the 1980s, but is not perceived as a prominent military commander. The lack of military expertise in comparison to his predecessors indicates that Haibatullah is a weak leader. Moreover, it is also likely that decisions under his leadership will not be taken independently, but will be heavily influenced by the Supreme Council (Daily Times 2016).

Haibatullah's Appointment: A Strategic Move, Not a Smart Choice

Haibatullah's appointment by the Taliban Supreme Council is a strategic move, but not a smart choice. His religious background earned him the immediate support of several Taliban commanders and fighters, which made it difficult for the dissenting members to raise objections against his appointment. Therefore, he managed to win the allegiance of major Taliban factions without any opposition, while forestalling power struggles within the organisation. This also negated any expectations of the Afghan government and the US from weakening the Taliban movement by killing Mansoor (Stenersen 2016).

His appointment also sent a strong signal to Taliban rivals that the insurgent movement is not dictated by personalities but rests upon strong social support along the Pashtun belt of Afghanistan, and a resilient hierarchical structure. As such, the office of the Taliban Chief is what made Haibatullah powerful, rather than his individual personality and background. The authority rests with the office of the Taliban Chief and not the person leading it. Haibatullah's appointment has also dispelled the perception

that the elimination of the Taliban's top leadership can weaken the insurgent movement.

Moreover, through this appointment, the Taliban Supreme Council ensured protection for Siraj Haqqani, who is one of group's most valuable military commanders. The position of the Taliban Chief entails extensive consultations, meetings with representatives of various Taliban factions and regular participation in Supreme Council meetings that deliberate upon critical issues affecting the movement. As such, the Supreme Council avoided compromising Siraj's security as the position of the leader could make him a target for a drone strike in the future. Siraj was a prominent contender for the position of the Taliban Chief after Mansoor because of the victories the Taliban achieved under his command in 2015. In addition, he is one of the most wanted militant commanders on the US terror watch-list and thus, vulnerable to a US drone attack. Through appointing Siraj as Haibatullah's deputy, the Supreme Council has granted him the ability to run Taliban's military operations rather than engaging in leadership duties (Sarban 2016).

Haqqanization of the Taliban Movement

Siraj rose quickly within the Taliban ranks ever since Mansoor took over as the leader last year. Haibatullah's appointment will further increase Siraj's influence in the Taliban movement. Prior to Mansoor's killing, Siraj played a leading role in the organisational affairs and military strategy of the group. He was also critical in resolving differences between dissenting Taliban commanders and Mansoor, including with the prominent Taliban military commander Mullah Qayum Zakir, and Mullah Omar's family. In light of the control Siraj exercised over the organisational workings, it can be said that the 'Haqqanization' of the Taliban movement is underway, and in fact is accelerating.

Haibatullah's lack of combat experience will undoubtedly increase Siraj's clout within the Taliban ranks. Siraj is now fully in charge of the on-going spring offensive and other Taliban-led military operations in Afghanistan. He is young, battle-hardened and a smart military commander. Siraj's increasing influence will prove to be damaging to American interests in Afghanistan and detrimental to prospects for a negotiated settlement. The conclusion of this summer's fighting season will be critical in deciding how much impact the Taliban can make

“ The authority rests with the office of the Taliban Chief and not the person leading it. ”

on the overall dynamics of the Afghan conflict (Shams 2016).

Implications for the Afghan Peace Process

Some experts believe that by killing Mansoor, the US has eliminated the possibility of resolving the conflict in Afghanistan (Yousafzai 2016). Mansoor had kept Taliban's Qatar office for peace talks open, even though he was reluctant to engage in the process fully. This was an indication that he did not entirely oppose peace talks. However, the US authorities perceived his presence as a hurdle to peace, whilst expecting his absence would allow the Taliban to engage with the Afghan government.

This assumption was largely divorced from ground political realities in Afghanistan. In fact, in his first speech after being appointed as Taliban chief, Haibatullah ruled out peace talks as long as foreign troops were present on Afghan soil. In this regard, he said, "Taliban will never bow their heads and will not agree to peace talks. People thought we will lay down our arms after Mullah Mansoor's death, but we will continue fighting till the end" (Dawn 2016).

The Taliban's spring offensive in Afghanistan has underscored the strength of the organisation despite losing its leader and appointing a successor. It is likely that Haibatullah will adopt a more assertive military posture and a hardened stance on peace talks to strengthen his position as the new leader. Furthermore, given his extremist views of favouring violence over political negotiations, it is unlikely that the de-tracked peace process will begin once again.

The Taliban's Supreme Council and prominent members also share similar perceptions. The current narrative within the Taliban ranks is that the group's violence has forced the drawdown of US and Western troops from the country, and continued violent opposition will lead to complete

eviction of foreign troops. Further, for the Taliban, talking to the government in Kabul with the presence of US troops implies accepting their existence in the Afghan territory and giving legitimacy to the government. This is one of the critical reasons that all chiefs of the group have steered away from mainstream negotiations with the Afghan government, despite making positive gestures for conditional peace talks. For this reason, most of the interaction between different Taliban delegations and representatives of the Afghan government has taken place at the track-two level or through backchannel diplomacy.

The Future Trajectory of the Afghan Conflict

Notwithstanding Taliban's impressive battlefield gains, the overall dynamics of Afghan conflict remain in a deadlock: The Taliban are not winning and the Afghan government is not losing (The Economist 2016). However, Afghanistan might face a deeper civil war if the Taliban shows inflexibility in their stance and/or the Afghan government does not grant concessions to the group.

In terms of fighting back, the Afghan security forces can prevent Taliban from capturing major urban centres if they possess air-support and ground assistance of US troops. Last year, the Taliban had altered their military strategy from hit-and-run guerrilla operations to quasi-military tactics of hold-and-capture operations. This shift in the strategy took the Afghan forces by surprise and led the Taliban to multiple victories. The Afghan forces were unable to defend Kunduz city and parts of Helmand province partially due to the lack of air support, which could not deter a large group of Taliban from entering.

However, this year the provision of Russian combat helicopters to Afghan Air Force (AAF) by India, coupled with a closer coordination between Afghan ground troops and US air support has somewhat blunted Taliban's ground offensive (Mcintyre 2016). The recent announcement by President Barack Obama expanding US troops' role in Afghanistan to support and train Afghan forces will avert major crises during the fighting season. The training and advisory roles of the US troops will also allow for closer coordination with the Afghan forces.

“ The Taliban needs to realise that protracted fighting in Afghanistan will be beneficial for new actors like IS... ”

Conclusion

The Quadrilateral Coordination Group initiated peace process, comprising of US, China, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, has collapsed after Mansoor's targeted killing. The entrenchment of respective positions by the Taliban and the Afghan troops backed by US suggests there will be prolonged violence within the country. As such, Afghanistan needs a fresh political initiative for peace, rather than adoption of fixed positions by the varied stakeholders. US and Kabul would benefit from granting the Taliban some concessions like easing travel bans and freeing prisoners as a goodwill gesture and remove their names from UN list of designated terrorists to provide them some space to return to peace talks. In addition, the Taliban needs to realise that protracted fighting in Afghanistan will be beneficial for new actors like IS, possibly leading to a surge in recruitment. This could harm the Taliban's long-term interests in Afghanistan.

Abdul Basit is an Associate Research Fellow (ARF) at the International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore.

References:

Qazi, Shereena. [Afghan Taliban: Haibatullah Akhonzada named new leader](#). *Al-Jazeera*, May 26, 2016. Accessed June 18, 2016.

Straits Times. [New Taleban chief Akhonzada a scholar, not a soldier](#). May 25, 2016. Accessed June 18, 2016.

Khan, Rashid. [Haibatullah is new leader of Taliban](#). *Daily Times*, May 26, 2016. Accessed

June 20, 2016.

Mashal, Mujib, Shah, Taimoor & Nader, Zahra. [Taliban Name Lesser-Known Cleric as Their New Leader](#). *New York Times*, May 25, 2016. Accessed June 20, 2016.

Khan, Ismail. [New Taliban leader rejects peace talks](#). *Dawn*, May 26, 2016. Accessed June 20, 2016.

Stenersen, Anne. [Why Killing Mansoor Won't Stop Taliban](#). *IPI Global Observatory*, May 31, 2016. Accessed June 20, 2016.

Sarban, Khyber. [The Taliban Enter the Haqqani Era](#). *The Diplomat*, May 13, 2016. Accessed June 21, 2016.

Shams, Shamil. [Could the next Taliban leader pose a bigger threat to peace?](#) *DW*, May 23, 2016. Accessed June 22, 2016.

Mcintyre, Jamie. [Obama expands role of U.S. forces in Afghanistan](#). *Washington Post*, June 9, 2016. Accessed June 22, 2016.

The Economist. [Fresh offence](#). April 23, 2016. Accessed June 22, 2016.

Khan, Zafar Asim. [Taliban after Mullah Mansoor](#). *The Friday Times*, May 27, 2016. Accessed June 22, 2016.

Yousafzai, Rahimullah. [By killing Mansour, US killed Afghan peace process](#). *The News*, May 23, 2016. Accessed June 22, 2016.

Is Al Qaeda Central Relocating?

Mahfuh Halimi

Al Qaeda Central (AQC) is making moves to regain its position as the leading jihadist organisation and bolstering efforts in Syria to set up the first Al Qaeda emirate in the world. This raises the question whether AQC will also relocate from its present Afghanistan-Pakistan (AfPak) region to Syria to strengthen Al Qaeda's presence and be more involved in the jihadist struggle.

Introduction

In the midst of serious military setbacks suffered by the so-called Islamic State (IS), Al Qaeda (AQ) may be seizing the opportunity to re-capture leadership of the global jihadi movement and filling whatever void is created by a retreating IS, especially in Syria. Reports are emerging that AQ is turning to Syria and consolidating its position there with its affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra (JAN). A recent New York Times article reported that AQ “operatives have been told to start the process of creating an alternate headquarters in Syria and lay the groundwork for possibly establishing an emirate through Al Qaeda’s Syrian affiliate, the Nusra Front, to compete with the Islamic State, from which Nusra broke in 2013” (Schmitt 2016). According to Middle East and Syrian country expert Charles Lister, “The combination of an Al Qaeda emirate and a revitalised Al Qaeda central leadership in northern Syria would represent a confidence boost for the jihadi organisation’s global brand” (Lister 2016b).

Discussions on establishing an emirate are still ongoing as JAN strengthens its position in northern Syria vis-à-vis other opposition groups. Lister suggests that JAN “will almost certainly follow through on its plans and establish an emirate in Idlib [northern Syria] by the end of 2016”. However, even if an emirate or an alternate AQ headquarters is established in Idlib, AQ Central (AQC) is unlikely to leave its current sanctuary in the AfPak region and relocate to Syria, as such a move is fraught with danger and uncertainties.

The lure of the AfPak region

After the death of Osama bin Laden, AQC is led by Ayman al Zawahiri and several top commanders. It is the brain behind the organization and has direct connections with its Consultative Council (Majlis al Shura). Terrorist attacks are still being carried out by AQ's affiliates with the knowledge and blessings of AQC, which is presumed to be based somewhere on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border (Lee 2015).

Although establishing an Islamic state is one of its stated goals, AQC's priorities are to create a safe haven and set up training camps for jihadists. This is the reason why after giving the bai'ah and recognising the now deceased Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar as the caliph of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, AQC has never become a part of the Taliban governing apparatus. Having a safe haven in Taliban's territory allows the AQC to plan additional attacks against the United States and its allies as well as provide ideological support and strategic directions to other jihadists in their fight against the ruling regimes in their countries (Byman and Williams 2015). This is a role that AQC has carved for itself even as it supports efforts to set up an emirate in Syria. AQC is therefore likely to consider remaining in the AfPak region to be the best option for the leadership.

While there are many reasons to support this argument, the following will suffice. Firstly, the Taliban feel honoured to be the Ansar of the AQC whom they considered as Muhajirun. In Islamic history, the Ansar (Helpers) refers to the people of Medina who welcomed and aided the Prophet and his Companions after they emigrated from Mecca whereas the Muhajirun refers to those who accepted Islam in Mecca and emigrated to Medina.

Both the Ansar and Muhajirun are Muslims with whom Allah is well-pleased (Al Qur'an Al Tawbah 9:100). Taking this into consideration, AQC can be assured of the level of commitment and loyalty of the Taliban to harbour and protect them. In fact, this has never waned since Mullah Omar's days. Secondly, with Taliban as the dominant jihadist group in the AfPak region, AQC has less to worry about its safety and security.

AQC is free to move around the AfPak territories under the Taliban's control. Slipping in and out of

“ Although establishing an Islamic state is one of its stated goals, AQC's priorities are to create a safe haven and set up training camps for jihadists. ”

Iran to escape the CIA's drone attacks would be another available option for the AQC with the “Iranian outreach to the Taliban” (Basit 2016b). All these will increase the AQC's ability to survive as long as they continue to take the necessary precautions. Furthermore, after many years of living in the region, some AQC commanders are married to local women and therefore, have family ties with the locals (Bergen and Tiedemann 2013, 80-81). This guarantees that they will not be betrayed. Even without such family ties, no Taliban will turn the AQC over to the enemies because of the well-established tribal custom, the Pashtunwali code of honour, which provides a strong assurance to the AQC (Afsar, Samples et al. 2008, 61). In addition to these, the AQC commanders are among the Arab jihadists whose sacrifices during the Soviet-Afghan War the Taliban duly recognised. As an organisation, AQ has never turned its back on the Taliban even when the rest of the world had forsaken them.

Thirdly, the days when AQ is treated as guests have long passed ever since Osama Bin Laden was alive. The Taliban revere Bin Laden as a true mujahid who was willing to give up his life of comfort and wealth just to be with the Afghan people. The spill over effect of Bin Laden's legacy has caused the Taliban to accord the same reverence to AQC. AQ matters a lot to the Taliban and its views carry a lot of weight. This can be seen in AQ's letter to Pakistani Taliban military commander Hakeemullah Mehsud (Roggio and Lundquist 2012). The letter chastised Hakeemullah for calling AQ “guests” in Pakistan, and instructed Hakeemullah not to poach fighters from Badr Mansoor (who was

AQ's commander in Pakistan) and to obey the chain of command. Atiyah Abd al Rahman and Abu Yahya al Libi would not have written such a letter if their organisation was an insignificant entity. The AfPak region is also the birthplace of AQ where it continues to grow and live. It is not an exaggeration to describe AQ as “the skin of the Taliban” to demonstrate the intricate relationship between them because of their common goal, ideology and mutual interests (Basit 2016a).

Finally, it is important for AQC to ensure its survival so that it could continue providing strategic, ideological and political direction to jihadists in Syria and elsewhere. Even while remaining in the region, it has been able to secretly dispatch more than a dozen of its most seasoned veterans to Syria (Lister 2016a 13). Its affiliate, JAN, is among the most active jihadist groups there. Given these reasons, AQC would not want to leave the AfPak region for Syria or anywhere else.

Syria is in a state of flux

In contrast to the AfPak region, the situation in Syria is fraught with danger and uncertainties. IS leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, who had refused to submit to AQC's authority, has established a so-called caliphate which include parts of Iraq and Syria.

Despite several military setbacks, IS still controls large swathes of land and is able to mount jihadist operations inside and outside IS territories. It is openly hostile to AQ with which it is competing for the leadership of the jihadist movement. The group is responsible for assassinating al Zawahiri's personally-appointed Syrian mediator, Abu Khaled al Suri (Lister 2016a), and has mounted a series of attacks against JAN. By establishing the Caliphate, anyone refusing to pledge allegiance to al Baghdadi is deemed an enemy, and this is not negotiable (The Soufan Group 2014). Given IS' determination to retain control in Iraq and Syria, AQC and its JAN affiliate can be expected to be embroiled in a protracted intra-jihadi fighting should AQC asserts itself and establish an emirate in Syria.

Further, JAN's position in Syria may not be fully secured as it has to contend with other significant anti-Assad opposition groups, local influential sheiks and residents. Not many are enthusiastic about the establishment of an

“ It is not an exaggeration to describe AQ as “the skin of the Taliban” to demonstrate the intricate relationship between them because of their common goal, ideology and mutual interests. ”

emirate, causing JAN to proceed cautiously with its plans (Lister 2016). JAN would not have forgotten the fate of AQ in Iraq and its successor the Islamic State of Iraq in the mid-2000s when Iraqi Sunnis turned against both. To win over the population, JAN embarks on religious outreach programmes to educate the population about Islam in areas it controls. Unlike IS, it avoids ‘terrorising’ Muslims to accept ‘true’ Islam. The strategy has been successful to some extent as many Syrians view JAN as a committed adversary of the Assad regime. Syrians were outraged when US forces bombed JAN because of its links to AQ (Byman and Williams 2015).

Al Zawahiri has highlighted the importance of Syria for the jihadists, and the many challenges they face to establish an Islamic state in his audio statement on 8 May 2016: “Infirū li al Shām” (Go Forth to War for the Levant) and in another, entitled: “Al Shām Amānah fi A'nāqikum” (The Levant is Entrusted upon Your Necks) (2016a and 2016b). He appealed to the Syrian fighters to unite, failing which they would “be eaten one by one” (2016a). This warning indicates Al Zawahiri's acknowledgement of the danger of the jihadist groups in Syria being wiped out by the military forces that are opposing them. In an undated audio message, Osama Bin Laden's son, Hamza, also weighed in, issuing a statement calling for unity among the jihadists in

Syria (The Guardian 2016).

While praising the achievements of JAN, Al Zawahiri understood that there is an on-going attempt to drive a wedge between JAN and AQ by those whom he referred to as “the great international criminals”. He made it clear that JAN must never “sit at the same table with the murderous criminals” whose aim is to: “make them submit to concessions of disgrace and appeasement, to submit to the governments of corruption and servitude, then to enter into the dirty game of democracy. Then after all that, throw them in jail like they did with the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt” (Al-Zawahiri 2016a).

Al Zawahiri would also have learnt a valuable lesson from the refusal of IS and its predecessors to submit to AQC’s authority and abide by its directives, leading eventually to a split in 2013 and open fighting. Would JAN be as loyal to AQC as the Taliban in the AfPak region or would it go the way of IS and betray AQC? Given attempts to cause a rift between JAN and AQC and opposition to AQC’s emirate plans, the AQ leadership is likely to think hard before leaving the Taliban-controlled AfPak region and its appreciative hosts for a region where loyalties are not fully tested and may still be shifting.

Further, any relocation of AQC to Syria would be perceived as a serious security threat to the region as well as to Europe and the US, especially in the light of the terrorist attacks in Paris, Brussels and Nice and possible instability in Turkey which has just warded off an attempted military coup. A Syrian-based AQC would be seen as a rallying point for recruitment and a launching pad for attacks. This would inevitably attract strong counter military action from the US and its allies, leading to more disruptions and losses which would nullify whatever advantages to be gained from relocation.

Conclusion

Given the above considerations, it is unlikely that AQC would leave the relatively ‘safer’ and stable AfPak region for Syria. The Taliban is still in control of many parts of the region and has proven to be reliable allies. The AQC could continue to use the AfPak region to provide ideological guidance to jihadists in Syria and elsewhere and to instigate attacks against the US and others. Since AQC is likely to remain in

“ The AQC could continue to use the AfPak region to provide ideological guidance to jihadists in Syria and elsewhere and to instigate attacks against the US and others. ”

the AfPak region in the foreseeable future, more needs to be done to neutralise the leadership and pre-empt AQ’s resurgence in the Middle East and elsewhere should IS be defeated or vacate areas it once held.

***Mahfuh Halimi** is an Associate Research Fellow at the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.*

References:

Afsar, Shahid, Chris Samples, and Thomas Wood. 2008. "The Taliban: An Organizational Analysis." *Military Review* (May-June 2008).

Al Quran.

Al-Zawahiri, Ayman. 2016a. *Infirū li al Shām*. Audio Message. As-Sahab Media.

Al-Zawahiri, Ayman. 2016b. *Al Shām Amānah fi A'nāqikum*. Audio Message. As-Sahab Media.

Basit, Abdul. 2016a. Mahfuh Bin Haji Halimi, interviewer. Face-to-face. S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, 31 May.

Basit, Abdul. 2016. [Iran-Taliban Cooperation: New Dimension in Afghan Conflict?](#) *RSIS Commentary 132*, June 1, 2016

Bergen, Peter, and Katherine Tiedemann, eds. 2013. *Talibanistan: Negotiating the Borders Between Terror, Politics and Religion*. USA: Oxford University Press.

Byman, Daniel L., and Jennifer R. Williams. [IS vs. Al Qaeda: Jihadism's global civil war](#). *Brookings*, May 24, 2015. Accessed on May 30, 2016.

Lee, Kangil. 2015. "Does al Qaeda Central Still Matter?" *UNISCI Journal 37*.

Lister, Charles. 2016a. [Jihadi Rivalry: The Islamic State Challenges al-Qaida](#). *Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper No. 16*, January 2016.

Lister, Charles. 2016b. [Al Qaeda Is About to Establish an Emirate in Northern Syria](#). *Foreign Policy*, May 4, 2016.

McCormick, Ty. [Al Qaeda Core: a Short History](#). *Foreign Policy*, March 17, 2014.

Roggio, Bill and Lisa Lundquist. [Bin Laden Docs: Al Qaeda Asserts Authority in Letter to Pakistani Leader](#). *The Long War Journal*, March 5, 2012.

Schmitt, Eric. [Al Qaeda Turns Syria. With a Plan to Challenge IS](#). *The New York Times*, May 15, 2016.

The Soufan Group. [The Caliphate](#). TSG IntelBrief, July 1, 2014.

The Guardian. [Osama bin Laden's son urges Syrian jihadis to unite 'to free Palestine'](#). *The Guardian*, May 9, 2016. Accessed July 13, 2016.

Submissions and Subscriptions

Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis

L launched in 2009, Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis (CTTA) is the journal of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR). Each issue of the journal carries articles with in-depth analysis of topical issues on terrorism and counter-terrorism, broadly structured around a common theme. CTTA brings perspectives from CT researchers and practitioners with a view to produce policy relevant analysis.

The International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research has entered into an electronic licensing relationship with EBSCO, the world's largest aggregator of full text journals and other sources. Full text issues of Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis can be found on EBSCOhost's International Security and Counter-Terrorism Reference Center collection.

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis (CTTA) welcomes contributions from researchers and practitioners in political violence and terrorism, security and other related fields. The CTTA is published monthly and submission guidelines and other information are available at www.rsis.edu.sg/research/icpvtr/ctta. To pitch an idea for a particular issue in 2016, please write to us at ctta@ntu.edu.sg.

For inclusion in the CTTA mailing list, please send your full name, organisation and designation with the subject 'CTTA Subscription' to ctta@ntu.edu.sg.

ADVISORY BOARD

Dr. Rohan Gunaratna
*Professor of Security Studies
Head of International Centre for Political
Violence and Terrorism Research*

Dr. John Harrison
*Associate Editor Journal of Transporta-
tion Security*

Dr. Kumar Ramakrishna
*Associate Professor
Head of Policy Studies & Coordinator of
National Security Studies Programme*

Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis is a monthly journal of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore. The CTTA has a circulation of more than 11,000 subscribers.

Editor-in-Chief Stefanie Kam

Associate Editors Sara Mahmood
Shahzeb Ali Rathore

Design and Layout Okkie Tanupradja

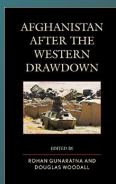
The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors and not of ICPVTR, RSIS, NTU or the organisations to which the authors are affiliated. Articles may not be reproduced without prior permission. Please contact the editors for more information at ctta@ntu.edu.sg. The editorial team also welcomes any feedback or comments.

The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) is a professional graduate school of international affairs at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore. RSIS' mission is to develop a community of scholars and policy analysts at the forefront of security studies and international affairs. Its core functions are research, graduate education and networking. It produces cutting-edge research on Asia Pacific Security, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Conflict Studies, Non-Traditional Security, International Political Economy, and Country and Region Studies. RSIS' activities are aimed at assisting policymakers to develop comprehensive approaches to strategic thinking on issues related to security and stability in the Asia Pacific. For more information about RSIS, please visit www.rsis.edu.sg.

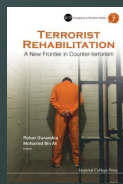


The International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) is a specialist research centre within the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. ICPVTR conducts research and analysis, training and outreach programmes aimed at reducing the threat of politically motivated violence and mitigating its effects on the international system. The Centre seeks to integrate academic theory with field research, which is essential for a complete and comprehensive understanding of threats from politically-motivated groups. The Centre is staffed by academic specialists, counter-terrorism analysts and other research staff. The Centre is culturally and linguistically diverse, comprising of functional and regional analysts from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America as well as Islamic religious scholars. Please visit www.rsis.edu.sg/research/icpvtr/ for more information.

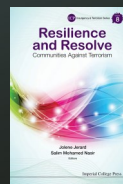
STAFF PUBLICATIONS



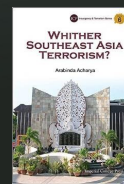
Afghanistan After The Western Drawdown
Rohan Gunaratna and Douglas Woodall (eds)
(Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015)



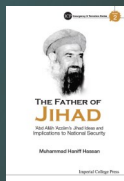
Terrorist Rehabilitation
Rohan Gunaratna and Mohamed Bin Ali
(Imperial College Press, 2015)



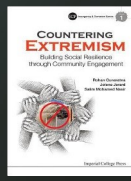
Resilience and Resolve
Jolene Jerard and Salim Mohamed Nasir
(Imperial College Press, 2015)



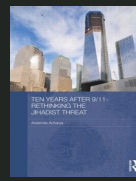
Whither Southeast Asia Terrorism
Arabinda Acharya
(Imperial College Press, 2015)



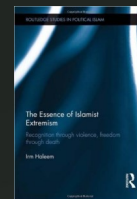
The Father of Jihad
Muhammad Haniff Hassan
(Imperial College Press, 2014)



Countering Extremism
Rohan Gunaratna, Salim Mohamed Nasir and Jolene Jerard
(Imperial College Press, 2013)



Ten Years After 9/11: Rethinking the Jihadist Threat
Arabinda Acharya
(Routledge, 2013)



The Essence of Islamist Extremism
Irm Haleem
(Routledge, 2011)

ICPVTR'S GLOBAL PATHFINDER

Global Pathfinder is a one-stop repository for information on current and emerging terrorist threats from the major terrorism affected regions of the world. It is an integrated database containing comprehensive profiles of terrorist groups, terrorist personalities, terrorist and counter-terrorist incidents as well as terrorist training camps. This includes profiles from emerging hubs of global terrorism affecting the security of the world, as well as the deadliest threat groups in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Caucasus. The database also contains analyses of significant terrorist attacks in the form of terrorist attack profiles. For further inquiries regarding subscription and access to Global Pathfinder, please contact Ng Suat Peng at isngsp@ntu.edu.sg.

Nanyang Technological University

Block S4, Level B4, 50 Nanyang Avenue, Singapore 639798

Tel: + 65 6790 6982 | Fax: +65 6794 0617 | www.rsis.edu.sg