

A PIPS Research Journal

CONFLICT & PEACE STUDIES

- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: an assessment of potential threats and constraints
- Persecuting Pakistan's minorities: state complicity or historic neglect
- The good governance model to counter extremism: an historical perspective
- From intra-sectarianism to fragile peace: the Gilgit-Baltistan model



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Editor

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Pak Institute for Peace Studies

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Pakistan faces an assortment of conflicts including militancy and terrorism, expanding sectarian strife and violence, a nationalist insurgency in Balochistan, ethno-political violence particularly in Karachi, political turmoil in governance, and inter-state conflicts with its neighbors. There are considerable gaps in context-specific understanding and empirical evidence base of these and related issues in academic and policy-level research and analysis. This not only confuses the entire discourse on conflict de-escalation and peacebuilding but also questions the context and relevance of the policies and interventions implemented regarding that on the level of state and society.

Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) has been striving to fill this gap by carrying out empirical, grounded-in-field research on the cited issues and by disseminating its research findings and policy recommendations through this quarterly research journal. Started in the last quarter of 2008, as many as 15 issues of the PIPS research journal have been published so far with their primary focus on conflict, insecurity, militancy and militants' media, religious extremism, radicalization & de-radicalization, terrorism & counterterrorism, human rights and regional strategic issues.

In 2014, PIPS sought collaboration with and financial assistance from the Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF) to publish two biannual issues of the journal. This issue of *Conflict and Peace Studies* is the second joint publication of the journal by PIPS and NOREF. PIPS is thankful for this assistance and hopes to continue this partnership. This joint PIPS-NOREF publication is meant to achieve the following objectives:

- To produce and publish context-specific research work on subjects of conflict, religious extremism, violent radicalism, militancy and terrorism, etc., in local and regional perspectives and disseminate to analysts, research institutes, institutions of higher education, policymakers, media and civil society organizations and others;
- To enhance the empirical knowledge-base and scholarship on interstate and intrastate conflicts and viable options of achieving

Editor's Note

peace, security and stability in the South Asian region, with particular focus on Pakistan;

- To increase understanding among policymakers and regional and multilateral institutions about situation-specific needs, early warnings, and effective options or strategies to prevent/de-escalate conflict and risk of violence; and
- To improve the effectiveness of local, regional and international partners by strengthening the evidence base and conceptual foundation for engaging in conflict prevention and de-escalation interventions in Pakistan.

Muhammad Amir Rana

November 30, 2014

ABSTRACTS

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: an assessment of potential threats and constraints

Safdar Sial

This report assesses potential security, political, economic and geostrategic threats and constraints that could affect the implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project. It notes that long-term political and economic stability in Pakistan are vital to smoothly implement the project. Secondly, while cooperation among all countries in the region, at least in terms of trade and economy, would be an ideal scenario in the emerging regional dynamics, there is a strong likelihood that persisting bilateral conflicts and an environment of mistrust will keep them polarized and part of alliances where Pakistan would certainly remain closer to China, thus having little impact on the construction of the CPEC and functioning of the Gwadar Port. Nonetheless, the prevailing environment of insecurity, militancy and violence in Pakistan can pose serious threats to the construction of the corridor although the finalized eastern alignment of the corridor will run through relatively more secure areas than those of the earlier planned western alignment.

Persecuting Pakistan's minorities: state complicity or historic neglect?

Razeshta Sethna

This report examines the socio-political views and notable challenges faced by Pakistan's largest minority communities – Christians, Hindus, and Sikhs – analyzing findings from a countrywide survey conducted by the Pak Institute of Peace Studies in 2014 with 327 respondents belonging to religious minorities from Pakistan's four provinces – Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Findings reveal that discrimination against minorities—within the social and cultural mainstream, undermining economic livelihoods and political participation—is connected with overall inequality and government inattention. The report also observes that most respondents although deeply committed to their faith are able to integrate and live

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peacefully with other religious groups but feel threatened by the overall deteriorating security situation countrywide and the wave of extremism that threatens their existence. Because minority groups are excluded from political decision-making matters that in the long-term not only affects but further marginalizes those communities persecuted by the religious right.

The good governance model to counter extremism: an historical perspective

Ummad Mazhar

The history of South Asia provides significant insights into the purpose of religion in the governance of the state. When analyzed, this discussion can offer explanation and methodologies that may be used to counter extremism presently taking hold in the region and beyond. This paper focuses on governance principles adopted by what were known to be two of the most durable empires in the region that is currently South Asia – the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire – as a way of studying and learning from these historical attempts at curbing the spread of extremist ideologies. The emphasis, by way of historical example, is that governance models and principles followed by Muslim rulers in the sub-continent from the 10th to 16th century were based on ideologies of inclusivism. This approach allowed for the continuation of governance with the provision of security for diverse communities, without having to contend with serious threats from multi-religious, multi-ethnic populations.

From intra-sectarianism to fragile peace: the Gilgit-Baltistan model

Peer Muhammad

This paper discusses diverse factors, actors and dynamics of sectarian conflict in Gilgit-Baltistan. Certainly these factors include the state's jihad policy during the 1980s, the fall-out of Afghan war, the Iran-Iraq war, as well as demographic changes in Gilgit-Baltistan after the construction of Korakorum Highway. The denial of constitutional and political rights to the people for almost six decades, the indifferent attitude of the local and federal administrations, misunderstanding among various sects, absence of an effective criminal justice system, ethnic divisions and lack of education and awareness, and the exploitation of the religious sentiments by different

interest groups further aggravated the situation. This paper argues that despite some recent successful efforts by local religious scholars to achieve inter-sectarian harmony there, Gilgit-Baltistan will remain hostage to sectarian-oriented religious sentiments, unless the political and constitutional alienation of the people of this region is addressed through reforms at the federal level.

Understanding the Islamic State: ideology, affiliates and the Da'esh model

Farhan Zahid

The emergence of the Islamic State has not only threatened to change the map of the Middle East but also heightened security concerns of whole world. This paper focuses on the foundation of the Islamic State and its ideology since its inception under the founding Al-Qaeda chief for Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and looks at factors that have fuelled its rise through the last decade. With Al-Qaeda losing its operational strength and independence, disappointed Al-Qaeda fighters and affiliated groups and movements began looking for a new terror base when IS appeared on their radar to provide such an opportunity after parting ways with Al-Qaeda in Syria. The IS has diverse sources of funding including captured oil fields, smuggling, extortion of taxes from businesses in Mosul in Iraq, and ransom for kidnapping. The IS model could be replicated in territories where governance is weak and states are unable to counter the rise of terrorist groups.

The evolution of militant groups in Pakistan (5)

Muhammad Amir Rana

A previous backgrounder, titled "Evolution of militant groups in Pakistan (4)" published in the spring issue of this research journal focused on primarily on Shia sectarian groups. This follow-up backgrounder reviews the evolution of sectarian groups belonging to other sects, mainly the Deobandis. An effort has been made to consult and depend on primary sources, particularly literature produced by different sectarian organizations and associated groups. There are about 45 Deobandi organizations operating in Pakistan, out of which 33 are directly involved in promoting sectarian hatred. Few of them including Sipah-e-Sahaba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi have changed the sectarian

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landscape of Pakistan, triggering violent trends in religious discourse. Meanwhile Sunni Tehreek and Ahle Hadith Youth Force, subscribing to Barelvi and Ahle Hadith sects respectively, have remained involved in violent activities.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: an assessment of potential threats and constraints

Safdar Sial

Introduction

China and Pakistan have developed strong bilateral trade and economic ties and cooperation over the years. China has gradually emerged as Pakistan's major trading partner both in terms of exports and imports. Bilateral trade and commercial links between the two countries were established in January 1963 when both signed the first bilateral long-term trade agreement (Ministry of Finance, 2014:126). Under the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries – signed on November 24, 2006 and implemented from July 1, 2007 – Pakistan secured market access for several products of immediate export interest.¹ Later, both countries signed the FTA on Trade in Services on February 21, 2009 that became operational from October 10 that year (Ibid).

¹These include cotton fabrics, blended fabrics, synthetic yarn and fabrics, knit fabrics, home textiles like bed-linen etc, minerals, sports goods, cutlery, surgical goods, oranges, mangoes, industrial alcohol, etc.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

According to statistics provided in Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-2014, the volume of trade between Pakistan and China has increased from US\$ 4.1 billion in the year 2006-07 to US\$ 9.2 billion in 2012-13, representing an increase of 124 percent. While China's exports to Pakistan increased by one percent during this period, Pakistan's exports increased by 400 percent from around \$600 million in 2006-07 to \$2.6 billion in 2012-13. As a result, China's share in Pakistan's total exports has gradually picked up from four percent in 2008-09 to 10 percent during the fiscal year 2013-14.²

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is expected to further strengthen trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang emphasized the construction of the CPEC during his May 2013 visit to Pakistan (Tiezzi, 2014). The incumbent Pakistani government has also shown much enthusiasm for the project since then. The corridor will connect Gwadar Port in Balochistan (Pakistan) to Kashgar in north-western China, which will make Gwadar not only fully operational but also a significant deep sea port in the region. Opened for operations in 2007, the control of Gwadar Port was transferred to China's state-owned China Overseas Ports Holding in February 2013. Since then, Gwadar is undergoing a major expansion to turn it into a full-fledged, deep-water commercial port (*South China Morning Post*, 2014). When the corridor is constructed, it will serve as a primary gateway for trade between China and the Middle East and Africa.³ The corridor is expected to cut the 12,000-kilometre route that Middle East oil supplies must now take to reach Chinese ports (Ibid).

Besides meeting China's needs in energy and developing its far west region and upgrading Pakistan's economy, the CPEC is expected to benefit the people of countries in South Asia, contributing towards maintaining regional stability as well as economic integration (*China Daily*, 2013).

As cited earlier, the CPEC is a comprehensive development program that entails the linking of Gwadar Port to China's northwestern region of Xinjiang

² For details see chapter 8 of Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-2014 available at <http://finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_14/08_Trade_and_Payments.pdf>

³ The whole project is expected to be completed by 2030, whereas related short-term projects including motorways and energy projects are to be finished by 2017-2018.

through highways, railways, oil and gas pipelines, and an optical fiber link. Major physical infrastructure to be built includes 2,700-kilometre highway stretching from Kashgar to Gwadar through Khunjrab, railways links for freight trains between Gwadar and Khunjrab linking to China and having possible regional connectivity with Afghanistan, Iran and India, and the Karachi-Lahore motorway. The project will also undertake the revival and extension of the Karakorum Highway that links Xinjiang with Pakistan's northern region Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.⁴ Besides physical links connecting Pakistan and China, the project also envisages establishing several economic zones along the corridor. Also, an Energy Planning Working Group of the CPEC has been established that will undertake fast-track implementation of power projects related to the CPEC. Those projects of 21,690 MW power productions will be undertaken with the assistance of China under the CPEC plan (*Pakistan Today*, 2014).

This report assesses potential threats and risks that could affect the implementation of the CPEC project in terms of insecurity and violence that pervade Pakistan, internal political and economic constraints, and also global and regional geostrategic impediments. The purpose is to understand and evaluate Pakistan's security, political and economic environment and regional geostrategic dynamics in the medium to long term to explore feasibility prospects for the corridor and also to manage potential threats, if any, that could hamper the implementation. Most importantly, the report discusses the security aspect in detail in which the probability of threats vis-à-vis extremist militancy, nationalist insurgency and criminal violence are analyzed with the main focus on areas across Pakistan which will be traversed by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

1. Political and economic constraints

Although Pakistan regards China an "all-weather friend" and bilateral relations between the two countries have never been uneasy over the course of history, yet it is important to evaluate the variables that can affect Pakistan's political and economic capacity and response to implement the elements of the larger CPEC project over longer periods of time. Important

⁴ The highway was started in 1959 and completed in 1979.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

among these variables are: 1) Pakistan's political stability and policy consistency; and 2) The present situation of Pakistan's economy and future scenarios.

With regard to the first variable, a positive aspect is that there is almost consensus among Pakistan's political parties on maintaining friendly relations with China which suggests that in principle there should be no major political impediment in the way of the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. With an exception of minor segments among nationalist parties in Balochistan,⁵ Pakistan's regional parties look towards China in a positive manner to preserve bilateral ties. Similarly Pakistan's military establishment, which is also a key stakeholder in policymaking processes in Pakistan, considers China a trusted and valuable partner in bilateral military, economic and strategic areas of engagement and cooperation. Every political party that comes into power in Pakistan holds frequent high-level meetings with the Chinese government to discuss the political and strategic prospects that are helpful in strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation. Nor have there been high level bilateral exchanges of military officials between the two countries less frequent.

Also, Pakistani and Chinese geostrategic concerns have historically remained largely converged around many common areas of strategic and bilateral interests. The relationship between the two countries mainly hinges on four shared areas of interest that include 'economic cooperation, energy security concerns of both countries, shared internal security concerns, and largely converging geostrategic interests' (Mezzera, 2011).

All these factors indicate that a change of government in Pakistan is less likely to reverse or halt the CPEC project as successive future governments are expected to maintain consistency in Pakistan's foreign policy towards China and also policy on bilateral trade and economic engagement. For example, the

⁵ Some Baloch nationalists believe that mega projects in Balochistan such as Gwadar Port are not providing due share or benefit to the Baloch people. In that context, too, it is not specifically an anti-China sentiment on their part rather it is their anti-mega projects narrative that makes nationalists aggrieved with Chinese involvement in Balochistan's development projects.

incumbent Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government in Pakistan restarted the country's political and economic engagement with China from the point where the outgoing Pakistan People's Party (PPP)-led government had left it.

At the same time, as the revised alignment of the corridor, or eastern alignment which will be discussed at length later in the report, will not run through most parts of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) as initially planned, some analysts are of the view that it would be difficult for the federal government to muster political ownership for the CPEC project from all the provinces.⁶ As the new CPEC route will largely pass through Punjab, the political leadership of Balochistan and KP may view their provinces as being deprived of the development and employment opportunities the CPEC will bring with it. However, the government claims it has not abandoned the original western route, which will be constructed later, and that the decision to first construct the eastern alignment was based on financial and security reasons.

Apart from that, long-term political stability will be required in Pakistan to smoothly implement projects such as the CPEC. In the past, Pakistan has faced many phases of political instability and turmoil that weakened the country's development roadmap and also affected policy consistency. It was a very promising development for the country's political stability that a democratically elected government completed its five year term and a peaceful transition of power happened after the 2013 elections. But the current government now faces a political crisis after just 14 months of being in power. This crisis unfolded itself after two political parties – Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) led by Imran Khan, and Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) led by a religious scholar Tahirul Qadri – started their protests and sit-ins in Islamabad on August 14. Apart from certain other demands, both parties demanded resignation of the prime minister. While the former is a political stakeholder having representation in the National Assembly and also heads the coalition government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the latter had not contested the 2013 election and does not have considerable electoral strength.

⁶ Author's interview with Fazlur Rehman, executive director, Pakistan Council on China, Islamabad, October 2014.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

The PTI alleges the ruling PML-N of rigging in elections and demands fresh elections under a 'neutral' interim set-up. Nonetheless, the PAT advocates a new political system that ensures 'true and participatory' democracy.

The ongoing political instability has already caused huge losses to the economy besides distracting the political leadership from other matters of vital importance related to governance, terrorism, policymaking and implementation of policies. Certain important visits to Pakistan of heads and officials from different countries and also international organizations including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were either deferred or shifted to locations outside Pakistan in the summer-autumn of this year.

As far as the second variable is concerned, economic growth and development are linked to political stability to a great extent. At present, Pakistan's economic outlook, although not bright, seems positive and improving. On August 18, 2014, the IMF raised its growth forecast for Pakistan to 4.3 percent for the current fiscal year, up from 4 percent (*Daily Times*, 2014). In the absence of certain major political crisis and policy breakdowns, it would be safe to say that the country's economy is right on the track and will improve gradually.

Put it another way, Pakistan can provide the required funds and facilities for the CPEC project over a longer period of time, if there is no major political conflict and no economic meltdown. The government has already allocated over Rs73 billion as the budget for the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) to execute development projects under the CPEC during the current fiscal year. Most of it this will be spent on the construction of Karachi-Lahore motorway and connecting roads and for land acquisition and relocation of utilities (Zafar, 2014). But in the case of a prolonged political crisis and economic meltdown gripping the country, such yearly and periodic allocations for the project could be disturbed causing delays to the project outcomes beyond the set targets.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project needs about \$32 billion of investment and loans for the project are expected to come mainly from Chinese banks and corporations. For that purpose, the Federal Minister of Planning, Development and Reform Ahsan Iqbal and the Punjab Chief

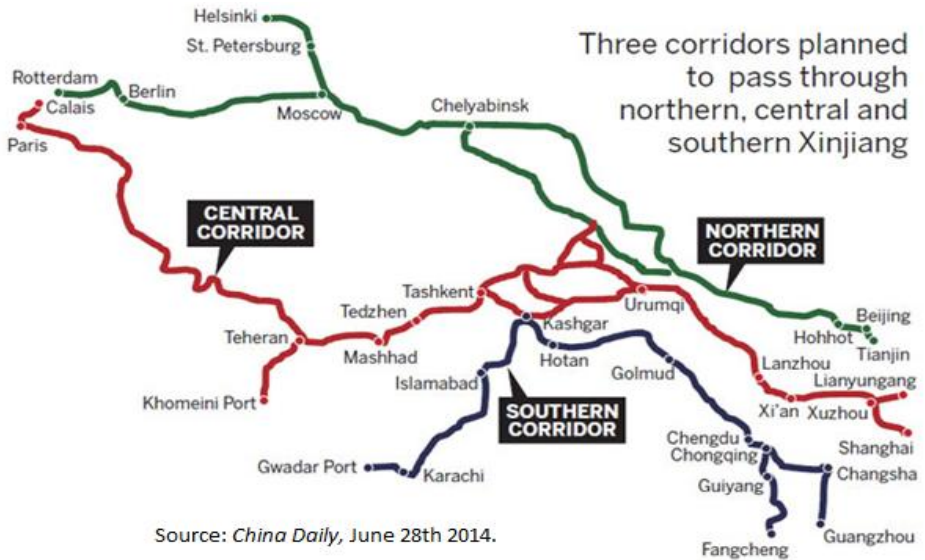
Minister Shahbaz Sharif held several meetings on their three-day visit to China in July 2014 with the Chinese National Development and Reform Commission, National Energy Administration, China Development Bank, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, Exim Bank, and heads of the Chinese corporate sector (Ibid).

Secondly, the corridor will be largely built on BOT (build-operate-transfer) basis. As a result of Chinese financing loans, the project will be completed by Chinese companies, especially state-owned enterprises in China. It is expected that the project will be financially viable for these companies because the revenues generated by the project through BOT-related facilities would cover its cost and provide sufficient return on investment. Under BOT arrangements, Chinese companies will also receive concessions from the government to finance, design, construct, and operate the designed projects as agreed in the concession contract, or BOT. The government may also provide support for the project in form of provision of the land.

2. Geostrategic dynamics

The CPEC is part of China's efforts meant to strengthen its trade and commerce connectivity with different regions of world. In September 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized reviving the ancient trade routes connecting China, Central Asia and Europe through developing three main corridors through southern, central and northern Xinjiang, which connect China with Russia, Europe and Pakistan (Jia, 2014). Also, the Chinese have recently increased focus on the Bangladesh-China-India Myanmar corridor that would provide China's landlocked Yunnan province access to the Bay of Bengal (Chowdhury, 2013).

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor



While China's prime focus in constructing these corridors seems to strengthen its trade and economic connectivity with countries in the region and beyond primarily to fulfill its soaring energy needs and enhance exports, it is expected that Pakistan could emerge as a hub of commerce and trade in the region with the construction of the CPEC that would entail establishing several economic and industrial zones and physical road and railway links connecting Pakistan and China. As the corridor also anticipates having regional connectivity with India and Afghanistan—although it is still too early to comment whether regional element of the CPEC will become operational or not—it could also enhance regional economic and trade cooperation, that in turn would contribute towards regional peace and stability.

Gwadar holds central place in the utility of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor because without making the Gwadar Port fully functional, it would be difficult for China to see the anticipated corridor as an energy corridor that appears as one of its main objectives behind the construction of the CPEC. Located near the Strait of Hormuz, which channels about one third of the world's oil trade, Gwadar could play a key role in ensuring China's energy security as it provides a much shorter route than the current 12,900km route from the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Malacca to China's eastern seaboard (Chowdhury, 2014).

However, there is the view that the construction of the CPEC will 'place Gwadar on the matrix of intense geo-strategic competition' (CPGS, 2014). It has been said that Gwadar will also put China and Pakistan in a strategically advantageous position along the Arabian Sea compounding already existing Indian concerns that stem from 'China's involvement in nearby ports such as Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Sittwe in Myanmar and Chittagong in Bangladesh' (Chowdhury, 2014). On the other hand as India is also energy hungry it looks forwards to developing Iran's Chabahar Port. In October 2014, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet decided to develop Chabahar Port, which many believe is central for India to open up a route to landlocked Afghanistan, where it has developed close security ties and economic interests (*Dawn*, 2014a), and to have access to energy-rich Central Asian States.

While Gwadar is located in Pakistan's Balochistan province, where a nationalist insurgency is rife, Chabahar is located in the Iranian province of Sistan-Baluchistan where unrest prevails as well mainly due to certain violent Sunni sectarian-nationalist groups operating in the district. If peace and stability is not achieved in Afghanistan after the drawdown of international assistance forces, and countries in the region, mainly India, Pakistan and Iran, engage in proxy wars, it could have some implications for internal security mainly for Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran that could impact development projects. Pakistan has blamed India in the past for supporting Baloch insurgents from Afghan soil. Similarly, Iran has concerns regarding Jundullah—a sectarian insurgent group based and operating in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province with free cross-border movement into and from Pakistan. But analysts argue that while Pakistan has struggled to achieve security in Balochistan, Iran has the capacity to enforce its writ in Sistan-Baluchistan that suggests Chabahar could become functional earlier than Gwadar, if pursued by India and Iran fervently.

Nonetheless, China has devised a pro-active foreign policy vis-à-vis the Middle Eastern countries by using the United Nations as a platform to negate the ongoing war in the region (CPGS, 2014). As far as Iran is concerned, China wishes to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue through peaceful political settlement. Moreover, when it comes to ties between Pakistan and India, China has played its part (Ibid). At the same time, for China, Pakistan's geo-

strategic position is very crucial as it serves as a window into the Middle East. Meanwhile, it has already expanded its trade, infrastructure and energy links with most of the Central Asian Republics (Pakistan-China Institute, 2014). But insecurity and instability in Afghanistan are a major source of concern not only for China but also other neighboring countries including Pakistan, India and Iran. China is already the biggest economic investor in Afghanistan with about \$7.5 billion investment (Ibid). China has recently enhanced bilateral and trilateral efforts aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and coordination. It hosted the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process Beijing on October 31, 2014 with a view to promote security and stability in the Afghanistan, in cooperation with its neighbors (Arif, 2014). China has also pushed the matter of Afghanistan's future after the drawdown withdrawal to the top of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's agenda (Pakistan-China Institute, 2014).

While cooperation among all countries in the region, at least in terms of trade and economy, would be an ideal scenario with changing regional dynamics, there is a strong likelihood that persisting bilateral conflicts and an environment of mistrust will keep them polarized and part of alliances where Pakistan would certainly remain closer to China, with emerging regional dynamics having little impact on the construction of the CPEC and functioning of the Gwadar Port. But it still remains to be seen whether or not the CPEC and Gwadar could become instrumental in forging and enhancing regional coordination and cooperation, although they are designed to have regional connectivity with India and Afghanistan.

3. Security-related threats

There are certainly security-related threats linked to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and while most might originate in Pakistan, the Xinjiang province in western China is also facing security threats from Uighur militants and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM). Uighur and ETIM militants have long sought shelter in Pakistan's tribal areas along with the local militants. However, Pakistan's security forces have fought foreign militants in North Waziristan Agency including ETIM and Uighurs in recent months with the commencement of the military operation *Zarb-e-Azb* which has also weakened the operational capacity of ETIM (Khan, 2014).

Furthermore, US drone strikes in various areas of FATA have also dented the group by eliminating a number of its leaders.

The security of the corridor is of crucial importance for Pakistan as well as China in order to further strengthen trade and development-related ties. It is feared that growing militancy will threaten the commencement of projects designed for the corridor. It will thus be a challenge for both countries to quash militant groups and their fighters along and across their borders. China also expects assistance from Pakistan in this regard. The presence of local and foreign militants in Pakistani tribal areas usually generates pressure on the government, therefore affecting bilateral relations (Rana, 2014).

Militant groups in Pakistan are relatively less hostile to China when compared to America and its western allies, but at the same time, they have targeted Chinese citizens, workers and engineers in past. The Uighur militants' links with the Taliban in FATA pose a major threat to Chinese interests in Pakistan. An Uzbek-speaking militant leader Mufti Abu Zar al-Burmi recently released a video message directing all Taliban groups to carry out attacks on Chinese embassies and companies and kidnap or kill Chinese nationals (Rehman, 2014). The second source of threat to security could be Baloch insurgent groups who are against mega development projects in Balochistan, including Gwadar Port currently being developed by Chinese companies. Thirdly, the militant-criminal nexus in certain areas also poses a threat to Chinese engineers, workers and citizens in the form of kidnapping and robberies. In the past, there have been many incidents of kidnapping and killing of Chinese citizens working and living in Pakistan.

This part of the report discusses the nature and level of potential security threats to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which can appear in different parts of Pakistan in form of protracted violence, terrorist attacks, kidnapping and criminal activities. The threat assessment for different regions-through which the CPEC will pass-is based on the frequency of terrorist attacks reported from these areas over the past few years, and also the presence of militant, insurgent and criminal groups in those regions.

3.1 Geography of the CPEC

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

The CPEC is a huge project that will undertake the construction of highway and railway links running through most of Pakistan starting from Gwadar in Balochistan and culminating in Kashgar in western China, while passing through parts of Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces and Gilgit-Baltistan in northern Pakistan to reach the Khunjab Pass and beyond to China.

Eastern alignment: Pakistan and China have decided to initially construct the eastern alignment of the corridor mainly due to two reasons: first, Chinese companies are reportedly willing to undertake the construction of the eastern alignment on a BOT (build-operate-transfer) basis, and secondly it is more secure compared to the western alignment planned earlier. The eastern alignment will run through only a few areas of Balochistan and KP provinces where the security situation is more volatile compared to other parts of the country. This change in original planning earned some criticism from parliamentarians in these two provinces who thought the new alignment will deprive their respective provinces of development and employment opportunities that the CPEC brings (*The News*, 2014).

Senators from KP and Balochistan during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Finance held in June 2014 said that the new corridor alignment [eastern] excluded many areas of their provinces and the new route largely passed through the Punjab (Ibid). The Federal Minister for Planning and Development, Ahsan Iqbal informed the senators that investors were unwilling to construct the western route on a BOT basis. He said the government had decided to construct the relatively more secure eastern route first with Chinese assistance and that it had not abandoned the original western route, which would be constructed later (Ibid).

The eastern alignment of the corridor originates from Gwadar, travels parallel to the Makran Coastal Highway eastwards (towards Karachi), and then after passing through parts of interior Sindh, and southern, central and northern regions of Punjab, it reaches Islamabad. From Islamabad, it extends to Haripur, Abbottabad, and Mansehra districts of the relatively peaceful Hazara Division in KP –this part of the corridor will also run through Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Jammu and Kashmir–and reaches Khunjab after passing through Diamer and Gilgit areas in northern Pakistan.

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The corridor will also run through the Pamir Plateau and Karakoram Mountains. A link from Taxila through Peshawar and Torkhum will connect the eastern alignment of the corridor to Jalalabad in Afghanistan. Regional connectivity with India through the eastern alignment is designed to be provided through the Hyderabad-Mirpurkhas-Khokhrapar-Zero Point link and the Wagha border, Lahore.

Western alignment: This was the original alignment which the government says it has deferred until the eastern alignment of the corridor is completed. According to the western alignment plan, the economic corridor (highway and railway) starts from Gwadar and runs through some southern and eastern districts of Balochistan (Khuzdar and Dera Bugti, respectively), and some districts in South Punjab to reach D.I. Khan in KP. From D.I. Khan, it further extends to Islamabad and Abbottabad and from there onwards, the route is the same as in the eastern alignment. The western alignment will have an additional regional connectivity link to Afghanistan through Chaman and will connect to Iran through Quetta-Kho-e-Taftan link.

Karachi-Lahore Motorway: It will run from Karachi to Lahore through traversing interior Sindh (mainly Hyderabad, Dadu and Sukkur), and parts of south Punjab, including Raheem Yar Khan and Multan.

3.2 Potential security threats to CPEC in each geographical region of Pakistan

Pakistan faces diverse challenges to its security and stability, for instance, Taliban militancy in KP and the tribal areas, a nationalist insurgency in Balochistan, ethno-political violence in Karachi, growing religious extremism and radicalism, and the deteriorating law and order amid acts of terrorism and violence being reported from across the country almost on daily basis.

This prevailing environment of insecurity, militancy and violence can pose serious threats to the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. As the level and nature of this threat is not uniform, it is a positive aspect that the finalized eastern alignment of the corridor runs through parts of the country which are relative more secure with few exceptions.

As China and Pakistan have decided to initially construct the CPEC along the eastern alignment, this section of the report assesses the security, law order situation and militant landscape of the regions through which the Gwadar-Kashgar Highway and railways will run, also including areas to be traversed by the Karachi-Lahore Motorway.

Gwadar and Makran Coastal Highway⁷

***Summary:** Baloch insurgents pose the key threat in Gwadar and the coastal belt; the Taliban and sectarian militants have minimum presence in this region. Baloch insurgents can carry out low intensity attacks targeting the CPEC-linked installations and infrastructure and workers besides attempts at kidnappings. The level of threat is medium, and needs stringent security measures.*

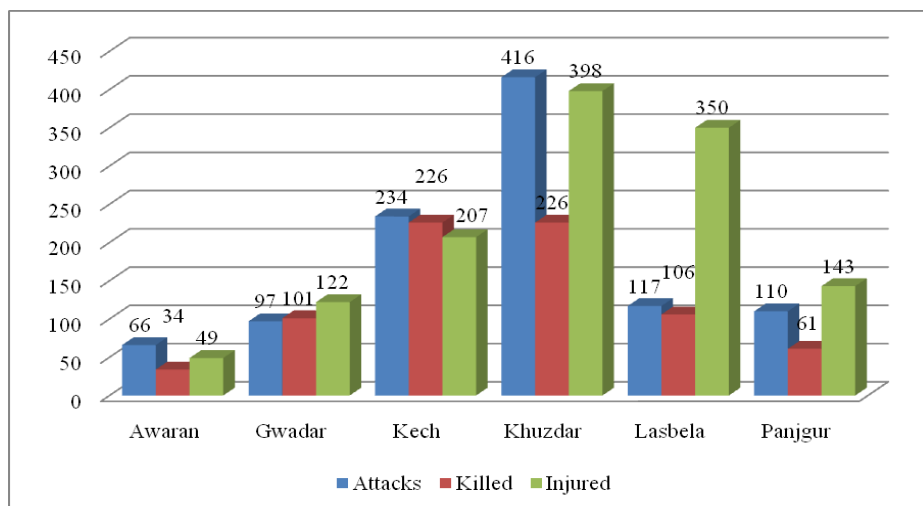
The 653 kilometers long Makran Coastal Highway extends towards the east to link Gwadar with Karachi. This is where the Balochistan part of the CPEC will originate from and run similarly towards Karachi. Security threats to the construction of the CPEC and workers can also appear from neighboring northern districts of Gwadar and Makran Coastal Belt, e.g. Kech, Awaran and Lasbela. As the militant landscape of these districts is largely linked to that of Panjgur and Khuzdar, too, it is pertinent to assess the security situation of this entire region spread over 6 districts.

A review of reported terrorist attacks between 2007 and July 2014 suggests that Kech and Khuzdar are the most volatile districts in this region. (See Chart 1) A worrisome factor is that Gwadar shares boundaries with Kech, a district where the activities and influence of Baloch insurgents has increased over the past few years. On the whole, 1,040 terrorist attacks took place in these six districts between 2007 and July 2014, representing 23 percent of total attacks reported from Balochistan during that period. In other words, 23 percent of total terrorist attacks reported from Balochistan between 2007 and July 2014 were concentrated in six districts of Gwadar, Kech, Awaran, Panjgur, Lasbela and Khuzdar.

⁷All data and statistics used in this section are taken from the Pak Institute for Peace Studies' (PIPS) database on conflict and security (<http://san-pips.com/index.php?action=db&id=1>), unless otherwise stated.

Targets hit in most of these attacks included security forces, civilians, political leaders, non-Baloch settlers and workers, gas pipelines and power pylons, railways tracks, and government installations and property etc.

Chart 1: Terrorist attacks in Gwadar and neighboring districts (January 1, 2007-July 31, 2014)



- Violent religious/sectarian and militant groups such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) or its Balochistan chapter Tehreek-e-Taliban Balochistan (TTB) have very little presence and operational activities in Gwadar, Kech, Awaran and Lasbela, four districts that will have immediate proximity with the CPEC alignment. But religious extremist and violent sectarian groups have enhanced their presence and activities in Khuzdar that lies towards north of Lasbela and Awaran districts.
- That means the immediate threat to the CPEC in Balochistan is less likely to come from the Taliban or associated groups and sectarian groups such as LeJ due to their minimum presence in Gwadar and its immediate neighborhood. Another reason is the fact that such development projects have not been prime targets for religious extremist and sectarian groups.
- However, most of the insecurity in terms of terrorist attacks and threat of kidnapping in Gwadar, Makran Coastal Belt and neighboring districts

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emanates from Baloch insurgent groups, mainly the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) and Lashkar-e-Balochistan (LB) while the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Baloch Republican Army (BRA) are also occasionally found involved in insurgent attacks reported from these four districts.

- The BLF, led by Dr. Allah Nazar Baloch, is predominantly focused in the southern coastal Makran belt although it operates across Balochistan. The group represents disgruntled middle-class and lower middle-class Baloch youths. The LB led by Javed Mengal is concentrated in south-western districts of Balochistan (Panjgur, Gwadar, Kech, particularly Turbat) and also Khuzdar. It is suspected that the group was involved in terrorist attacks on the Chinese Consulate in Karachi and a blast at the Lahore Railway Station in August 2012 (PIPS, 2013). The BLA and BRA are also active in parts of Gwadar and its neighboring districts particularly Panjgur and Kech.
- As far as the security situation of Gwadar district and Gwadar coastline is concerned, the frequency of terrorist attacks in these areas is quite low compared to other regions of Balochistan. From 2011 onwards, Baloch insurgents have hit different targets in Gwadar at an average of nine attacks in 2013 or less than one attack a month. These targets range from security forces including Gwadar coast guards, non-Baloch settlers, state installations, public and private property, and political leaders and workers etc.
- The drug peddlers, human traffickers, and criminal groups are also present in Turbat, headquarters of Makran Division, and parts of Gwadar. Also, the growing nexus of Baloch insurgents with Taliban-like groups and criminal networks has the potential to increase the overall security threat for Gwadar and its neighborhood. To curtail such a threat it is necessary to counter the Taliban, sectarian groups and criminals from across Balochistan so that they are not able to expand their outreach to Gwadar region.

***Karachi and interior of Sindh*⁸**

Summary: *The level of threat is medium in Karachi and very low in interior parts of Sindh. With the presence of large numbers of militant, sectarian extremists and criminal elements in Karachi, there is a probability of attacks on engineers and workers of the CPEC-related projects and also security personnel deployed to provide security to the project sites and workers. Incidents of kidnapping too cannot be ruled out.*

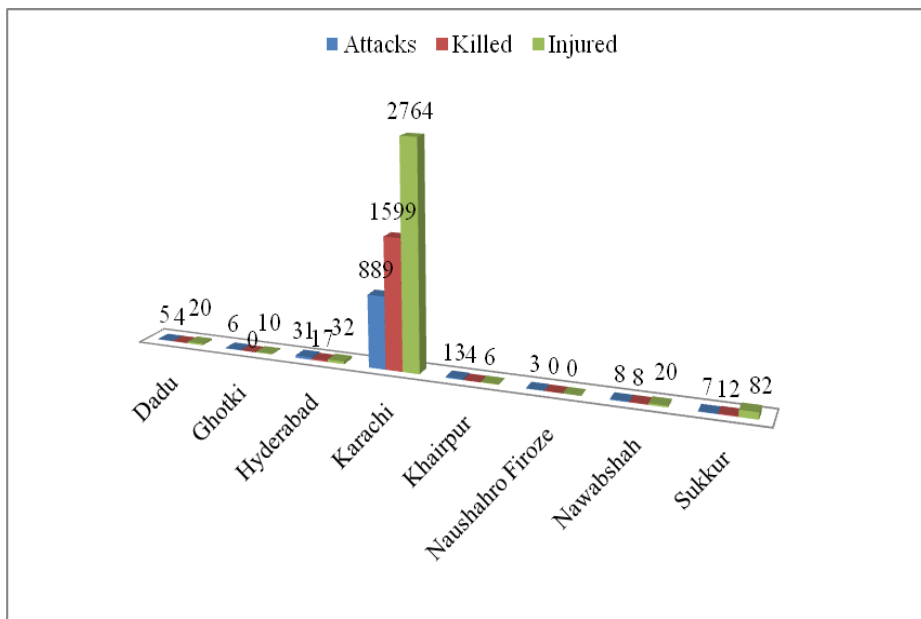
A security analysis of major areas of Sindh along the eastern alignment through which Gwadar-Kashgar highway and railways and Karachi-Lahore motorway will run reveals that major threat can emerge from Karachi whereas the level of threat in interior of Sindh is quite low.

Between 2007 and July 2014, as many as 962 terrorist attacks took place in areas of Sindh through which the CPEC and Karachi-Lahore Motorway will run. Most of these attacks, 889, occurred in Karachi alone. Among 31 attacks reported from Hyderabad, most were low intensity attacks carried out by Sindhi nationalists and others.

Most of these attacks targeted security forces and law enforcement agencies, civilians, Shia and Sunni religious communities, and political leaders and workers. A few attacks also targeted NATO supply vehicles. A considerable number of low intensity attacks also hit railway tracks and trains, mainly in interior parts of Sindh.

Chart 2: Terrorist attacks in parts of Sindh where CPEC-linked projects will run (January 1, 2007-July 31, 2014)

⁸All data and statistics used in this section are taken from the Pak Institute for Peace Studies' (PIPS) database on conflict and security (<http://san-pips.com/index.php?action=db&id=1>), unless otherwise stated.



- Karachi has become hub of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and associated groups and sectarian militants such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Muhammad. While sectarian groups are largely engaged in sectarian violence—with an exception of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi that is also engaged in terrorist attacks on security forces and other targets being a key ally of TTP—most of the terrorist attacks including high profile are carried out by the TTP and associated groups.
- The ongoing security operation in Karachi has failed to break the network of militants in the city. Reports also suggest that criminals were mainly targeted in security forces' surgical strikes going on in the city for several months now. There is dire need to launch a comprehensive operation against militants in Karachi because the TTP and its allies including foreign militants are well entrenched in the city, more than what is usually thought, mainly in areas of Gadap, Sultanabad, Gulshan-e-Buner, Manghopir, Sohrab Goth, Mauripur, Musharraf Colony, Usmanabad, Steel Town, Sultanabad, and Orangi Town. The brazen attack on cargo terminal of Karachi airport in June this year provides enough evidence to suggest how militants have established their network and strengthened their operational capabilities in Karachi.

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It also highlights lapses in the state's security and intelligence infrastructure.

- Also, Karachi can become more vulnerable after the military operation has been launched in North Waziristan. Taliban militants based in Karachi along with Sunni sectarian groups will be more than happy to welcome their fellow Taliban militants fleeing from North Waziristan.
- As far as parts of interior Sindh are concerned, in recent years religious extremism has been reported to be gradually rising there. The increasing incidents of persecution of religious minorities there suggest that interior Sindh, which historically and traditionally has been a land of peace and pluralism, is not safe anymore from the onslaught of religious extremism and radicalism. Although the frequency of terrorist attacks has been quite low in interior parts of Sindh, yet few high profile attacks were reported from there in recent past including a lethal suicide-and-gun attack by a group of five militants on the regional headquarters of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in Sukkur in July 2013.
- While the presence and activities of militant groups have been quite low in parts of interior Sindh, through which the CPEC will run, threat to security of these areas has been gradually rising from Sindhi nationalist groups mainly Sindhu Desh Liberation Army. Sindhi nationalists have carried out some low intensity cracker attacks in recent months and years targeting state infrastructure such as railway tracks but their operational capacity and organizational strength are too weak to cause some heavy damage. Hence the threat from nationalists to security of interior parts of Sindh also remains low that can be easily managed with stringent security measures.

Punjab and Rawalpindi-Islamabad⁹

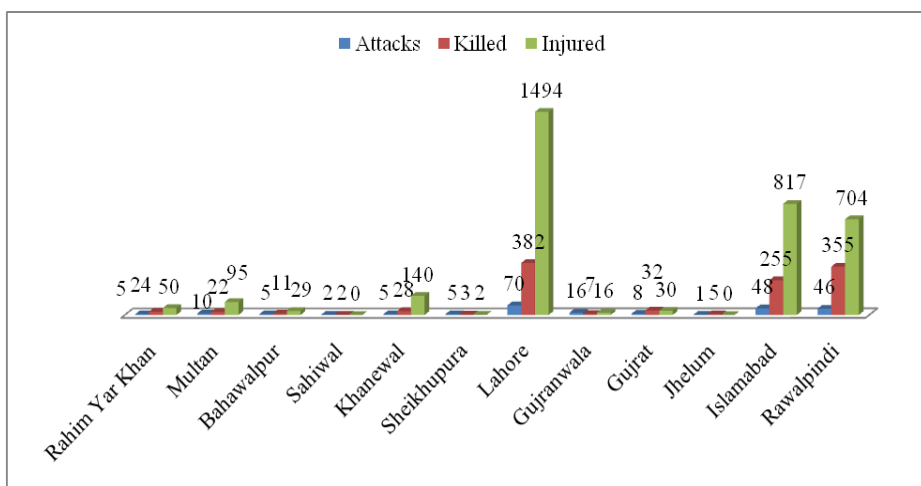
⁹ All data and statistics used in this section are taken from Pak Institute for Peace Studies' (PIPS) database on conflict and security (<http://san-pips.com/index.php?action=db&id=1>), unless described otherwise.

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Summary: *The overall threat level is low in those parts of Punjab and Islamabad from where the CPEC corridor will pass. However sporadic incidents of violence including against the project-related targets such as sites, engineers, workers and security personnel cannot be ruled out completely. It is imperative to eliminate TTP's support structures in Punjab to prevent high value and high intensity attacks in future.*

Over the past eight years, starting from 2007, Lahore and Islamabad-Rawalpindi have faced maximum terrorist attacks and casualties compared to other regions of Punjab through which the CPEC-linked roads and railway links will pass. However, sporadic attacks have also been reported from other areas as illustrated in Chart 3.

Chart 3: Terrorist attacks in parts of Punjab and Islamabad where CPEC-linked projects will run (January 1, 2007-July 31, 2014)



Targets for most of these attacks were security forces, civilians, and Shia and Sunni communities. Some attacks were also aimed at political leaders and workers, private property and NATO supply vehicles. A spree of terrorist attacks including lethal suicide attacks gripped Lahore and Islamabad-Rawalpindi after the 2007 Red Mosque siege and that continued for 2 to 3 years. Even after that time period, high intensity attacks have been reported in few other cities of Punjab.

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- The TTP has support structures in parts of Punjab in the form of groups like LeJ and also some Deobandi madrassas. These support structures have helped the TTP in past to carry out lethal attacks in the heart of Punjab, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. But strong vigilance and surveillance of security and law enforcement agencies in Punjab have denied the TTP permanent operating bases or safe heavens. That keeps the security threat to the CPEC-linked projects and personnel in Punjab low.
- Secondly, the eastern alignment of the CPEC will run through those parts of Punjab which are relatively safer and tactically difficult for the free movement and entrenchment of militants. For instance, the CPEC alignment in southern Punjab (Raheem Yar Khan, Bahawalpur and Multan regions) will be located towards the east of the Indus River and will be least vulnerable to security threats that could emerge from the western side of the River Indus. To the west of Indus certain areas are the hub of extremist groups and criminals gangs (D.G. Khan and Rajanpur, respectively) but also serve as districts where militants from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa are found as it is the simplest entry-point into Punjab - D.G. Khan through the Indus Highway and link roads is the route used. Also, to the west of the Indus, there is the presence of criminal elements, mainly in Kacha area of Rajanpur, an area that lies between the River Indus and the Indus Highway. These criminals reportedly have formed a nexus with LeJ and have been found involved in kidnapping and road robberies.
- Areas in central and northern Punjab parts of the CPEC alignment are even relatively safer than south Punjab. Although Chart 3 displays a large number of terrorist attacks reported in Lahore and Islamabad-Rawalpindi between 2007 and July 2014, as mentioned earlier these cities were specifically targeted in the aftermath of Red Mosque operation of 2007. Also, most of these attacks were orchestrated from outside and terrorist infrastructures have minimal presence in these cities, although operational support exists. Another factor to be noted is that development projects and infrastructure schemes have hardly remained targets for militants in these and other cities of Punjab.
- Although it appears that security threats to the CPEC project in Punjab will be low and minimal, it is also important that militants have the

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capacity to orchestrate high value and high intensity attacks in those areas of Punjab from where the CPEC road and railway links will pass. It is imperative to ensure that the tribal militants' support structures in Punjab are eliminated and strong surveillance and vigilance is maintained to prevent any major terrorist attacks. Police and intelligence agencies have a major role to play here.

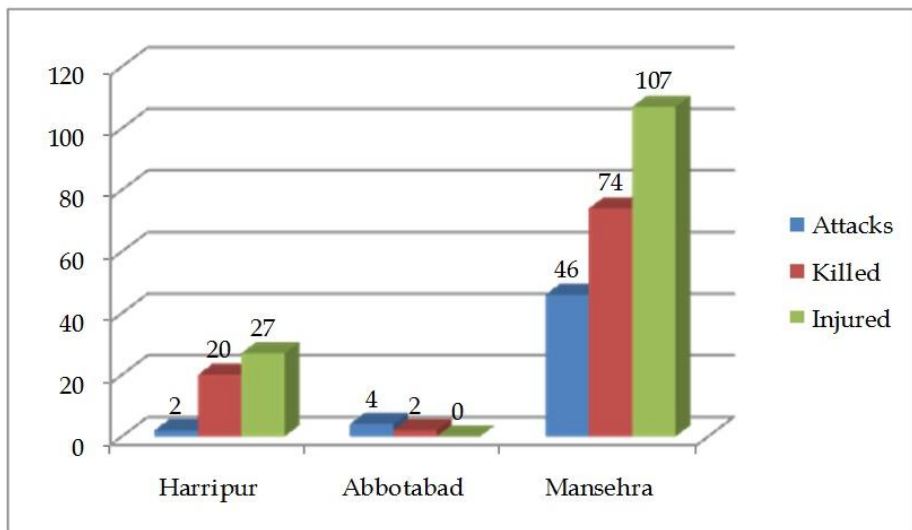
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and AJK¹⁰

Summary: *The threat level for the CPEC alignment in this region is also low because the Hazara Division of KP is relatively more secure and safer from militancy than other parts of the province. However, local Taliban militants in Mansehra, some of them linked with the TTP, could pose a security threat to workers and engineers associated with the CPEC.*

Parts of KP through which the CPEC will travel (Haripur, Abbottabad, and Mansehra) have traditionally been least violent when compared to other regions of the province. The presence of militant groups is also low in these areas, with the exception of Mansehra where local Taliban groups are operational but with minimum capacity to carry out major attacks without help and support from outside terrorist groups. Between 2007 and July 2014, as many as 4,732 terrorist attacks took place in KP and only 52 of these attacks, or 1 percent, occurred in the three districts of Haripur, Abbottabad and Mansehra. Also most of these 52 attacks were concentrated in Mansehra alone; 4 in Abbottabad and 2 attacks took place in Haripur, respectively. (See Chart 4)

Chart 4: Terrorist attacks in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where CPEC-linked projects will run (January 1, 2007-July 31, 2014)

¹⁰ All data and statistics used in this section are taken from Pak Institute for Peace Studies' (PIPS) database on conflict and security (<http://san-pips.com/index.php?action=db&id=1>), unless otherwise stated.



As mentioned earlier, local Taliban militants in Mansehra, some of them linked with the TTP, can pose a degree of threat to workers and engineers with the CPEC, but the probability and intensity of such a threat is low.

- Abbottabad and Haripur have remained largely isolated from Taliban militancy in the province. However, the Taliban in the past have tried to make inroads into these areas. For instance, in September 2007, an attack on army's mess building in Haripur had killed 20 soldiers. Since no major terrorist attack has been reported from these two districts.
- Strict security measures are required to keep the TTP and other militants away from this region, and also to counter any threats that might be posed by local Taliban and extremist groups.
- This part of the CPEC will also be linked to Muzaffarabad, capital of Azad Kashmir. Muzaffarabad has also remained peaceful over the years with the exception of a few attacks in the past; only three terrorist attacks occurred in the city between 2007 and July 2014, all in 2009. One of these attacks was a sectarian-related suicide attack that claimed 10 lives and injured 81 others. Another suicide attack had targeted an army barracks killing two soldiers, while the third attack was a low intensity cracker blast that killed one person. 2009 was the year when reports started to appear in the media that the TTP was trying to make

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inroads into Muzaffarabad, but since then no such attacks have been reported; nor have any reports surfaced describing the TTP's presence in the region.

Diamer and Gilgit¹¹

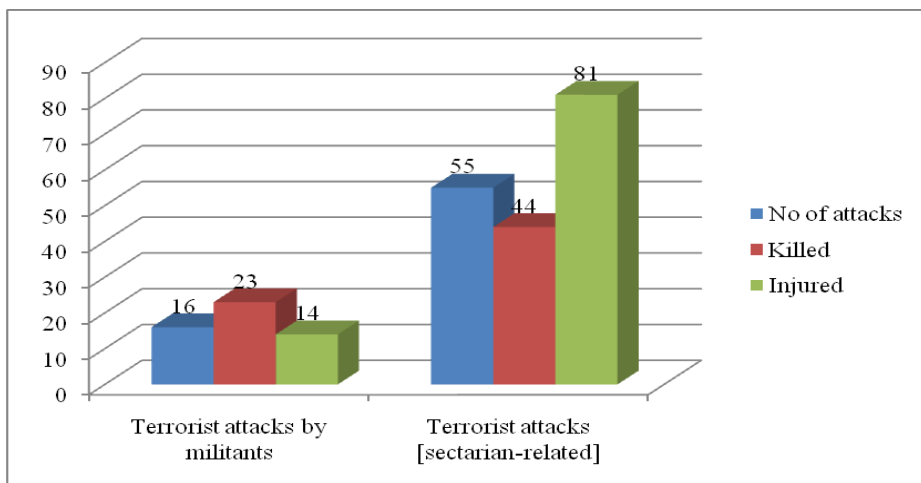
Summary: *The region has seen plenty of sectarian violence in past. Some high intensity attacks in recent years on security forces and foreigners also revealed TTP and other militants' outreach to these areas. However, the absence of militant bases and support structures in Gilgit and Baltistan suggests the threat level to the CPEC in this region will be low. However, sporadic attacks on the CPEC-linked sites and personnel cannot be ruled out.*

After passing through parts of KPK and Azad Kashmir as described earlier, the CPEC will run through Diamer and Gilgit districts of Gilgit-Baltistan. Sporadic terrorist attacks from the region in recent years, aimed at high value targets, attracted global attention and also raised concerns that Pakistani militants, mainly the TTP, in collaboration with the ETIM and Chinese Uighur militants would attempt to entrench themselves in this region. Other than that most violence incidents reported from this region have been sectarian-related.

A total of 74 terrorist attacks were reported from Gilgit-Baltistan between 2007 and July 2014 – 71 from Diamer and Gilgit alone – out of which 55 were sectarian-related and only 16 were carried out by the TTP and associated militants and other groups. (See Chart 5)

Chart 5: Terrorist attacks in parts of Gilgit-Baltistan where CPEC-linked projects will run (January 1, 2007-July 31, 2014)

¹¹ All data and statistics used in this section are taken from Pak Institute for Peace Studies' (PIPS) database on conflict and security (<http://san-pips.com/index.php?action=db&id=1>), unless described otherwise.



- On June 23, 2013, militants killed 11 people including nine foreign tourists and two Pakistanis at Nanga Parbat tourists' base camp near Bunar Nullah. The TTP spokesperson Ehsanullah Ehsan told media representatives through telephone calls that the group's faction named Junud-e-Hafsa had carried out the brutal attack. He further said the killings were in revenge for US drone attacks and the killing of TTP chief, Waliur Rehman Mehsud (Khan, 2013). The Diامر attack also revealed that the nexus of the TTP, Al-Qaeda and the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) could pose as a threat to Pakistan's internal security and also that of China's Xinjiang province.
- Later on August 6, 2013, three security force officials, including an army colonel, a captain and the Superintendent of Police in Diامر were shot dead in Chilas City (the district headquarters of Diامر) by the TTP militants. These officials were investigating the Nanga Parbat incident and the killing of foreign tourists by the militants (*The News*, 2013).
- On July 4, 2014, over three dozen militants wearing Pakistan Army uniforms stormed a police station in Diامر district. They took away 10 guns, three pistols, thousands of rounds, wireless telephone sets, police uniforms and other police personnel belongings (*Dawn*, 2014b). Locals from Diامر suspected these attackers were associated with Taliban militants.

3.3 The state's capacity and responses to maintain security and law and order

Pakistan has the required capacity and security infrastructure to deal with potential threats to the CPEC project. The country has a huge security and law enforcement infrastructure comprising military, paramilitary including Rangers and FC, police and local police forces such as the Khasadar force in FATA and Levies force in Balochistan. Additionally, it has strong professional intelligence agencies. Sufficient sources and equipment for security, law enforcement and intelligence agencies would imply better standard. But with the threat of terrorism being non-conventional and asymmetrical, Pakistan needs more stringent efforts to deal with this threat.

Tribal militants against whom the Pakistani army has launched several military operations in the past, including latest military operation, *Zarb-e-Azb* – launched on June 15, 2014 in North Waziristan that is ongoing – would suggest a policy of containment of militancy, but much needs to be done in this regard. Initial reports following the launch of the military operation in North Waziristan suggested that foreign militants mainly those from Central Asia and China were prime target of military strikes. Several militants belonging to ETIM and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)–both groups along with the TTP have close links with Chinese Uyghur militants–have been killed in the military operation so far. The government and army have vowed to clear North Waziristan of all militants including local and foreign, so there is hope that these foreign militants from Central Asia and China will no more find sanctuaries and shelter. Some reports suggest many of them have already relocated to either Afghanistan and elsewhere or other parts of FATA and Pakistan. However, it has been established that many of their ‘hideouts’ in Waziristan have been destroyed. This will certainly reduce security threats for the CPEC project emanating from FATA.

As far as Balochistan is concerned, the province is already under strict security scrutiny in the presence of the Frontier Constabulary, police and Levies. In recent months, attacks by nationalist insurgents and militants have decreased. The state's security apparatus in Balochistan, if utilized effectively, is capable to deter any threats to CPEC-linked projects and activities.

However, there is an immediate need to address security problems in Karachi, which is complex city where militants find many weak spots and spaces to hide, recuperate, recruit, plan and operate. The Rangers and police have carried out security operations in the city, but there is need to expand scope of this operation to eliminate all sorts of militants.

Law enforcement agencies, mainly the police can handle the security of the CPEC alignment in Punjab, Islamabad, KP and also Gilgit-Baltistan with the help of intelligence agencies. Coordination among different security, law enforcement and intelligence agencies will be vital to secure the route, construction and workers of the CPEC project.

Provincial police departments can take pre-emptive steps to ensure the security of Chinese engineers and others working on the CPEC-related projects. Some precedents were set in recent past. For instance, the Lahore City Police established eight special security desks around the city in June 2014 for Chinese citizens employed in government, semi-government and private sectors (*Express Tribune*, 2014).

4. Conclusion

Long-term political stability in Pakistan is vital to smoothly implement the projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. In the past, Pakistan has gone through phases of political instability and turmoil that weakened the country's development roadmap and also affected policy consistency. Similarly, if now or later, some prolonged political crisis and economic meltdown grip the country, the yearly and periodic budget allocations for the CPEC project could be disturbed causing delays to the project outcome beyond set targets.

Although the prevailing environment of insecurity, militancy and violence in Pakistan can pose serious threats to the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the level and nature of this threat is not uniform across Pakistan. It is encouraging that the areas through which the finalized eastern alignment of the corridor will run are relatively more secure than those of the earlier planned western alignment, though with few exceptions. The level of threat to the security of the CPEC project, including sites and personnel, is

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low along most areas of eastern alignment with the exceptions of Gwadar, the Makran Coastal Belt and Karachi, where threat level is assessed to be medium. At the same time, it is imperative to ensure stringent security measures along the entire CPEC alignment.

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Persecuting Pakistan's minorities: state complicity or historic neglect?

Razeshtha Sethna

On the frontline: minorities under threat

Religious freedom is a human right. It is as critical to the development of a nation as its economy and security, given that it reflects moral values and a sense of identity. The right to religious freedom for all religious groups constitutes the freedom to practice without threats from those organizations and individuals rejecting the beliefs of minority religions and sects. Freedom of religion takes on greater importance when communities and diverse ethnic groups co-exist, especially in countries where intolerance and religious extremism is rife. In Pakistan, there exists a co-relation between the lack of freedom of religion and the dissemination of violent religious extremism. When the government refuses to protect its people and represses religious freedoms, permits laws that are misused (laws used to prosecute for blasphemy) and target minorities and other vulnerable groups, it not only fuels rising extremism, but emboldens those who spread violence with impunity.

It was in 2013 when Pakistan witnessed an unprecedented transition of democratic power that the changing of guard between two democratically elected governments was acknowledged as a critical political milestone. To be watchfully steered towards increased stability and national pluralism, it drew consensus among most political stakeholders that increasing internal conflict fuelled by sectarianism and extremist attacks against religious minorities would need to be addressed as an urgent priority. Religious tensions would need to be quelled by the state—through a process that would engage religious leaders and combined with inter-faith dialogue and confidence and tolerance-building at the local level within diverse religious and ethnic communities where the slightest spark of dissent is liable to cause violence and distress. Given the spectre of sectarianism, much of it perpetuated by religious and

other sect-based intolerance tearing at the fabric of human rights and democracy, it was thought the government would proceed and commit resources, appoint special officials/ ministers and intelligence to curb right-wing hardliners from conducting terror attacks and vigilante justice. But sadly that did not happen. Government assurances, especially articulated in the aftermath of an attack targeting a minority community or a place of worship, did not go beyond visiting the scene of violent incidents/attacks, and ensuring a committee investigate the attack. Activists in Pakistan and other international watchdogs have reminded that minorities lack police protection and legal assistance. Perpetrators of hate crimes are not charged and punished. In a 2013 Pew survey, fifty-seven percent of Pakistanis said that they considered religious conflict a national problem.¹

Vali Nasr² explains sectarianism as the single most important issue in the Muslim world, including the Middle-East. It is the oldest dispute with 1,400 years of difference between the two sects of Islam – Sunni and Shia – that interpret history, law and philosophy differently. Because diversity doesn't have currency in religion, it is not easy to define the Shia-Sunni conflict as being about religion [alone] but it has a socio-political dimension, therefore has a political side. Nasr claims that the 2003 Iraq war brought into sharper focus the Iranian-Saudi rivalry which meant that an Arab-Shia power with oil money in the Middle-East became a lot more dangerous than even an independent Najaf (considered the third holiest city of Shia Islam and the center of Shia political power in Iraq) According to his analysis, Pakistan has

¹ *The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society* was conducted by Pew Research Centre's Forum on Religion and Public Life and published in April 2013, the main objective being to examine the social and political views of Muslims worldwide.

² Having written extensively on politics and Islamic activism in Pakistan and Iran, Vali Nasr highlighted the importance of Shia politics in the aftermath of the 2003 Iraq war and the current power struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Middle-East, while speaking on the growing role of sectarianism in politics at the Yohsin Distinguished Lecture at Habib University, in Karachi, Pakistan in November 2014. Nasr is currently the Dean of the Paul H Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at John Hopkins University, USA. Among other numerous professional appointments, he has served as a senior advisor to the US Special representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan, the late Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, between 2009 and 2011.

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the world's second largest Shia population at 30 percent. Nasr points out that Pakistan, despite its resilience was the canary in the coalmine (Nasr, 2006).

Post-1977 Pakistan witnessed the state adopting a Sunni version of Islam and this was reason for growing discord among minority religious communities that became targets because of their sect and ethnicity. Religion when misused in a multi-ethnic and religious society polarizes more than it unifies communities. Of the various factors that perpetuate such polarization, political power games and the desire to hold onto geographical and ideological space can be attributed as reasons (Rais, 2007). The religious group in the majority – Sunni Muslims – has been turned into a dangerous weapon in the hands of proxy extremist players, as they attempt to reshape society, culture, social institutions and the politics of the state according to their doctrine.

According to authoritative indicators used in the “Peoples under Threat 2013” analysis by Minority Rights Group International, Pakistan, Syria, Yemen and Egypt have all risen significantly in the global ranking table (global ranking that documents threats), with religious minorities at particular risk. Eight out of ten states are identified in the index as being most at risk subject to recent or decades-long foreign military interventions. The report points out that foreign armed intervention is now the norm in states with peoples at risk, but there is a widespread failure to track the effect on civilians (MRGI, 2014). In the case of Pakistan, although the 2013 election was hailed as the first where the transfer of power from one democratic government to another marked a milestone in the country's historical past, there has been deepening resentment among certain political and religious groups on Pakistan's role in the war on terror; its complex relationship with America, and the drone war that continues to affect communities in the tribal areas. Operating in such a backdrop of insecurity and terrorism, Pakistan has willfully turned a blind eye to home-grown extremist groups threatening its internal security and economic progress, allowing proxies to regroup and train on its border with Afghanistan and attack foreign troops across the Durand Line. Internally militant groups such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and other sectarian extremists have intensified a campaign against Shia and other religious groups, operating with complete impunity.

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Pakistan celebrates National Minorities Day on August 11 ever since Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif made a comeback for a third inning in 2013. If this was meant to be a commended reminder of an increasingly tolerant democracy where minorities are accorded rights and a voice as equal citizens, then it can be vehemently reiterated that is not the case given the constant anguish and endless threats non-Muslim communities must endure. Their situation and treatment defies all norms set by humanity: a potent reminder of the harsh reality that is Pakistan for most minority groups, including Muslim minority communities that continue to face alarming levels of hate, violence and intolerance and are forced to leave the country. Economic deprivation, political divisions, weak laws and poor governance practices and other factors all contribute to their suffering, but an underlying element is the Islamization of thought that propels this ongoing discrimination and marginalization. And very often, targeted violence has a purpose as an instrument of oppression. It sends a message not only to individuals but to entire communities. The role of religion has become so greatly politicized that it adversely impacts the status and situation of minorities and the question of security. This, in itself, has led to greater internal instability and caused sectarian and communal violence.

Religious minorities comprise 9 million out of the 183 million Pakistanis. Christians and Hindus, making up 2 percent of the population are the largest group of minorities, while the remaining include Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Baha'is, Buddhist, Jews and Ahmadis.³ It is clear that the state of security and protection for all citizens has come under greater threat as Sharif's government grapples haplessly with political machinations while the reigniting and regrouping of various militant assortments means ceding further space for extremism to take root. As the Sword of Damocles hangs over Pakistan's minority groups, the future for religious communities and the younger generation appears insecure and threatened than previously.

³ Pakistan's population is estimated to be around 183 million according to the population census in 2011. Over 181 million (97%) are Muslims, while the remaining include Christians (1.8%), Hindus (1.6%), Ahmadis (0.22) and other smaller religious groups including Buddhists, Parsis and Sikhs. Studies have suggested that a very small group (few hundred) of Jews also live in Pakistan.

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What does it mean to belong to a minority religion in Pakistan? This report examines the socio-political views and notable challenges faced by Pakistan's largest minority communities – Christians, Hindus, and Sikhs – analyzing findings from a countrywide survey conducted by the Pak Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS) in 2014. Based on interviews with 327 respondents from Pakistan's four provinces – Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan – the survey is focused on groups according to educational qualifications and religious affiliation. Findings reveal that discrimination against minorities – within the social and cultural mainstream, undermining economic livelihoods and political participation – is connected with overall inequality and government inattention.⁴

As extremist views take hold of the mainstream, persecution of religious minorities is often enacted under the guise of the blasphemy law. A record number of blasphemy accusations have surfaced over the past years, having resulted in nearly 500 families leaving the country (JI, 2014). Young children and handicapped individuals are punished for their words and their religion while those who seek to inflict inhumane harm against vulnerable, poor communities without influential, political support are permitted to do so with impunity.

What does it mean to be a religious minority in Pakistan

Historian James Mill when writing the 'The History of British India' in the 1818 marked its history into three distinctive phases – the Hindu, Muslim and the British.⁵ Even in early times, it was noted that intra-religious discord was not alien to traditions, whether Islamic, Hindu or Christian. Historically

⁴ The PIPS October 2014 survey, *Minority Rights in Pakistan: Historic Neglect or State Complicity?* discusses the lives of minorities and their relationship with other religious groups within an inter-faith milieu; explores social, cultural, economic and political aspects of various minority groups with emphasis on historic challenges; and identifies inter-faith and inter-cultural connectors from Pakistan's existing composite cultural heritage. A summary of the findings can be downloaded at <<http://san-pips.com/download.php?f=257.pdf>>

⁵ Scottish historian and economist, James Mill published 'The History of British India' in 1818 and the following year was appointed an official in India House to take charge of all correspondence from India.

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minority identities in Islamic societies distinguished themselves from the Muslim majority by features such as culture, language, religion, literature, symbols, communal memory, rather than by politics. But with geopolitical and social changes in recent times, factors impacting the role of religion in minority-identity formation would include political organization. Complex historical and social factors have formed the nexus between religion and politics in Pakistan. Religion was at the heart of the political struggle for a separate Muslim homeland pre-1947 and has remained integral to the functioning of the state since Partition. Religious identities and definitions are often mutually inclusive, varying across overlapping temporal, regional, linguistic, economic and sectarian vectors. This relationship between religion and state is complex and at times unclear. It brings in varied explanation and interest from mainstream political parties, religious leaders, military and other stakeholders. Perceptions are tailored in accordance with political interest – and it is this conflict whether Pakistan should develop as a liberal secular democracy or an Islamist state with conservative leanings that has left its real identity up for grabs and caused civil liberties and economic progress to remain on the backburner.

The Muslim majority tends to perceive poverty and the low social status of certain minority groups as one of the reasons for disqualifying them from full citizenship and preventing them from political participation by enacting discriminatory laws that persecute the vulnerable. With religion more than any other factor remaining at the core of Pakistan's identity, Huntington's thesis (1996) is compellingly applicable as he observes "in the modern world, religion is central, perhaps the central force that motivates and mobilizes people.' Any civilization that bears markers of religious traditions predominates among its people. This clash between civilizations becomes a struggle between religions and not people, and the conflict is intractable. He notes that 'what is universalism to the West, is imperialism to the rest' which in essence makes even positive interventions of peace and development by the West – or what appear less conservative forces of religion – seem structured to evoke violent reaction.

Further, Pakistan's ethnic diversity has given rise to sectarian violence against a backdrop of intolerance and historically entrenched hatred for non-Sunni groups – the aftermath of Zia's Islamization policies led to the exclusion and

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persecution of non-Sunni groups. Though population statistics reveal a multi-ethnic and religious mix, it is clear the space for all other religious groups is shrinking rapidly.

Was Pakistan defined as homeland for Muslims and non-Muslims or an Islamic state is a question further spotlighted when Zia promoted religious organizations that blatantly advocated violence – Harkat-ul-Ansar Pakistan linked with the Deobandi school of thought emerged in the 1980s to fight the anti-Soviet war and lent support to the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) which views all Shias as infidels.⁶ As early as the 1980s such organizations demanded that Pakistan not only become an Islamic state but promote Wahhabi Islam in society – and this has meant little space for minorities in state governance and how they see themselves fitting into a larger national identity. This is an example of how Sunni Islamism has an urge for purification and the tendency in Sunni fundamentalism to be exclusive and puritanical in their interpretation of Islam. Furthermore, the Iranian Revolution in 1979 was a jolt to the region and brought Islam into the political process as it emboldened Shias in the region. It raised the question as to who defines what an Islamic state constitutes. It was at that time when Shias went from being seen as passive and backward to demanding their place in the sun.⁷

This report provides an overview of ways in which minority groups continue to remain politically and socially marginalized and targets of violence. Faith-based violence, targeted killings and kidnapping for ransom, and incitement of hatred are not confined to non-Muslims alone; minority Muslim sects, mainly Shias, including the Shia Hazara community in Balochistan, are frequently attacked for their religious beliefs. State complicity is yet another factor which makes minority persecutions more rampant and left unpunished. Discriminatory laws and socio-economic and political isolation which has historically categorized minorities has found endorsement through various democratic governments and military rule. The blasphemy laws have

⁶ The SSP, founded in 1985 by Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, targets Shias as one of the Sunni militant organizations allegedly attacking and intimidating non-Sunni communities through their campaign of violence.

⁷ Vali Nasr on sectarianism in the Muslim world, Karachi, November, 2014.

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served to silence and intimidate the weak, settle personal scores against enemies when misused – including Muslims. It is the effects of adverse laws that leave an impression on the character of society, its thinking and merging ideologies, its prejudices and youth.

Human Rights Watch's 2014 report on the killing of Shia Hazaras in Balochistan reiterated that the Pakistan government 'should take all necessary measures to stop Sunni extremist groups in Balochistan province from committing further killings and other abuses against Hazara and other Shia Muslims (HRW, 2014).'⁸ Several hundred Shia Hazaras have been killed since 2008 in incidents of targeted violence, the worse attacks in January and February 2013 that killed at least 180 people.⁹ It is well established that civilian and military forces have done little to investigate such attacks against the Hazara community which allows perpetrators to kill with increasing impunity and attack Shia processions, pilgrimages and neighbourhoods.

Additionally, the threat of ethnic or sectarian killing is spreading across the country, including risks from inter-ethnic political violence in Sindh, sectarian

⁸ This 62-page Human Rights Watch report documents attacks on the Shia Hazara community in Balochistan, targeted by Sunni militant groups. HRW interviewed more than 100 survivors, members of victims' families, law enforcement, security officials, and independent experts for the report. HRW's Asia director, Brad Adams states: "There is no travel route, no shopping trip, no school run, no work commute that is safe for the Hazara. The government's failure to put an end to these attacks is as shocking as it is unacceptable."

⁹ Ongoing attacks against the Hazara community in Quetta by Sunni extremists has meant that the half a million Hazaras live under constant threat of attack, restricting their movement, facing economic challenges and hardships and with curtailed access to education and employment, members of this community have begun to leave Pakistan seeking refuge in other countries, states the 62-page Human Rights Watch report. It reminds of the two brutal attacks mentioned above: "On January 10, 2013, the suicide bombing of a snooker club in Quetta frequented by Hazaras killed 96 people and injured at least 150. Many of the victims were caught in a second blast 10 minutes after the first, striking those who had gone to the aid of the wounded. On February 17, 2013, a bomb exploded in a vegetable market in Quetta's Hazara Town, killing at least 84 Hazara and injuring more than 160. The LeJ claimed responsibility for both attacks, the bloodiest attacks from sectarian violence in Pakistan since independence in 1947."

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clashes between Deobandi and Barelvi militant groups, violent repression of Balochi activists in Balochistan, continued persecution of Christians and Ahmadis, and an exterminatory campaign against Hazara and other Shias by LeJ, SSP and the Pakistani Taliban, which claimed the lives of hundreds of victims last year (MRGI, 2014). In October 2014, eight men were killed and two others wounded – the victims belonging to the Shia Hazara community – when gunmen opened fire on a bus in Quetta, in a wave of violence that has left hundreds dead, children orphaned and families bereaved in recent years. With the police unable and unwilling to either apprehend the killers, or provide adequate protection, many Hazara families have left the country seeking asylum abroad.

According to statistics provided by Pak Institute for Peace Studies, a total of 220 incidents of sectarian violence were reported in Pakistan in 2013, including 208 sectarian-related terrorist attacks and 12 sectarian clashes, seven more than such incidents reported in 2012. As many as 687 people lost their lives in these incidents—a 22 percent increase in fatalities compared to 2012—and another 1,319 were injured—46 percent more than in 2012 (PIPS, 2014).

The situation for the country's larger minority groups—Christians, Hindus and Sikhs—remains no different as it continues to deteriorate with the government's limited capacity and will to investigate attacks, persecute perpetrators and promote a culture of tolerance. Religious communities remain under direct threat from religious extremists and individuals spreading a milieu of vigilantism and horrific brutality. In the latest manifestation of the threat of vigilante violence, a brutally violent attack on the outskirts of Lahore resulted in an enraged mob killing a Christian couple and burning their bodies in a brick kiln where they worked. Rumours had circulated the day before that the couple had desecrated the Quran but to date the evidence is not clear and the circumstances surrounding this incident remain unexplained. Although the Punjab government has announced a committee to investigate this incident, the government must ensure the safety of vulnerable Christian communities that are threatened persistently. There have been angry protests that those responsible for the killing of this young couple must be brought to justice and that protection be accorded to minorities living in poor districts where the Muslim majority wield the power

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to take law into their own hands – but if this horrific killing could address the inaction of the authorities nothing noteworthy has happened to date. This climate of impunity is pervasive and perpetrators hardly brought to justice, which sends the message that anyone can commit outrageous atrocities and misuse the blasphemy law to take matters into their own hands.

Hindus in Pakistan remain a struggling community in socio-economic and political terms. Treated as second-class citizens, Hindu women have become victims of sexual assault, kidnapping, forced conversions and marriages, given the minimum safeguards within the legal system for their protection. The unchecked abuse of women's human rights among the Hindu and Christian communities point to the suffering of those who are already marginalized but face rape, persecution and are forcibly married to abductors or sold to a third party. With two million Hindus living in Pakistan, the majority belonging to Sindh, many families have said their daughters are being forcibly kidnapped and married to Muslim men but they can do nothing to reverse their plight – this sense of unease has intensified in the past few years with over 300 women converted to Islam in Pakistan every year.¹⁰ Under the Hudood Ordinance, rape is equivalent to fornication—or to adultery, if the victim is married— and because of the lack of investigation and number of witnesses required women often fail to register complaints against their attackers for fear of retribution. The Hudood Ordinance is used to discriminate against and persecute women in general but more recent cases of non-Muslim (Christian and Hindu) women in particular have become cause for action. Additionally, forced conversions to Islam has enraged the Hindu community that have repeatedly registered complaints against influential perpetrators identified to have kidnapped, forcibly converted and married off their young women. Furthermore, most of those working as bonded labour belong to religious minorities – Christians in Punjab and Hindus in Sindh – are trafficked, raped, sold and suffer economic exploitation.

¹⁰ These figures are cited by the Movement for Solidarity and Peace that states 100 to 700 victims forcibly converted are Christian women each year and 300 are Hindu women.

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Besides forced conversions and marriages, underrepresentation in political institutions and discriminatory legislation persecuting religious groups, another underlying issue for most minority communities is the lack of access to educational opportunities that takes away from economic development, social status and integration. This is reflective through the PIPS survey results where most respondents – from all provinces polled – said they felt they were not integrated into the larger cultural and social mainstream and lacked equal economic opportunities. In Punjab, 81 percent overwhelmingly stated they felt excluded from the mainstream; 98 percent polled in Sindh stated the same, although 95 percent in the same province did say they participated freely in cultural and religious festivities along with followers of other religions. Here 93.3% of Hindus polled stated that they were not part of the mainstream, whereas in the same province only 5% of Christian respondents stated the same, reflective of the minority population which has a larger presence in this district.

96.7 % polled in Balochistan stated they were excluded (and treated as second-class citizens) although respondents in this province also said they celebrated religious festivities freely.

In KPK, 77.4% stated they did not feel they were part of the social and cultural mainstream which corresponds with results obtained from other provinces where members of minority communities were posed the same question. However, as noted in all provinces, over 90% polled as participating freely in cultural and religious festivities along with members of other religious groups. When asked about the response of members of other religious groups when it came to celebrating their (respondent communities) religious festivities and holidays, 66% did not respond to the question, whereas 21% stated that the response they received was positive. When asked whether they had experienced challenges while doing business or other transactions with those of other religious groups, 82% said they had not, although 54% remained neutral when responding about inter-community relations and only 37% described inter-community relations within their neighbourhood as closely-knit. These results, unlike those obtained from other provinces reveal the lack of security for all groups as well growing conservatism in society (regarding minorities, religious practices and

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tolerance levels) with special focus on the Islamization drive in the tribal region, including urban districts in KPK.¹¹

Promoting a culture of tolerance is not prioritized as urgent by the state, which if implemented through step-by-step processes would decrease the incidence of violent attacks. The journey from moderate conservatism to violent extremism has transformed Pakistan into a state that is failing to protect its minority groups. Churches are bombed, temples vandalized, worshipers attacked and killed, buses targeted, homes destroyed and social gathering attacked. In September 2013, the Christian community in Peshawar faced its deadliest attack when the All Saints Church was targeted by a suicide attack leaving 127 dead and scores injured. When respondents were asked whether they practised their religion freely, it appeared the more educated polled did not practise their customs as openly as much as they might have but the lesser qualified (or those with fewer economic opportunities) or the matriculated individuals stated they did attend their places of worship more frequently. This could be because of fear or the knowledge that if they attend churches or temples, they could be attacked by conservative/sectarian rightist groups. So the awareness of intolerant behaviour towards minorities appears more prevalent when the respondent is educated at a certain level and informed of the possible threat.

In KPK, most of the respondents included Christians (27.4%) and Sikhs (72.6%) but unlike those polled in other provinces over 40% had an intermediate degree which is obtained after a matriculate qualification and right before a Bachelor's degree. 98.4% were over 25 years. Here, 90% polled

¹¹ It is important to note the survey titled, *Minority Rights in Pakistan* polled respondents with varied educational qualifications ranging from matriculation to a Master's degree. It appears that those respondents with higher educational qualifications had more awareness of social, political and economic issues that plague minority communities and condemned the recent wave of terror attacks that have targeted their groups. Also note that this group belongs to the middle-to-upper strata of society or that some members that have perhaps migrated for jobs and security to larger cities feel less persecuted than others belonging to the same religious community but have a lower economic status and lesser opportunities and live in semi-urban or rural locales.

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as participating freely in cultural and religious festivities along with members of other religious groups. When asked about the response of members of other religious groups when it came to celebrating their (respondent communities) religious festivities and holidays, 66% remained neutral, whereas 21% stated that the response was positive.

Having said that the dynamics of traditional communities where religious tolerance is a given hasn't completely lost ground in KPK as respondents claimed they did not face social, political and economic problems while residing and interacting with diverse religious groups. 80% of the respondents said that security and terrorism threats were critical, threatening all religious communities given their overall vulnerability to terror attacks, kidnapping and extortion rackets. Faith-based persecution on a day-to-day basis was at a low with only 25% answering in the positive. 72% polled said the government does cater to their needs unlike in Punjab, for example, when minority communities were asked the same question.

Audacious and horrific attacks, symptomatic of the state of the nation, taking on increased frequency means there is little social and political space accorded to minorities and no meaningful dialogue and understanding between non-Muslim and Muslim communities. Well-known religious leaders belonging to mainstream Muslims communities, religious parties and sects have rarely been encouraged to take on positive roles in bringing about inter-faith resolutions that could foster tolerance and peace and put an end to attacks that target Shias, Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus and Sikhs. Interestingly, these results have shown that when questioned regarding faith-based persecution in their everyday lives, most respondents have answered in the negative. This could be because within tight-knit multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities where families have lived together for generations traditional ties are binding and religion does not divide. However, outside intervention in many instances causes violent attacks. For example, in Balochistan, 33.3% polled (matriculated/educated respondents) said they faced daily discrimination, but 63.3% disagreed. When asked if they faced any particular terror threats or was it the same for all minority communities, 66.7% stated the threat of a terror attack was the same for all, but 23.3% said they were particular to their community which could indicate awareness (and

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fear) regarding attacks on churches or mob/vigilante violence against Christians.

In Sindh, 92.4% of Hindus were polled, compared to 5.8% of Christians given the larger Hindu community. Hindu communities have complained regarding forced marriage and abduction of their girls and women as well as lack of job opportunities and discriminatory laws which have also adversely affected both Christian and Hindu communities in Sindh and Punjab. Poll results in Sindh among Hindus and Christians show that communities live together without facing any religious, social and political integration issues. 61% say there are no faith-based persecutions where they live, whereas 31% state there has been persecution.

In Punjab, all three religious minority communities polled stated that they did face religious, economic and political problems that other communities might not necessarily encounter (58%). Although 60% said that security and terrorism related threats were the same for all communities. The data collected regarding shared aspects of life among multi-ethnic communities reveal for instance, visiting among various communities on special occasion such as weddings reflect a sense of satisfaction. However, 41% polled stated they faced faith-based persecution on a day-to-day basis whereas 51% said they did not – which makes these figures higher in the Punjab given the ongoing persecution and attacks on focused on Christians in this province.

Living under the Sword of Damocles: the blasphemy law

The most common tool of persecution against non-Muslim communities has become a charge of blasphemy. Currently found in Pakistan's Penal Code (PPC) as the prohibition of blasphemy or irreverence towards holy persons, culture and artefacts, Pakistan's blasphemy laws were first introduced under British colonial legislation drafted in 1860. Under the Indian Penal Code in 1860, prepared by the First Law Commission, this piece of legislature stated that the act of damaging or defiling a place of worship or a sacred object under Section 295 was a criminal act. In 1947 after Pakistan inherited this law – which by then had an additional Section 295A adding the offence of outraging religious feeling – amendments were sought over decades. Under Zia's Islamization, modifications were made when the PPC Ordinance 1982 amended Section 295-B to include life imprisonment if “whoever wilfully defiles, damages or desecrates a copy of the Holy Quran or any extract thereof or uses it in any derogatory manner or for any unlawful purpose shall be punishable with imprisonment for life.” The victims of blasphemy-related vigilante attacks are often minority communities – including Christians, Hindus, and Ahmadis – although members of the mainstream Muslim majority

Historical trail: Pakistan's controversial blasphemy laws

- *The British colonial administration formulated four laws to deal with blasphemy because of communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims prior to Partition and supported even at the time by political interests of various groups. Therefore, general laws against trespass and defiling monuments were first codified in 1860 by India's British rulers*
- *These laws were amended in 1927 to include 'deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion and religious believers' which meant words, insults would be punished with imprisonment and with a fine. This law was inherited by Pakistan after Partition in 1947. The ensuing tensions and tussle between the powers that led East and West Pakistan allowed the conservative religious right to further fuel hatred and intolerance of the other. This resulted in a movement led by Majlis-e-Ahrrar in West Pakistan against the Ahmadi community, which was eventually declared non-Muslim and heretic under the Islamization process that was gradually taking*

have also been targeted. Allegations of blasphemy and the prosecution are often not issued by the police but by individuals. In instances, the accused have been injured or killed in prison by policemen or other inmates. Lawyers and judges fear reprisals and several cases are pending and victims languish in prison without legal representation.

Misusing the blasphemy laws to promote intolerance and vigilante justice is of grave concern as the government has yet to amend the law. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan notes that 34 individuals were charged with blasphemy in 2013. Although no one has been executed for blasphemy in Pakistan as yet, 16 people are on death row and 20 are serving life sentences for blasphemous activity. The minority Ahmadi community has become a frequent target for Sunni extremist groups as Punjab's provincial officers are known to support extremists instead of protecting the community, its mosques and graveyards.¹²

- *The blasphemy laws were Islamised under 1980s Zia-ul-Haq regime with more than 80 cases reported to the courts between 1977 and 1988 according to a report by the Islamabad-based Center for Research and Security Studies.*
- *Further amendments to the blasphemy law were made between 1980 and 1984. These were: 295-B (defiling the holy book); 295-C (the use of derogatory remarks in respect to the Holy Prophet; 298-A (using derogatory language for holy personages); 298-B (misuse of holy titles, epithets and titles reserved for holy personages and places); 298-C ('Qadiani' or Ahmadis were forbidden from calling themselves Muslims or preaching and propagating their faith)*
- *Highlights of the controversial amendments under Zia: 1982: Life imprisonment introduced for desecration of Koran.*
- *1984: Ahmadi sect barred from calling themselves, and behaving as, Muslims.*
- *1986: Death sentence for blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad.*
- *High rate of conviction in lower courts, but usually overturned in higher courts.*
- *No accused has been executed for blasphemy but jailed persons have been killed and threatened in prison*

¹² The Human Rights Watch World Religious Community continued to be a subjected to specific anti-Ahmadi laws

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When Professor Muhammad Shakeel Auj propagated his moderate views on Islam – he had suggested that it was not mandatory to remove make-up before saying one's prayers – he began to face threats which continued for years; some more sinister than other messages. But the Dean at the Faculty of Islamic Studies at the University of Karachi remained stoic and defiant.¹³ In September 2014, the 54-year old professor was murdered as he travelled with a female student to attend an evening invitation at the Iranian Cultural Centre in Karachi.

Attempts through the past decade and previously at amending the blasphemy law have been rejected fearing backlash from the religious right.¹⁴

discrimination as militant groups used provisions of the law to prevent Ahmadis from “posing as Muslims,” forced the demolition of Ahmadi mosques in Lahore, barred Ahmadis from using their mosques in Rawalpindi, and vandalized Ahmadi graves across Punjab province.’

¹³ It has been widely reported that Professor Auj had received death threats and had also been accused of blasphemy in 2012 by four colleagues belonging to Karachi University. They had claimed a speech he had given in the US insulted the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) One of the academics that he complained about had previously held his position in the same department. The four men who had accused him face charges, but are presently out on bail.

¹⁴ In 1986, the Criminal Law Act III provided another amendment to section 295 C which meant defamation against the Prophet was a criminal offence. The amended version noted: “Whoever by words, either spoke or written, or by visible representation, or by any other imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) shall be punished with death or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to a fine.” Aasia Bibi, who is the first Christian woman to be sentenced to death, is accused under this clause. Interestingly, in May 1998, during Nawaz Sharif's previous government, there was talk of amending the blasphemy law but in September of that year Justice Nazeer Akhtar from Lahore is known to have said that there was no reason to amend this law and that all blasphemers should be killed. This statement caused public uproar but the religious right supportive of the blasphemy law in its existing form led by Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani warned the government of dire backlash, if it amended the Penal Code. The Action Committee of the Namoos-e-Mustafa was mobilized to hold countrywide protests. In 1992, when Sharif's government removed the option of life imprisonment from Section 295C and inserted the mandatory death penalty it meant more power was given to those who wished to misuse this law.

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In April 2001, Musharraf's regime had attempted to regularize the registering of cases by amending procedures which meant that each case was to be initially investigated and verified by the District Commissioner before being submitted to court. This would immediately remove false accusatory cases for lack of evidence and curtail the misuse of the law. This process would have further identified unscrupulous complainants who have used the law to settle grudges and personal scores against members of minority communities. This suggested amendment that had come after recommendations made across the board during a national Human Rights and Dignity Conference was rescinded in May of the same year because of fervent religious opposition. The state has failed to intervene and protect those minorities and falsely accused victims who have suffered because of powerfully supported persecutors. While not punishing those who misuse the law and violently attack communities and places of worship, the state had turned away, while mobs kill hundreds in horrific incidents such as the Gojra riots in Punjab in 2009 and the Joseph Colony violence in March 2013 that torched an entire Christian neighbourhood. On July 30 and August 1, 2009, 7 Christians were burnt alive and dozens injured, their homes gutted when riots broke out over allegations of blasphemy. In another incident, an accused in a blasphemy case was shot dead in November 2010 outside his house after being granted bail.

In 2013, the Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights informed Pakistan's parliament about 8,648 rights violations that had occurred across the country. These included violence against women, sectarian violence and target killings, sexual harassment and other violations that were reported to the police. This figure also included 141 cases of missing persons, 47 of which were from Balochistan, the Ministry stated. However, rights violations related to the blasphemy laws were not stated as such, but what was noted in the list (and is open to interpretation) was that there had been '20 minority-related issues.' There is a lack of state acknowledgement that unpopular victims of violations need legal counsel, advice and in many cases, protection (Sethna, 2014). Pakistan as a hotbed of Islamic militant organizations augmented by the long Afghan war and an assortment of militant and extremists ideologies is fertile ground for recruiting disillusioned youth and changing their perceptions towards religious minorities. Violence against minorities is on the rise as is the misuse of the blasphemy law with extremist

and semi-literate groups sharing a narrow world view, readily providing tacit support to militant agendas.

The consequences of the blasphemy law has left the Christian community exposed to abuse—and law enforcers as the police collude with unjust accusations as a climate of fear pervades. Individuals—including mentally handicapped minors and young girls under the age of 6 years—belonging to minority communities have been charged with blasphemy and imprisoned with no access to legal assistance. Reported incidents have shown that those accused have been killed in jail even before being sentenced. Questioning the state's capacity and will to establish the rule of law, Sam Zarifi, the Asia Pacific Regional Director at the International Commission of Jurists, says the country is conceding space to extremists (Ibid). "A government that cannot protect its people is systematically failing in its responsibility and cannot call itself a sovereign state," he says. Zarifi believes that when it comes to representation, the legal community must unite and sign up to represent unpopular defendants needing legal assistance. But in an atmosphere in which extremists threaten and murder with impunity, this is easier suggested than implemented (Ibid).

Destined to death: the fate of human rights defenders

Even committed and brave individuals advocating for minority rights and justice, including judges, lawyers and rights activists have been threatened by colleagues (for providing legal assistance to those accused in blasphemy cases) and religious groups; and more often than not targeted and murdered for their work. In May 2014, a 55-year old lawyer representing an academic accused under the blasphemy law was shot dead in his office in the city of Multan. Rashid Rehman, a staunch defender of human rights had worked for more than twenty years with the HRCF representing women, peasants, minorities and other vulnerable groups. It was because of this commitment to provide legal assistance when no other lawyer would take on controversial cases that he had agreed to represent university lecturer Junaid Hafeez.¹⁵

¹⁵Junaid Hafeez who taught at Multan's Bahauddin Zakariya University had been accused of defaming the Prophet on social media last year. Reports stated the accusations were levelled by hardline university students who had pushed for him to

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However, Rehman had been threatened openly in court by the complainants in this case. This incident showing that it is more than evident Pakistan's blasphemy laws support religiously motivated violence that goes beyond persecuting minorities but also targets the protectors of human rights and justice. Often lawyers state that it is difficult to find judges to hear appeals when it comes to high profile cases because of the unwillingness due to fear to be associated with blasphemy cases.

I. A. Rehman writes in *Dawn* about his nephew's commitment to the vulnerable and voiceless: "He did not wait to be asked for his services. He was the first to take up Mukhtaran Mai's case and it was he who fought off Sherry Rahman's persecutors up to the high court level. We, at the HRCP secretariat, had often to curb his enthusiasm for taking up cudgels on behalf of the meek and the voiceless...what matters more now is the sight of a society that seems to have lost all sense of shame or responsibility. It does not have the courage to look into the mirror on the wall" (Rehman, 2014).

A 2012 study by the Islamabad-based think tank, the Center for Research and Security Studies shows an increase in blasphemy accusations with 80 complaints in 2011, up from a single case in 2001 (CRSS, 2012). Extremist groups are successfully targeting ethnic and religious minorities and anybody who dares to speak out in their defence, right up to a government minister is targeted, which means strategically isolating these communities so that they don't have any allies.¹⁶ "Many believe that some accused don't have a right to representation by lawyers," notes HRCP chairperson Zohra Yusuf, citing the murder of Justice Arif Iqbal Bhatti who acquitted two Christian boys in a 1995 blasphemy case.¹⁷ Bhatti, who had received numerous death threats, was murdered in 1997. In its 2014 annual world report, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom explains: "Pakistan's laws and practice are particularly egregious [with regards to blasphemy], with its constantly-abused law penalising blasphemous acts with the death penalty or

be charged. Mr Rehman took on the case after no other lawyer would represent the lecturer.

¹⁶ Author's interview with Sam Zarifi, Asia Pacific Director of Amnesty International, June 2014.

¹⁷ Author's interview with Zohra Yusuf, June 2014.

life in prison. In addition to state enforcement, mobs feel enabled, under the cover of this law, to mete out vigilante justice against individuals deemed to have committed blasphemy" (Sethna, 2014).

Although high-profile government ministers have advocated for minorities and their legal rights in blasphemy cases, they have also suffered intimidation and court cases, some have been targeted and murdered for their convictions. When in November 2010, when Aasia Bibi, a young Christian farm labourer was sentenced to death for blasphemy, the then President Asif Ali Zardari sought a presidential pardon for her, but his decision was overruled by the ruling party's coalition partner, the JUI-F. Interestingly, the law minister failed to seek amendments to the blasphemy law that rights advocates state are critical when reviewing the misuse of this law targeting vulnerable individuals and communities. In 2011, Punjab's Governor Salman Taseer who had earlier visited Bibi in prison and advocated openly against the discrimination of minorities was murdered by one of his own police guards in Islamabad.¹⁸ He had also backed a private member's bill in the moved by parliamentarian Sherry Rehman, to amend the blasphemy law to ensure miscarriages of justice less likely and remove its death penalty.¹⁹ Taseer's murderer was hailed a hero by certain extremist religious groups and offered

¹⁸ Punjab's Governor Salman Taseer was the first senior government official who visited Aasia Bibi, a mother of five, in prison and appealed to President Zardari for clemency. Taseer had told the media at the time that she was a poor woman who belonged to a minority community and should be pardoned. Bibi was arrested on blasphemy charges in June 2009 when she was picking fruit in the field. When she drank from a well, other women laborers objected saying she was a non-Muslim so should not touch the water that she had contaminated. She was later arrested when they complained that she had made derogatory remarks about the Prophet. Minorities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti who had been asked by President Zardari to investigate the case was also murdered after the killing of Taseer.

¹⁹ Ms Rehman submitted a bill for amending the Blasphemy Act in November 2010 seeking an end to the mandatory death penalty, urging constitutional protection for minorities. Reformers like Ms Rehman cannot call for an outright scrapping of the blasphemy law as that would be akin to committing suicide in an emotive and extremist-driven milieu but have sought procedural amendments in the past so that miscarriages of justice are stopped. However, since the murder of high-profile rights activists and ministers advocating on behalf of blasphemy accused persons, there has been no public talk of amending the Act.

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pro bono legal assistance such is the tolerance level for first-degree murder seen as a legitimate act to cut down support for an accused blasphemer. Later, an Islamabad-based mosque was named after the man sentenced to death by a court of law.²⁰ Taseer's targeted killing was followed with that of Shahbaz Bhatti, the Federal Minister of Minorities, who like the liberal Governor of Punjab was a vocal advocate for fighting for greater and equal minority rights and had supported amendments to the blasphemy law.

Bibi, who is a Christian and a mother of five, has spent five years on death row accused of making derogatory remarks against the Prophet as she was picking fruit with Muslim women in a field. She was also accused of taking a sip of water from a well and making the water impure. She was awarded the death penalty in October 2014 and her lawyers are now appealing against the verdict in the Supreme Court. Despite international calls that she be pardoned and the blasphemy laws repealed, there has been no progress to ensure human rights are preserved in the case of Bibi and other accused under this law.

Human rights groups have long campaigned against these laws also frequently used to settle personal scores. Evidence is rarely presented in court and judges are reluctant to hear cases. There is no penalty for false accusations. The scope of the law seems to be widening, as seen in the recent example where the Punjab police registered a case of blasphemy against 68 lawyers who publicly protested after a police officer detained one of their colleagues.

As a lawyer who has defended an accused in a blasphemy case explains, the immediate reaction was shock when other associates heard he was involved in such proceedings. "It was as if I deserved to be attacked [if that happened] for providing legal assistance," he recalls, requesting anonymity. He says he was warned and roughed up by a group of lawyers within the premises of the Supreme Court for his involvement. It is common to hear of lower courts

²⁰ Mumtaz Qadri, a police guard who was sentenced to death by a court of law in 2011 confessed to murdering Salman Taseer because he objected to the Governor's calls to amend the blasphemy law. No Pakistani politician has since dared openly criticize the blasphemy laws or call for an amendment.

convicting the accused in blasphemy cases, sometimes on little credible evidence, due to the fear of mob violence if there is no conviction.²¹

“Blasphemy cases are in a league of their own because of the kind of emotions they evoke, often followed by violent vigilante actions. While legally representing vulnerable groups, there is pressure and intimidation, but the insecurity felt as an advocate while defending a blasphemy case is unlike anything else,” notes senior advocate, Salman Raja (Sethna, 2014).

When looking for ways to ensure victims accused in blasphemy cases have access to justice, Raja suggests the need to think along the lines of the mafia trials in Italy that were transferred from ordinary courts to secret locations along with lawyers and judges whose identities were protected. It would be radical, he concedes, but with an effective witness protection programme, this approach could administer justice without fear. Measures to protect rights defenders against abuses and investigate instances of such abuses brought to its notice with a view to bringing perpetrators to justice is something the government has systematically ignored and so to fight injustice many more defenders will risk their lives (Ibid).

Targeted mob violence, hate crimes, murder, desecrating places of worship, verbal abuse and intimidation against Pakistan's minorities has become a daily reality, often reflective of the socio-political exclusion of vulnerable religious groups and communities and the consequence of acceptable, intolerant extremist ideologies supported by the state. Violence against Hindus and Dalits, especially in rural Sindh, including kidnapping young women, forced conversions and marriages to Muslim men has become widespread with activists voicing concern at relentless inhumane practises. In its proposals over the past decade, HRCP has recommended the repeal of the Penal Code Section 295-B and C besides other urgent measures to restore citizenship and security to non-Muslim Pakistanis. It has been stated that 295C should be further amended because it could create ‘ambiguity and legal complications.’ “Three unsavoury facts were established: a) in many cases the law was invoked to deal with a business rival, to grab property or to settle a

²¹ Author's interview with a Supreme Court lawyer quoted here on condition of anonymity, conducted in June 2014.

personal score; b) that filing FIRs against vulnerable persons had been adopted as a lucrative business by quite a few clerics; and c) that the conservative elements subjected courts to unbearable strains by laying siege to them" (Rehman, 2010).

Official authorities have paid minimal, if no attention to protecting certain communities at risk with state complicity evident at the judicial, executive or legislative level. Trial courts fail out of fear to acquit accused who remain unsafe in prison and at police stations, and even outside the courts. Those acquitted by high courts leave Pakistan and a judge who had acquitted a child was killed when he retired.

Minorities in an Islamic state: who will protect them?

The PIPS survey poses two critical questions with regard to the rights of minorities:²² Why has the government failed to prevent violent atrocities against certain minority groups, persecuted under laws that are misused, despite certain communities having lived historically in integrated and diverse neighbourhoods? And why does it continue to collude with extremist groups from the majority to target vulnerable communities of non-Muslim faith? Why have minorities been relegated to the social and economic periphery of a nation state that needs to promote national pluralism or else risk being enshrouded in an extremist, intolerant worldview? When poll results were examined, 42% of respondents polled in Punjab said the law of the state was not discriminatory, whereas 50% said discrimination was faced by certain groups. Job-based discrimination was prevalent (49.5%) and 43% felt threatened while visiting their places of worship; although 65.7% said they could openly celebrate their religious festivities without interference. In Sindh, when asked if the law of the state was equal for all, 49% polled agreed whereas 45% said it is discriminatory for certain groups. 64.2% said they shared equal opportunities when it came to getting jobs. In Balochistan, when

²² According to the survey, *Minority Rights in Pakistan: Historic Neglect or State Complicity?* respondents in Punjab included Hindus (6.7%), Christians (83.8%) and Baha'is (9.5%). Among those polled, 33.3% had a matriculation degree; 12.4% were uneducated; 10.5% had a Master's degree and 19% had a primary level education. Over 68% were aged 25 years and above. A summary of the survey findings can be downloaded at <<http://san-pips.com/download.php?f=257.pdf>>

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asked if the law was discriminatory, 60% of all religious minorities polled agreed whereas 73.3% said it is discriminatory towards them when seeking jobs. 43.3% of Christians especially state that they have faced discrimination.

As a countrywide survey of four provinces with respondents divided on the basis of educational qualifications (respondents range from having a Matriculation to a Master's degree) and religion (Hindus, Christians, Baha'is, Sikhs), it is particularly interesting to document that in certain provinces overall responses appear reflective of the level of awareness, concern, experience and fear regarding rights issues, the law and ongoing discriminatory practises. In Sindh where more respondents of minority groups remain uneducated in greater numbers and belong to poorer, deprived communities, it appears that persecution and marginalization of certain minorities is so rife – and has continued for decades – that many low-income and weak groups when discriminated against do not feel the need to identify or discuss their views openly for fear of reprisal. Many fear their local political representatives will disapprove of their criticism which emboldens those in powerful places. Many Hindu families work as bonded labour under Muslim landlords and therefore fail to voice their suffering – kidnapping, rape and forced labour is the norm for such groups. Additionally, without trust in the police or the justice system, they realize their voices will be shunned. The concept of equal citizenship and rights, education, and non-discrimination in everyday life and work situations are unavailable to Hindu and Dalit communities in rural Sindh and the Christians of Punjab.

Take three minority communities in the Punjab – Christians, Hindus and Baha'is that state they are dissatisfied with the manner in which the government caters to their needs when compared to how it assists other religious groups. But when questioned about the law of the state as being discriminatory against minorities, 42 percent of the poll respondents stated that was not the case.

This survey also finds that most respondents although deeply committed to their faith are able to integrate and live peacefully with other religious groups but feel threatened by the overall deteriorating security situation countrywide and the wave of extremism that threatens their existence. There is also strong backing for intercommunity relations that appear to be peaceful, traditionally

rooted and functional for most minority groups in various parts of the country as respondents have stressed. Harmony within religiously mixed neighbourhoods is a positive indicator for peaceful relations, promoted and supported by those communities who have a stake in the security and progress of their areas. Although many respondents from all four provinces also believe that they are not part of the larger social and cultural mainstream as is clearly the state of the nation's minority population. It can be deduced that because minority groups are excluded from political decision-making matters that in the long-term not only affects them – extremism and how to tackle its spreading – that this further marginalizes those communities persecuted by the religious right.

One factor that has caused further alienation is the lack of political representation for minorities which is historically found in the separate electoral system. Very few minority representatives serve in the national and provincial assemblies and under the separate electoral system, members of each minority group gets to elect representatives from their own religious communities on a proportional basis.²³

Conclusion: no home for minorities

The issues of minorities in pluralistic democracies is fraught with problems and challenges, but most know about the importance of preserving these rights, the cultural and religious identity of minorities, and accord them freedom to profess and practice their faith, and participate in politics and economic life. At Partition because Pakistan was not envisaged as a theocratic state, its founders – Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan and Allama Iqbal – had similar aspirations. The Pakistan Resolution of the Lahore session of the All India Muslim League on March 23, 1940 aptly stated: "The adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards should be specifically provided in the constitution for minorities in these units and in the regions for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests in the constitution with them and in other parts of India where the Mussalmans are in a majority." However, there appeared an impending

²³ In Pakistan's National Assembly, Christians have 4 seats, Hindus and other groups have 4, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis have one seat.

coalescence of national and religious identity and future events would dictate the same, steering the direction of the nation.

The 1973 Constitution states: 'Adequate provision will be made for the minorities *freely* to profess and practice their religions and develop their cultures.' Also, the Objective Resolution in Zia's time was brought into the main body of the Constitution and the word '*freely*' in the earlier quotation omitted. Though all these provisions refer to freedom of worship and freedom from persecution, it is clear that these rights are far from guaranteed in an Islamic state that is listed by the Minority Rights Group International as the seventh among ten countries where people remained the most under threat in 2014. It concludes that the increase in threats to minorities has been the result of governments and societies overlooking or tolerating 'entrenched patterns of discrimination against particular communities.'²⁴ Noting the threat from sectarianism, including inter-ethnic political violence in Sindh, clashes between Deobandi and Barelvi militant groups, violent repression of Balochi activists in Balochistan, continued persecution of Christians and Ahmadis and an exterminatory campaign against Hazara and other Shi'as across the country waged by LeJ, SSP and the Pakistani Taliban, which claimed the lives of hundreds of victims last year, this ranking is a stark warning to the government that it must buckle up and act. In its annual report, *State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous People 2014 – Freedom from Hate* the group notes: 'Hostility towards minorities and indigenous peoples can range from intimidation or denigration to murder and indiscriminate attacks.' Despite such continuous warnings, brutal violent attacks and overwhelming evidence of hate and murder targeting minority groups forces most to continue to endure religious, social, economic and political discrimination given the all too acceptable milieu of extremism in the country. This has sparked off

²⁴"Peoples under Threat" is Minority Rights Group's annual authoritative rankings table which highlights those countries around the world where the risk of mass killing is greatest. Based on current indicators of authoritative sources, it has been compiled annually since 2005 to warn of potential future mass atrocities as it states in an introduction to the rankings report. The report states that the number of states which rose prominently in the index over the last two years – including South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Pakistan and Syria – subsequently faced episodes of extreme ethnic or sectarian violence.

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political implications for the government and led to mass internal and external migration given its apathetic response.

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The good governance model to counter extremism: an historical perspective

Ummad Mazhar

Overview

Historically extremism finds strange ambivalence in Pakistan's secular record. At independence, the country under the leadership of secular and liberal politicians – most having enjoyed a western education – was not envisaged solely on the basis of religious doctrine. This is in contrast, for example to many African and Asian countries where religious leaders steered the course of the freedom struggle. However, it is difficult to reconcile the fact that the country's religious leadership began playing a dominant part right after independence, shaping legal and political institutions of the newly formed country.

If examples of intolerance and inequality are to be examined in Pakistan's prevalent turbulent polity, it can be noted that segments of society backed by religious political parties and militant groups are opposed to freedom of expression and human rights for all communities; whereas the opposite can be found in pockets where free-thinking traditions are permitted to flourish as much as is possible. Take the examples of secular, democratic leaders working to create a milieu of tolerance and human rights for all who have been targeted with impunity for their support and advocacy.

Although Pakistan became the first Muslim country to elect a female head of state in 1988, it is also where religious extremists have assassinated, at different occasions, liberal-thinking and secular leaders, including the former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, the Punjab governor Salman Taseer and the Minister of Religious Minorities Shahbaz Bhatti – both Taseer and Bhatti were murdered for showing support for persecuted religious minority communities.

The good governance model to counter extremism: an historical perspective

In Pakistan's urban areas, especially dotted within the cities of Karachi and Lahore, the diversity of cultural and secular traditions is not entirely lost. Women have risen to occupy key positions in politics and within the workforce – as the head of the State Bank; within Pakistan's foreign affairs ministry at home and abroad and within ambassadorial divisions. This is in sharp contrast, of course to the lack of rights for those women and children from low-income groups who are victims of brutally violent practices perceived wrongly to have roots in traditional norms.

Ironically, religious parties have never won a majority in the general elections but Pakistan is among the few countries that have experimented with *shariah laws* (Islamic laws) both officially as well as unofficially through non-state actors.

The question that has arisen on numerous occasions given this dichotomy of practice and belief within society – the secular versus the religious – is how the existence of conflicting social and political currents can or should be explained.

Admittedly, a religious and extremist mindset can be found among certain groups in most nations and almost in all times. Even Western democracies are not free from extremist organizations and exclusivist ideas targeting foreigners or non-white races (Hoffman, 2006:10-40). The disturbing aspect is that in Pakistan (and in many other developing countries) organizations propagating extremist ideologies are gaining ground both politically and in other spheres of ordinary life. Increased power and support – not to mention resources and manpower – have allowed these groups to openly challenge the writ of the state by establishing control over different areas within the country. For example, the Pakistani Taliban had virtually established a parallel government in Swat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before the Pakistani security forces reclaimed the area through launching an extensive military operation there in 2009 (Abbas, 2010: 13-29). Similarly, the communist ideologues in India and Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka are other examples of the same genre of extremists-cum-terrorists in recent times (Lutz and Lutz, 2008:150-153; Fair, 2004:11-68).

The good governance model to counter extremism: an historical perspective

This paper focuses on the roots of extremist ideology as perpetuated in Pakistan. The objective is to trace the origins of such ideologies and forces that shaped them in the past and continue to keep them afloat in the present. Without elucidating this understanding, it is difficult to assume that extremism can be eliminated.

This paper also discusses the governance structure followed by Muslim rulers was based on openness and religious inclusiveness during most of their rule in the region known as South Asia. However, at different periods in history, the changing external environment provided opportunities to religious conservatives to propagate extremism. Their narrow perception of the problem resulted in incorrect diagnosis and prescriptions: fidelity, devotion and suppression of dissent were posed as the solution. It is argued in this paper that the extremist solution was not adopted by the general populace and religious extremists were largely ignored.

The rulers of the time were attentive to regional and religious specificities and the existence of a monolithic Islamic community is a myth developed to serve political purposes in the early 20th century. And as is shown recently, this myth is based on little evidence (Bose and Jalal, 2012:22-27). It can be said that Muslim rulers of the sub-continent followed what we now termed as principles of good governance. The use of religion was kept to the minimal pragmatic rather than at a high ideological level. Consequently, they faced no noticeable revolt from their non-Muslim population till the 18th century.

More recently, the creation of Pakistan caused a large number of Indian Muslims to migrate to Pakistan creating a more or less homogenous religious environment (Burki, 1999:181-186). This homogeneity, coupled with an exaggerated sense of multi-dimensional insecurity, reduced the social cost of ignoring dissent and debate. Adding fuel to fire, early experimentation of political elite to use religious nationalism as the very fountainhead of Pakistan's nationhood sowed the seeds of narrow world views and ego-centrism (IPPBNU, 2014:118-120). It encouraged the habit of suppressing debate on fundamental issues related to both the politics of the nation and the role of religion in society. More unfortunately, it increased the payoff associated with religious intolerance among rival religious groups for each other. The preferred game was to knock off the rivals, and monopolize the

guardianship of state's religious stance. This strategy is the root cause of schisms and confusion prevalent in our society (Siddiq, 2014).

Islam is flexible and can accommodate other religions and world views. The history of South Asia and Indo-Islamic civilization is a clear evidence of this claim. In fact, one of the four reasons cited by Cohen (2004:18-21) for the spread of Islam includes relative flexibility of the religion in the face of changing political, commercial and demographic realities of the time. The open attitude towards other religions and accommodative attitude of Muslim rulers contain important lessons for contemporary leaders and rulers. Historically, it was observed that good governance practices kept extremist elements at bay, whenever they reared their head, and thus these groups were unable to attract attention.

It can be argued that all forms of extremism and exclusivist mindsets that are challenging the writ of the state today have been observed through centuries, albeit in various forms and ways. The reasoning for growing intolerance taking on more violent forms is due to weaker governance structures. The South Asian Indo-Islamic civilization has shown that different religious cultures can coexist peacefully and amicably. What is required from the state is to adopt a policy of religious neutrality towards its subjects, and practice equality and the adoption of human rights and dignity for all citizens.

In the colonial era, Muslims faced political and economic decline and significant sections attempted an insulation of the community with a focus on inner purity. This approach sharpened the schisms, intensifies sectarian conflicts, and engendered animosity towards western education and knowledge. Similar factors have allowed extremist ideologies to survive 68 years after the independence of Pakistan.

It can be argued that almost all extremist groups derive their inspiration from a narrow view of practices adopted by the earlier Islamic state of Medina. It is instructive, therefore, to explore the history of this stance and its practical relevance for today. This paper, therefore, attempts to explore in historical context various factors that have contributed to the development of extremist ideologies.

The good governance model to counter extremism: an historical perspective

Certain factors that transform extremist ideologies into terrorism should be identified. Once such factors are identified, ways and means to influence their development can be found. These factors have to be curtailed, not only by force but through debate. If not then we cannot ensure a peaceful future. Needless to say this is the lesson that one can learn from history. For example, Nazi ideology was defeated both on the battlefield and through intellectual debate. This multifaceted defeat is what provides both necessary and sufficient condition for the elimination of extremism.

The Delhi Sultanate: how the principle of multi-religious accommodation forged greater security

The Sultanate of Delhi refers to an administration established first by Muhammad bin Sam in 1175. This administration continued under the rule of successive slave-soldiers of Turk-Afghan descent. This was the period of the Abbasid Caliphate in the region known presently as the Middle-East. The Delhi rulers, being Sunni Muslims, derived their legitimacy from Abbasid Caliphate. In 1229, the Delhi ruler Iltutmush was recognized by the Abbasid Caliphate and awarded the title of 'Sultan' which was used by subsequent rulers (Qureshi, 1970:5-8). This fact partly indicates an important development during this period, the seeking of religious legitimacy by rulers. And this also partly served the strategic purpose to undermine rival claims to the throne by acquiring greater legitimacy in the eyes of the masses. This was necessary at the time to ensure peace and discourage insurgencies.

One can contrast the reliance of medieval Muslim rulers on religious legitimacy with that of the time of the first four caliphs when no such need arose. This difference reflects two aspects: the specialization of religious sciences, especially after ninth century (of the Christian era) led to the rise of a class of religious scholars. For example, five major and detailed legal and ethical strictures, namely the Malaki, the Hanafi, the Shafi, the Hanbali, and the Jaafri, where the first four are followed by Sunni Muslims and the last one by Shiite Muslims, were developed in the ninth century and expert knowledge was required to resolve legal disputes. Thus, the need for religious experts and scholarly guidance encouraged the role of the *ulema* (religious leaders/scholars) in Muslim polity, thereby ensuring that the rulers of that age relied on their judgments. This development, although gradual but

persistence, increased the role of religious scholars in the system of governance (Jalal, 2008: 24-40).

Relatedly, the second factor could be the discouragement and distortion of the Quran's concept of deciding state authority through the principle of consultation or the *shura*. The Quran clearly recommends that Muslims must decide "their affairs by mutual discussion and consultation" (Quran 42:38), which, practically speaking, requires the participation and involvement of the community in the affairs of the government (Rahman, 2000: 132:144). What happened centuries ago was that the heavy-handedness of the rulers of the subcontinent meant, they hand-picked consultants on the basis of personal whims.

The history of Muslim rule and the development of Indo-Islamic culture is an excellent example of how good governance can accommodate groups with different religions, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Jackson (2010:120-122) discusses the policy of Muslims rulers towards minorities using a two pronged criteria: (a) the fate of religious establishments in Delhi Sultanate and (b) the status of Hindus. He concludes that Hindu-Muslim relations were largely amicable, throughout the times as history has shown. Specific examples are also available. The son of a Hindu princess of Dipalpur, Sultan Feroz Shah Tughlaq who reigned over the Sultanate of Delhi between 1351 and 1388, for instance, was, like his predecessor Mahammad bin Tughlaq, used to participate in Hindu religious festivals. Similarly, Mahmud of Ghazni was a man of letters known to encourage arts, poetry and cultural openness. The notable poet Ferdowsi, after laboring 27 years, went to Ghazni and presented the Shahnamah to him.¹ The Sufi musician, poet and scholar, Amir Khusro (d.1325) was one of the most famous musicians of those times.

On the other side, there is evidence that both Hindu rajas and Muslim rulers of the time patronized religious establishments of different religions.

¹ Mahmud of Ghazni succeeded Sebuktigin as the ruler of Ghazna in 998. He launched a campaign against Hindu rajas to extend his rule and to ease the fiscal position of his government. "He did despoil and destroy many Hindu temples, but in his dealings with his own Hindu subjects he was tolerant, as is evident by his employment of Hindus, some of whom lived in Ghazna and rose to high posts." (Qureshi, 1970: 3-4)

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Numerous instances point out the example of tax exemptions given to Hindus, Jains, and Jogis and Brahmans by Muslim rulers. However, interestingly, recent research points that stories of destruction of religious establishments were largely based on myths developed in the 19th century.

It is not the case, however, that the Delhi Sultans were completely devoid of religion. They relied on religion only to the extent of securing divine sanctification to their rule, a general practice of the time. Although religious leaders were allowed to play an important role within the Sultanate's administrative structure – Shaikh Al Islam (or Islamic scholar) presided over judges in each city – this was largely symbolic and religious life was outside the state control:

Despite rapid dynastic change, these sultans created a stable political structure. In their rhetoric, “Islam” meant the political dominance of the Sunni Turkic and Afghan elite. This rhetoric (preserved in coinage, monumental architecture, and historical chronicles) should not obscure the fact that local Muslim communities were growing outside state control. Hindu kings (rajas) who fought against the Turkic dynasties employed South Asian Muslims as soldiers, just as Hindu soldiers fought with the Turkic armies. Political conflict between Turkic sultans and Hindu rajas was not a clash between two religions or two incompatible civilizations despite claims of colonial-era and contemporary nationalist histories. (Kugle, 2004:636)

Though relying on the model of the Abbasid Caliphate, the third of the Islamic Caliphate, the rulers of the Delhi Sultanate were pragmatic in their approach. The Sultan was the source of power but he had to rely on religious scholars for finding justification for his actions. The elite group, closer to the Sultan, followed Persian cultural traditions and those manners associated with the latter court. The principle of inclusive governance required that the large Hindu majority be allowed to play its part. This was achieved by assigning revenue collection and other local governance issues to the Hindus because they understood local customs and were aware of vernacular issues.

The Hindus community and other non-Muslims were guaranteed full protection. They enjoyed religious freedoms and were part of the governance

structure. Many of their temples and other institutes received funds from the government. Stories about the onslaught of Muslim rulers against the Hindus are misconceptions developed only in the 19th century. Quoting Bose and Jalal (2012:22):

The colonial reinterpretation of Mahmud's attack on Somnath stressing religion rather than economics and politics can be traced to the period of the first Anglo-Afghan war of the early 1840s. Mauled in Kabul, the British forces retreated to India via Ghazni and dismantled the doors of Mahmud's tomb, which they mistakenly believed had been taken from Somnath.

The portrayal of iconoclastic wars waged by Muslim rulers against Hindu rajas was motivated more by economic reasons than religious reasons. More recent evidence suggests that, in line with the strategy of that period, the wars were a means to acquire one off booty and a continuous source of tributes and taxes from the defeated kingdom. Many Hindu rajas in South India followed the same strategy; for instance, Rajendra Cholas's northern campaigns from his South Indian base (Bose and Jalal, 2012:22-27). Similarly, the destruction of religious establishments had military importance and was not indicative of religious iconoclasm as the historians of later years would interpret. It was meant as a display of power and to establish one's authority within the masses. This strategy was also employed by Hindu rajas when they emerged victorious in a conquest.

There is an economic rationale why Muslim rulers were particularly accommodating towards their non-Muslim subjects. In the Delhi Sultanate, Hanbali legal jurisprudence was adopted. It has a special focus on providing security to non-Muslims as well as allowing the role of custom in legal codes (Jalal, 2008:35-40). Hindus being in majority in the sub-continent, the security tax levied on non-Muslims (*zimmis*) was a large source of revenue for the state. Moreover, Hindus were also relied upon for collecting agricultural taxes and to sort out issues directly related to village populations.² Hindus

² It is important to note that the language spoken by the elite class at the time of the Delhi Sultanate was different to what was spoken by the masses. The upper classes

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communities were related to the local population and fully aware of indigenous languages, customs and demands. In fact, the attempt by Aurangzeb (the grandson of the Mughal emperor Akbar) to reduce the role of Hindus by forcing them to accept Islam and/or by empowering rival Muslim landowners led to chaos and eventual decline of Mughal Empire in the 18th century. Cohen (2004:16) notes “the attempts of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb to extend his control to South India, coupled with his brutal treatment of his subjects, led to a crisis of empire”.

The decentralization of Delhi Sultanate after the mid-14th century led to the development of smaller regional kingdoms.

“This process, however, was not entirely state sponsored in most regions, as it appeared to be in Kannada-speaking region of the south. The rise of the vernacular did not necessarily entail the decline of the universal as is sometimes supposed. Islam while adapting to the regional settings of Kashmir and Bengal, never lost its universal appeal”. [Bose and Jalal, 2012:26]

The Delhi Sultanate relied on Sufism and Shiite loyalties to justify their independent existence. This was the rational stance in the multi-religious multi-ethnic environment because both Sufism and Shi’ism favored the inner spiritual aspects of religion more than the visible ritualistic approach that gradually took root in later centuries. Thus, Ahmadabad (Gujarat) was named after the Sufi saint Shaykh Ahmed Khattu. Similarly, other dynasties build tombs to honour Sufi saints and show allegiance to the philosophy of spiritualism which was equally revered by Hinduism and Buddhism. “Some of the Deccani dynasties were Shia and fostered cultural and commercial relationships with Iran (Kugle, 2004: 636).

The Mughal era and Akbar’s eclecticism

The Mughals retained the same principles of governance as the Delhi Sultanate. Ideologically, the Mughal rulers, except Aurangzeb, were more

spoke Persian which was the language of the court, while ordinary people used Hindi or Sanskrit or local languages.

inclined “to sharing power with Hindu elites and Ithna Ashari (Twelver) Shiite nobles”, thus diffusing the insistence on Sunni or Turkic supremacy of Delhi Sultanate (Kugle, 2004:637).

However, an important development that helped the rise of exclusivist ideologues was Akbar’s experimentation with religion. It earned him the wrath of radical Sufi scholar Ahmed Sirhandi, inspired by the writings of Ibn-e-Taymiyyah (Ali, 1996: 22-26 and 59-61). The latter wrote to purify religion from the influence of Ibn Arabi, a controversial Sufi saint who argued that God can be known through the forces of the nature.³ An important implication of this view is that there is no good and evil in the literal sense of the term as everything belongs to God. The opponents of Ibn Arabi charged him of heresy. The opposite view is that God is independent of the characteristics of this universe. The debate leads to what is called a conflict between unity of appearance and unity of creation. Ibn-e-Taymiyyah interpreted the Sufism of Arabi as an impurity and tried to purge religion from such views.

The objectives of Ibn-e-Taymiyyah as discussed by Rahman (2000:132-165) were: (a) to rediscover and intellectually reconstitute the early normative community of Islam which is the most perfect example of Islamic community based on the Quran and Sunnah. His aim was to bring the Muslim community onto the true path adopted by that early community established by the Prophet and his close companions; (b) according to Ibn-e-Taymiyyah Islamic developments in law, theology, Sufism, and politics followed a wrong track and thus, needed to be put back on correct path. All the disciplines followed orthodox lines and represent unitary Islam until the fourth century of the Islamic calendar. Subsequently, however, they started to change. The reason for this degeneration, according to Taymiyyah, was weak Muslim leaders, and religious impurities added to Islam by the sects like Ismailias, Shiites, and sufis. Ibn-e -Taymiyyah attacked Arabi and other Sufis, especially of the later period. He interpreted their acts as indulgence in pleasure and ecstasy and equated their social seclusion as a way to seek pleasure.

³ Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-Arabi (1165-1240) was a mystic and sufi saint of medieval period. He believed that all tangible things in the universe are reflections of God and thus contain His essence which filled the universe. His opponents accused him of pantheism.

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In the sub-continent too exclusivist ideologues reacted against religious liberalism. As cited earlier, when Akbar (1542-1605), the third emperor in Mughal dynasty, adopted an eclectic approach in religious terms he was challenged by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhandi (1564-1624). Akbar encouraged inter-faith dialogues between Hindu, Muslims, Christians and other religions. His religious experimentation, especially the development of a new kind of religion, invited him the wrath of Sirhandi. Sirhandi was an orthodox sufi sheikh of Naqshbandiyya order and assisted Akbar's court historian for sometime. Sirhandi interpreted the ideas of Akbar against Islam and urged the people to avoid following such 'impurities'. In his own time, his criticism of Akbar was largely ignored (Ali, 1996:22-24). However, "his continued criticism of the inadequate role given to Islam in the politics of the state led to his brief imprisonment by Emperor Jahangir in 1619 in the Fort of Gwalior" (Sijapati, 2009:629). Although ideas of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhandi did not prove influential in his own times they inspired Shah Waliullah (1703-62) in whose hands these became more extreme and caused much violence in the sub-continent.

The main reason why the philosophy of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhandi was unable to gather support was because of the governance strategy practiced at that time. Muslims and non-Muslims were equally treated under the administration of most of the Muslim rulers. Security for non-Muslims was the responsibility of the ruler. The law of the land was accommodating and issues confronting non-Muslims that required their religious rulings were treated as such. By marrying Rajput and Hindu princesses themselves, Mughal rulers tried to set a role model for society where religion was a personal matter for the individual.

Meanwhile, the ideologies perpetuated by the likes of Shah Waliullah inspired from the writings of Sirhandi and Ibn-e-Taymiyyah argued for an authoritative stance on matters such as morals and prayers. He favored religion as a matter of demarcation from the non-Muslims (Jalal, 2008:40-57). This particular emphasis on religion as a line of demarcation provides the foundation of using religion as a motivation behind the demand for a separate homeland for the Muslim community during anti-colonial campaigns in the sub-continent in the early 20th century. Presently, it is the argument favoring religion as a source of identity that is vehemently

employed with great effect by many religio-political parties in Pakistan like Jamaat-e-Islami, and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam.

The revivalist movement of Shah Waliullah

The specific approach to religion propagated by Shah Waliullah that proved influential in the later years was a product of the times when strong central rule was over. During the reign of Aurangzeb many factors contributed towards weakening of state institutions and allowed for the greater role of religion in political and state activity. One important factor in this respect was the circumstances leading to Aurangzeb's accession to the throne. Being the youngest son of Emperor Jahangir he had to imprison his own father and kill his two elder brothers before sitting on the throne in Delhi. He used religious charges of apostasy against Dara Shikoh, his elder brother and heir apparent, which were then approved by his handpicked *ulema* to execute the prince (Ahmed, 2007:49-50). Perhaps these deviations and the use of religion for personal gains explain his later efforts to assign a far greater role to religion in the body politic of the empire compared to his predecessors. He commissioned religious scholars to compile a book of religious judgments, *Fatawa-i-Alamgiri*, to be used in the courts as benchmark and guidepost in legal cases.

There were other developments in the time of Aurangzeb that increased his reliance on religion as a source of justification of his actions. For example, trade with the Europeans had increased the economic and military power of the southern Indian rajas. Aurangzeb tried to include them in his empire but even after many prolonged battles he met with little success. His long struggle against the Hindu Rajas and the general strategy to decrease the role of Hindus was based on extreme religious ideology inspired from *Fatawa-i-Alamgiri*.

After the death of Aurangzeb, the remnants of the Mughal Empire fell into chaos and the political environment never regained its past stability. There emerged various types of governments in the subcontinent. Some areas were under the control of Sikhs and Marathas, others were ruled by Hindu Rajputs while some were occupied or rather plundered by Afghan conquerors, among them notably Nadir Shah. In this context, Shah Waliullah argued for a revivalist movement. Implicitly, he assumed that the strife and chaos in India,

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which used to be *Dar ul Islam* (abode of Islam), was due to deviation from the path ordained by God. The right path was the one given in Quran and Sunnah and it should be followed by all Muslims. He favored implementation of Sharia to ensure the path of Islam. Those who don't follow it cannot be part of Muslim community.

Shah Waliullah was particularly cautious in advising Muslims to avoid Hindus and Shias because, he believed, they had a bad influence on the faith of Muslims. This period was marked by Shia efflorescence in the sub-continent. The states of Bengal and Awadh were noted in patronizing mourning ceremonies and supporting the writing and distribution of Urdu language elegies (Metcalf and Metcalf, 2006:43).

The ideas of Shah Waliullah were more effectively propagated by his son Shah Abdul Aziz. His influence was notable among the elites of northern India. The ideas of reform which implied purging of Sufism from the practices of saint worship and the restoration of political and social order were the need of the circumstances of those times.

It was in the context of these uncertain and chaotic times that Shah Waliullah wrote a letter to Ahmad Shah Abdali to conquer Delhi. He was imagining a strong ruler in the form of Ahmad Shah Abdali.⁴ He even advised Abdali on how his army should behave once they conquered Delhi. However, the army of Ahmad Shah Abdali did not pay heed to the recommendations by the spiritual master and plundered and destroyed Delhi in a way that became a proverbial example of terror and horror for people for many decades into the future.

Conclusion: exploiting faith to divide and rule

A vast empire ruled by Muslims of Arabia, Turkish, Afghan, and Persian origins, South Asia provides an important repository to study Islamic ideals as they have developed and changed to adapt to societies and ideologies that

⁴ Ahmad Shah Abdali (1722-1772) was the ruler of Afghanistan from 1742-1772. In 1761 he sacked Delhi causing much havoc, destruction, and atrocities. Many historians claimed that it was Shah Waliullah who instigated Abdali to wage *Jihad* against rulers in Delhi. (see e.g. Jalal, 2008: 54-56)

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are averse to integrating global strains. It is noted that Islam through the centuries has not played a significant role in the governance structure developed by Muslim rulers though they did seek religious sanctification for their rule from the Muslim Caliph in Central Asia and also from the doctors of religious sciences. At different phases in the history of Islamic civilizations, intellectuals and Sufis attempted to revive the 'true spirit of Islam'. Unfortunately these attempts focused more on the outward display of Islamic identity rather than its intellectual roots.

Most Muslim rulers adopted pragmatic approaches to diverse religious communities under their leadership and minimized the intervention of religion in affairs of the state. Therefore, they also succeeded to extend their rule despite rapid dynastic changes. The Mughals also adopted similar rules of governance, encouraging inter-faith dialogue and similarities between religions of the sub-continent to develop a unifying theology acceptable to all. These attempts invited a reaction from more conservative elements who only managed to gain ground during the reign of Aurangzeb. The latter instead of being pragmatic, encouraged a one-sided view of Islam, primarily to achieve personal political aims. This consequently weakened the Mughal Empire and brought it to its untimely ending. Conservative religious thinkers urged an armed attempt to restore a Muslim government in Delhi but their moves proved disastrous. In fact, they deepened the divide between Hindus and Muslims. It has been stressed that these fissures and cracks that gradually developed over centuries played an important role in formulating the independent struggle of Hindus and Muslims in subcontinent leading both groups on different paths.

The checkered history of Pakistan after independence from colonial rule displays a strange ambivalence between world views that are poles apart. The inability to explain Pakistan's identity at conception is debated to have become the root of its present-day dichotomy and complex socio-politics. On the one hand there are those minorities of all religions that share a liberal and secular outlook, willing to integrate with the modern world, and share values and a global business culture. Conversely, there are religious organizations and religiously inclined political parties censuring Western concepts and ideas to secure Islamic culture in its pristine purity of the early days of the Prophet Muhammad and his four companions.

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From intra-sectarianism to fragile peace: the Gilgit-Baltistan model

Peer Muhammad

Introduction

Gilgit-Baltistan, known for its scenic landscape, has experienced a vicious cycle of sectarianism for the last three decades; a region which otherwise was an exemplary example of peace and stability. The rise of sectarianism has damaged almost every fabric of society in a region that enjoyed social and cultural diversity. Although efforts at reconciliation by local leaders, religious elders and politicians has restored temporary security, resulting in decreasing sectarian attacks over the last two years, local residents remain sceptical about this partial lull in sectarian-related clashes. According to local sources, the root cause for increased sectarianism needs to be addressed, to restore permanent peace and tranquillity in this region.

Previously known as the Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA), Gilgit-Baltistan is situated in the extreme north of Pakistan. Bearing strategic and economic importance, it stretches over 72,496 square kilometers, surrounded by China in the north-east, Afghanistan and Central Asia in the northwest, and India in the east. The geography of Gilgit-Baltistan holds significance because the locale hosts three major mountainous ranges – the Karakorum, the Hindu Kush and the Himalayas – which are not only strategically important, but also provide natural resource, including glaciers comprising the main source of the country's water requirement. With a population of over 2 million, it comprises two administrative divisions, Gilgit and Baltistan, and seven administrative districts. Five districts fall under the jurisdiction of the Gilgit division including Ghizer, Gilgit, Hunza-Nagar, Diamer and Astore, while Skardu and Ghanche districts are located in the Baltistan division.

Demographic dynamics and sectarian divisions

Four major sectarian groups are known to be found in the Gilgit-Baltistan region: Shia, Sunni, Ismaili and Nurbakhshi. Among the inhabitants of Gilgit-Baltistan, 39 percent are Shias, 27 percent Sunnis, 18 percent Ismailis and 16 percent are Nurbakhshis (Hunzai, 2013: 2). Despite these sectarian affiliations, the local people of this region have co-existed for centuries. After joining Pakistan on November 14, 1947, the area remained largely peaceful for over three decades though some minor ideological and sectarian clashes were noted to occur periodically. It has been observed that a culture of inter-sectarian marriages was encouraged and other social connections that existed were supported by subscribers of different sects (Shekhawat, 2011). Apart from the people, local rajas (rulers) also nurtured the tradition of inter-sectarian marriages, which helped build a harmonious and peaceful society.

During British rule in India, sectarian conflict in the region – with roots in the 7th century – almost disappeared mainly due to the British Indian government's refusal to recognize the jurisprudence of *takfir*, or apostatisation of other sects, and a competent encoding of the Muslim Family Law that treated Sunni and Shia sects separately. Sectarian conflict in Gilgit-Baltistan, however, became a prevalent phenomenon after Partition in 1947. (Muhammad, 2011: 13).

Renowned historian and researcher on Gilgit-Baltistan, Sherbaz Ali Barcha believes that sectarian conflict is not a new phenomenon in the region.¹ According to his analysis, these differences are centuries old, but it was because of the effective policies of the British regime and Dogra Raj that sectarianism was not allowed to flourish. He refers to a letter by a local ruler Raja Suleman Shah of Gilgit written to Syed Ahmed Shah in the 1800s seeking the latter's help to exterminate certain 'non-Muslims' living in the area. However, in this letter, he does not identify the 'non-Muslims', although it is known that Shias and Ismailis had been living in this area, besides the Sunni population for centuries.

Emerging sectarian conflict post-1970s

Initially, sectarian tensions were limited to Gilgit that entailed clerics' bellowing insults at each other from their respective mosques, and clashes among Shia and Sunni youth, especially during Muharram processions which were rapidly quelled by local elders. The first case of sectarian violence resulting in the loss of life occurred in 1975, when a Shia Muharram procession in Gilgit was fired at from a Sunni mosque. The subsequent arrest of a Sunni religious leader known as Qazi instigated riots in Sunni areas of various valleys across the Indus, south of Gilgit, and its side valleys of Gor, Darel and Tangir. Sunnis from these areas threatened to attack Gilgit (Hunzai, 2013).

However, according to Barcha, the first case of sectarian killing was reported in 1971 when a Shia arms dealer from Gilgit was kidnapped in Kohistan and later killed while travelling to Gilgit from Rawalpindi. Barcha claims this was the first incident of its kind after 1947 that followed pockets of sectarian-related killings in Gilgit city, but locals have never perceived these incidents as associated with sectarian conflict.² Most believe that these incidents marked the beginnings of weakening administrative control in the area.

¹ Author's interview with Sherbaz Ali Barcha, an historian and researcher on Gilgit-Baltistan, conducted in Gilgit in July 2014.

² Author's interview with Sherbaz Ali Barcha.

Vested interests also emerged promoting a host of social, ethnical and sectarian issues in a traditionally peaceful society. The independent princely kingdoms of the region were abolished between 1972 and 1974 and replaced by a single administrative territory cryptically called the 'Northern Areas'. This new entity was neither given autonomous status like that of Azad Kashmir, nor provincial standing which had been granted to other regions of Pakistan. Instead, it was placed under the direct rule of the non-local, unelected Federal Minister of Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas (Ali, 2008).

A 2011 report by the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency noted that in order to thwart secular nationalist aspiration and deflect political energy and agreement, state institutions embarked upon a divide-and-rule policy of sponsoring Sunni and Shia religious organizations (Muhammad, 2011). As the traditional social order disintegrated, resulting in an identity crisis, many resorted to religion to establish a collective identity (Dad, 2011).

During the 1980s, Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization policies not only encouraged religious parties in mainstream politics, but polarized Pakistani society to an extent that tolerance of other religious sects was not perceived as the norm. This emerging religious ideology had a ripple effect through Gilgit-Baltistan as sectarian intolerance emerged to the fore after the worse tragedy in Jalalabad, Gilgit in 1988. When a large number of Shias were killed by Sunnis, allegedly with the help of certain outsiders, the Shia community placed the blame on the then president and military chief General Zia-ul-Haq. This tragedy triggered burgeoning sectarian conflict between Shia and Sunni communities in the region that had been living peacefully for centuries.³

Besides the Islamization policies of Zia, it was Iran's Islamic Revolution, the war between Iran and Iraq and Pakistan's Afghan policy that were contributing factors that gave impetus to a cycle of unending sectarianism in Pakistan, including the Gilgit-Baltistan region (Shekhawat, 2011). The 1988 Jalalabad tragedy was triggered by a quarrel between Shias and Sunnis in Gilgit. On May 17, 1988, Shias celebrated *Eid-ul-Fitr*, the festival marking the

³ Author's interview with Sherbaz Ali Barcha.

end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, a day earlier than the Sunni population. The latter who were still fasting, clashed with the Shia community, as a result of which a Shia student leader was seriously wounded. As the violence escalated, two people were killed. After news of these clashes spread to other parts of the region and beyond, Sunni religious clerics in what was then the North West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) declared a religious war or *jihad* against Shias, calling on volunteers (Sorbo, 1988). Sunni zealots, assisted by local Sunnis from Chilas, Darel and Tangir, attacked several Shia villages on the outskirts of Gilgit. By the time army units were sent in to quell the violence, at least 150 people were killed, several hundred injured and property worth millions of rupees destroyed (ICG, 2007).

Tracing the links: increasing sectarian violence in the 1990s

After the 1988 incident in Gilgit-Baltistan, sectarian violence continued through the next decade in this region, while the governments of the Pakistan People's Party and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz took hold of power successively in Pakistan after the Zia regime. In the aftermath of this tragedy, both Shia and Sunni communities began to strengthen their positions.

The historic proliferation of armed, militant religious organizations meant the rise of sectarian killings and violent clashes through the 1990s in Gilgit-Baltistan and continuing throughout the decade that followed; much supported by vested political interests at a particular time. The Zia era had witnessed the creation of religious groups purporting Wahhabi ideology – such as the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) – which meant in response Shia groups disillusioned with Islamabad and motivated by the need to unite on a common platform to ensure their collective survival, organized and supported the Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Fiqah-e-Jafria (TNFJ). Initially a religious organization, but transformed, through sheer numbers, the TNFJ has become a formidable political force. The TNFJ and the Shia community boycotted the election to the Northern Areas Council in 1991, accusing the then KANA minister Sardar Mehtab Abbassi of redrawing constituencies in Gilgit in

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favour of the Sunni community. In 1994, soon after the Legal Framework Order (LFO) for Gilgit-Baltistan was passed and concerned about Shia alienation, Islamabad held early elections when the TNFJ won ten seats out of 24 and was included in a coalition government (ICG, 2007).

In 1996, the SSP created an armed wing, the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). This led to the Shias forming their own armed outfit, the Sipah-e-Mohammad Pakistan (SMP). The impact of the aggressive Sunni Islamization drive initiated by Zia fell substantially on the Shia-dominated Gilgit-Baltistan region (Shekhawat, 2011)

Many local Sunnis who had participated in the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan returned home to join anti-Shia sectarian groups like the SSP and the LeJ. Local Shia graduates from Iran's religious schools also returned home and with Iranian financial backing and support joined Shia militant organizations (ICG, 2007).

Towards the end of the 1990s, yet another sectarian controversy appeared in the Northern Areas. In 1999, after the federal education ministry suddenly introduced amended textbooks produced by the Punjab Textbook Board, Shias believed, they contained material that exclusively promoted Sunni beliefs and practices, blackening out the Shia perception from the syllabus for subjects such as Islamiyat (or Islamic studies) and history.

According to a 2007 report by the International Crisis Group, which recorded figures from the Gilgit Police, there was a progressive increase in sectarian murders between 1990 and 1992, with seven accounted for in 1990, twelve in 1991, and 30 in 1992; in 1993 the number decreased to twenty (Ibid). The assassination of Gayyasuddin, a Sunni leader, on May 30, 1992 led to at least 30 sectarian-related killings. The subsequent conciliatory peace talks ended when Latif Hassan, a Shia leader, was shot dead on August 4, 1993, again leading to clashes that claimed more than two dozen lives (Shekhawat, 2011).

The controversial curriculum

In 2001, Shia and Sunni students in a Gilgit high school clashed violently, sparking demonstrations and strikes in the city. As this discord continued through the coming years, the government was not interested to resolve the

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issue. In May 2004, a local attempt was made to resolve the curriculum issue and all sects from this region agreed to a settlement on a three-point formula. Firstly, in Shia majority areas, instead of the controversial aspects of the curriculum, the one suitable to the Shia faith would be taught. Secondly, in Sunni majority areas, the curriculum would be taught as it was originally conceived. Thirdly, in the areas where there was a mixed population, the curriculum would specifically focus on the faith of both sects (Shekhawat, 2011).

Local communities agreed on separate Islamic Studies courses for Shia and Sunni students, signifying their willingness to resolve differences peacefully, but the Ministry of Education refused to withdraw contentious material. This led to strikes and protest demonstrations by Shias, bringing Gilgit to a standstill.

By 2004, it had been four years since the Shia community in the Northern Areas had started agitating against the controversial curriculum. Delegations had repeatedly appealed to the Ministry of Education as well as the Ministry of Kashmir and Northern Areas Affairs in Islamabad, only to be dismissed each time. Discouraged and angered, Shia students began to boycott classes and stage rallies: on May 17, 2004, more than 300 went on a three-day hunger strike in Gilgit. Within days, the situation gravely deteriorated as thousands took to the streets, blocking roads and bringing businesses to a halt. When a prominent Shia leader, Agha Ziauddin Rizvi, declared June 3 as a day of protest, if the government failed to resolve the syllabus issue within that timeframe, the army was called in and a curfew imposed in Gilgit. However, street processions continued in defiance of the curfew, leading to violent clashes between protestors and security personnel in several parts of the Northern Areas (Ali, 2008).

On January 8, 2005, Rizvi, who was the Imam of the central Shia Mosque and was spearheading the movement against the textbook issue in Gilgit-Baltistan, was critically injured in an attack, later succumbing to his injuries at the CMH, Rawalpindi on January 12, 2005. Soon after this attack, enraged Shias took to the streets in Gilgit, destroying government and private properties, resulting in a loss of lives. A senior government officer belonging to the Ismaili community and six others were burned alive in an attack on his

house by an enraged mob, and the Sunni director of the local health department was shot dead in his office. At least fifteen people were killed and scores injured before the government imposed a shoot-on-sight curfew. Riots spread to Skardu, where hundreds of Shias protested, attacking government property and blocking roads. On January 12, Rizvi succumbed to his injuries, triggering more violent protests. Although leaders of the two main religious groupings in the Northern Areas, the Shia Anjuman-i-Islami and the Sunni Tehreek Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat, signed an agreement brokered by the NALC to restore peace, neither side was sincere. Despite the agreement, target killings continued and followed with the assassination of Sakhiullah Tareen, a Sunni police chief from KPK in the Northern Areas at the time of Rizvi's assassination.

On April 26, 2005, the federal minister for education, Lt. General (retd.) Javed Ashraf Qazi chaired a high-level committee meeting that decided the Punjab Textbook Board's contentious textbooks would be withdrawn and replaced with those published by the NWFP Textbook Board and the National Book Foundation. However, the education minister has not delivered on his pledge to replace the national curriculum with revised textbooks from which all contentious sectarian material has been removed. The old textbooks, with minor modifications, are still used in the region, although the controversial chapters are not taught (ICG, 2007).

Killing fields: new targets, widespread violence

In 2012, it was noted that sectarian attacks that had earlier targeted towns had shifted focus to the longest passenger route, the Karakoram Highway (KKH), the only land route connecting Gilgit-Baltistan with the rest of the country. This new phenomenon and locale of violence on the transport route has created anxiety among the people of Gilgit Baltistan, particularly Shia communities, who have to travel longer routes by crossing Sunni populated areas amid a poor security mechanism provided by the government.

On February 28, 2012, in a chilling sectarian attack, sixteen men were hauled off buses at Harban in district Kohistan and shot dead in cold blood by unidentified assailants disguised in military fatigues. The gunmen who flagged down the buses, and climbed on board, asked passengers for their

identification, then proceeded to drag a group of men off the bus, lining them by the roadside, and mercilessly spraying them with bullets, a senior police official had told *The Express Tribune*. Fifteen out of the sixteen passengers killed were Shias. The militant group Jundallah claimed responsibility for the attack when a commander, Ahmed Marwat, contacted the media soon after the attack (*The Express Tribune*, 2012).

Later, on April 3 the same year, at least nine passengers were killed by a mob in Gunar Farm area close to Chilas in reaction to a sectarian incident of violence that erupted in Gilgit which in turn was in reaction to an attack with a hand grenade that morning, leading to the death of 7 Sunnis protesters and injuring 50. In retaliation, nine Shia passengers were killed near Chilas. Protesters in Chilas also burnt down six buses, pushing two into the Indus River. Police and administration officials failed to control the angered mob. A Superintendent of Police and two guards were injured while trying to protect passengers. A curfew was imposed in Gilgit and the surrounding areas and cell phone services were suspended for months.

This was followed by yet another incident of carnage on August 16, 2012, in what appears to be a replay of the Harban Nala attack in Kohistan district, when gunmen killed 19 people after establishing their identity (identity cards) at the Babusar Top Pass in Mansehra district. They were travelling to Skardu from Rawalpindi.

Local assessments: reasons for internal sectarian violence

A former police Inspector General for Gilgit-Baltistan, Hussain Asghar believes that the dynamics of conflict in this region has cultural and ethnic overtones rather than sectarian.⁴ This region plays home to three different culturally diverse areas, including Balti, Diamer and Gilgit. Previously, the Shia-dominated Baltistan never connected with Gilgit and Diamer. It was when the Gilgit-Skardu road was constructed in the early 1960s and KKH was constructed in the 1970s that people of different cultures and regions started travelling and this connection forged through travel and trade became a merger of ideas and communities. Therefore, Baltistan was connected with

⁴ Telephonic interview in July 2014.

Gilgit. The lack of frequent interaction between the people of Baltistan with Gilgit and Diamer before the construction of KKH meant an isolated vision of the other. When communities started integrating with each other, it was the period of urbanization, after the construction of connecting roads, which led to different cultures meeting and clashing, later giving the impression that sectarianism had arisen, state analysts. Indigenous communities in Gilgit and Diamer were proudly connected to their ethnic background like the Shins, Yashkuns and, Kasgharis and Kashmiris – key ethnic groups that have inhabited Gilgit for centuries. According to Asghar, another major factor is related to economic and social interests of different groups that also began colliding after the above mentioned demographic changes.

As mentioned earlier, the construction of the KKH caused demographic changes in Gilgit-Baltistan. About 70 percent of the businesses, particularly in the Shia dominated Gilgit region, were dominated by non-locals, mostly Pashtuns from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Kashmiris with a largely Sunni background. This trend frustrated the local Shias. Gradually, non-locals purchased land, built properties and started to prepare domiciles to enter government departments with the help of non-local officers. The outsiders relied on sectarian affiliations to protect their economic and commercial interests by drumming up support from local Sunnis.

According to Ghulam Nabi Raikoti, a peace activist from Chilas, the sectarian tragedy of 1988 was engineered by Zia regime. But it was the local and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa administrations which were responsible for allowing extremist Sunnis to enter Gilgit and kill local people.⁵ He believes to maintain peace in Gilgit-Baltistan suspicious outsiders should be banned from entering the region as there is no conflict among local communities but that outsiders fuel clashes.

Ever since the 1988 incidents, when Shia- Sunni sectarian rifts blew out of proportion due to a minor misunderstanding and weak local governance, Gilgit-Baltistan has never been the same, notes Jamsheed Khan Dukhi, a Sunni poet and historian. He affirms that gradually the writ of the government has weakened mainly due to the propagation of sectarianism

⁵ Ghulam Nabi Raikoti was interviewed by author in Islamabad in July 2014.

serving vested political interests. Presently, Gilgit-Baltistan is divided on sectarian lines including its politics, civil society, judiciary, and bureaucracy, he explains.⁶

As a former police inspector general belonging to Skardu, Afzal Ali Shigri is of the view that sectarianism in Gilgit-Baltistan cannot be explained in isolation from rest of the country. Shigri notes the spillover of sectarianism to this region was mainly caused by poorly coordinated local administrations.⁷ Locals believe that strict action should be taken against government officials found involved in instigating sectarian strife in Gilgit-Baltistan. Strengthening the criminal justice system is also crucial. Additionally, political and sectarian affiliations of government employees should be seriously investigated.

Peace initiatives: why religious clergy must unite communities

Despite the dangerous brew of sectarian hatred perpetuated during the last 30 years in Gilgit-Baltistan, certain religious leaders and elders from all sects have periodically played their role to reduce such divisions. This has reduced the tit-for-tat violence and killings between rival sects. Take the example of the *ulema*, and leaders of Diamer who promptly acted to rescue as many as 200 passengers, sending them safely to Gilgit. These passengers had reportedly been kidnapped by a violent mob on April 3, 2012 at the Gunar Farm, in Chilas, where seven other passengers were also killed. This intervention points to the support and protection provided by the clergy adding to the security of the region and providing the message of peaceful co-existence. Public circles have appreciated the religious clergy for protecting unarmed passengers and

⁶ Even development and social service organizations have adopted religious tags such as Kashrot Hospital for Sunnis and Barmas Hospital for Shias; Kashrot School for Sunnis and Basin School for Shias. Sectarian polarization has further created a gulf coupled with weak governance at the core of all challenges.

⁷ Interview by author in Islamabad, August 2014.

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ensuring their safe return to Gilgit. It is being said that if not for these efforts, the bloodshed could have escalated. (*Pamir Times*, 2012).

At the same time, some Sunni persons including a doctor and judge were taken hostage by Shias in Nagar valley in reaction to the Gunar farm incident in April 2012. However, the elders of the community and the Shia clergy intervened and rescued them, handing them over to the administration despite adverse reactions by Shia activists.⁸

Later, in 2012, following the Gunar farm incident and killing of protesters in Gilgit city, the Gilgit-Baltistan administration sealed two major mosques belonging to both sects in the city. The government had linked the opening of these mosques with the acceptance of the code of conduct that bars prayer leaders from making hate speeches that would rile communities.

After four months of hard work, in April 2012, a 15-point Code of Conduct was prepared by a parliamentary peace committee, which was constituted by the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly.⁹ The committee not only prepared a

⁸A federal government initiative on September 21, 2005, resulted in the formation of a *jirga* (traditional tribal assembly), headed by the speaker of the Northern Areas Legislative Council (NALC), Malik Muhammad Maskeen, including representatives from both the sects, to bring peace to the area. Sunni and Shia organizations signed a six-point peace deal. According to this agreement, the Tanzim Ahle Sunnah wal Jamaat, representing the Sunni community, and the Central Anjumane-Imamia, known as Anjuman (community), representing the Shia community, agreed to immediately stop issuing religious *fatwas* (edicts) and counter-fatwas against each other and to foster sectarian harmony by resolving other outstanding issues. Each agreed to ensure law and order during Muharram processions and to be held responsible for protecting the communities living in their areas and localities. Despite, this peace agreement, the killing did not stop and religious leaders of both sects continued preaching against the others' communities.

⁹ The adviser to the Prime Minister Attaullah Shahab, the G-B Legislative Assembly Deputy Speaker Jamil Ahmed, the member of the G-B Council Advocate Amjad Hussain, the adviser Forests and Wildlife Aftab Haider and others were members of the committee constituted by the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly to formulate effective regulations for mosques, aimed at ending sectarian attacks that had led to the closure of the central mosques belonging to both sects in Gilgit. This happened after the killing of passengers in Chilas on April 3, 2012.

15-point effective Code of Conduct for both Sunni and Shia mosques in Gilgit, but also gave it legal cover through legislation, titled the 'Masjid Regulation Act 2012' passed by the legislative assembly. Under the Act, a 20-member Masjid Board was constituted representing ten members from both Shia and Suni sects, bound to implement the code.

This initiative curtailed the role of mosques in politics and set a mechanism for religious clerics. The key feature of the code of conduct was that prayer leaders from both central mosques were not to malign each other's beliefs or use abusive language against the another sect's revered personalities. It also stated that prayer leaders and their deputies should not issue inflammatory decrees, nor follow any order of vested interests, especially during Friday and Eid sermons. Clerics were instructed against demanding a share in government jobs and other privileges for their respective sects under the new code of conduct. Violators were liable to be tried under the Anti-terrorism act. The prayer leader of the mosque would have to sign this code of conduct before taking charge of any mosque and had to abide by the code in letter and spirit. This act would not only apply to Gilgit, but was also extended to other parts of the country, wherever any issue arises. Advocate Amjad Hussain, a key member of the peace committee, who was also the main author of the code of conduct, says that the Act was implemented with the cooperation of the Masjid Board and the administration. He attributes the enforcement of this code to a decrease in sectarian incidents in Gilgit.¹⁰

Historically sectarian violence in Gilgit-Baltistan could be attributed to the sudden instigation of religious sentiments, not because of a pre-meditated design, Hussain states. Religious leaders often used their offices as potential forums where they received jobs, contracts and permits, which could not be done under the Act. This is the reason why peace has remained in this region for the past two years. Besides, Hussain also points out that there was no proper political forum for the youth and politically motivated persons in the past, but that the Gilgit-Baltistan Governance and Self Rule Order-2009, granted by the PPP government in 2009 has filled this gap. "In the absence of such political forums in the past a potential religious elite had developed

¹⁰ Telephone interview by author in July 2014.

over time and filled the vacuum, remaining active in pursuing the vested interest of certain groups,” he adds.¹¹

Conclusion: the Gilgit-Baltistan experiment in sectarian harmony

Historical facts and interviews with various stakeholders in Gilgit-Baltistan reveal that sectarian conflict, particularly when clashes turn violent can be attributed to internal and external factors. Certainly this would include the state’s jihad policy during 1980s, the fall-out of Afghan war, the Iran-Iraq war, as well as demographic changes in Gilgit-Baltistan after the construction of KKH. Additionally, the denial of constitutional and political rights for almost six decades and the indifferent attitude of the local and federal administrations further aggravated the situation. It can be asserted that other internal factors included misunderstanding among various sects, absence of an effective criminal justice system, ethnic divisions and lack of education and awareness, and the exploitation of the religious sentiments by different interest groups. Hence, the complexity of the situation as it developed in the region over years, further fuelling violence, when different local interest groups started using their respective sects to achieve their designs. These interest groups include religious groups, politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen. The fundamental reason that such religious forums became powerful was because of the absence of any alternate affective platform available to better serve their interests, in the absence of strong political and constitutional institutions to redress their grievances. Thus, it remained common practice for more than two decades for the religious clerics to enjoy a dominant role in the corridors of power at a local level: this resulted in many pursuing the agendas of their respective sects. All this happened in the absence of strong political institutions and a justice system. The vacuum was ultimately filled by religious groups to protect their interests. It was the main reason that most of the youth had to rely on religious leaders from their respective sects rather than concerned political and constitutional institutions, when it came to issues, particularly employment. This trend often resulted in the exploitation of the younger generation.

¹¹ Author’s telephonic interview with Advocate Amjad Hussain, a key member of the peace committee, in July 2014.

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Following the Majid Regulatory Act 2012, the cooperation and the commitment of religious leaders in mosques connected meant that they focused only on the religious matters, avoiding hate speeches and influencing the local administration. It could also be recommended that this code of conduct was not only strictly implemented, but also extended to other regions to ensure long-term peace and harmony. All stakeholders agreed that peace could be revived and sectarianism tackled through indigenous measures. It could also be mentioned that this peace effort demonstrated unity to fight for the common cause of restoring the wheat subsidy for the region in February 2014. People gathered from seven districts belonging to diverse sects in Gilgit and Skardu, staging a sit-in for ten consecutive days under the umbrella of Awami Action Committee (AAC), and successfully achieved their joint objective. This exemplary demonstration of unity among the four sects after more than two decades of violence gave hope to local communities.

Despite the latest show of unity, sectarian harmony in Gilgit-Baltistan will remain hostage to religious sentiments, unless the political and constitutional alienation of the people of this region is addressed through reforms at the federal level. When there is empowerment of local people – both politically and administratively – there is visible economic growth and stability with little reason to shift gears towards creating violence and political instability.

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Understanding the Islamic State: ideology, affiliates and the Da'esh model

Farhan Zahid

Introduction

The newly surfaced Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which is referred to as the Islamic State (IS), is an Al-Qaeda offshoot which was disfranchised by the latter's current chief Ayman al-Zawahiri in favour of another branch of Al-Qaeda, the Nusra Front involved in the Syrian civil war.¹ Another reason for the split is attributed to the personality clash between Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed caliph of IS, and Mohammad al-Joulani of the Nusra Front (Zahid and Salman, 2014). Zawahiri swiftly disavowed the newly created IS in a statement saying Al-Qaeda was not linked to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (*Al-Akhbar*, 2014). Under Baghdadi's leadership, IS has

¹ The al-Nusra Front was created in January 2012 as a Sunni rebel group with the objective to overthrow the Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria. It is known that many of the group's members had fought against Americans in Iraq and remained there after the withdrawal of US forces.

rapidly developed into an efficiently organized and financially viable militant organization exerting its control over large swathes of oil-rich Iraq and Syria, able to recruit fighters worldwide, using social media platforms to proliferate its Salafist ideology and attracting western educated foot soldiers and young western women made to marry its fighters. The brutal and violent actions of IS, including its unrelenting authority and theological interpretations have been widely criticized, even by Islamist groups. The militant group was found involved in massive human rights abuses and ethnic cleansing of the local Iraqi tribesmen including Kurds and Iraqi Yazidis.

This paper focuses on the foundation of the Islamic State and its Sunni Muslim/Salafi ideology since its inception under the founding Al-Qaeda chief for Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and looks at factors that have fuelled its rise through the last decade. The emergence of the group has not only threatened to change the map of the Middle East but has also raised concerns for the security of the neighboring and distant countries as fighters from various countries including the West are travelling to join this terrorist organization. Being regarded as the world's richest terror group, the IS is making money from captured oil fields, smuggling of millions of dollars worth of antiquities from the country, and by extorting taxes from businesses in Mosul in Iraq. The IS model could be replicated in territories where governance is weak and states are unable to counter the rise of terrorist groups.

The paper also tries to examine that to what extent the group's ideology and affiliations might have changed under its new leadership and its recent rise as a brutal terror group targeting minorities in Syria and Iraq given its vast financial resources. Differing from Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda, the IS is mixing violence and terrorism with territorial expansion. Why global affiliates are pledging allegiance to Baghdadi and momentarily ignoring Al-Qaeda is another aspect discussed in this paper.

How Al-Maqdisi influenced earlier IS leaders?

It is imperative to understand the teachings of ISIS ideologue, Issam al Barqawi, also known as Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi in order to examine the origins of the group. The original name for IS was Tawheed wal Jihad, an

Iraqi radical Islamist movement founded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2002 after the US invasion of Iraq. Maqdisi ideologically mentored the founder of ISIS and groomed his Salafist views.

Militant organizations interact for the purposes of sharing ideological motivations, safe havens, weapons, training and logistics and foot-soldiers. The globally branded militant organization, Al-Qaeda has provided its label, overall cover, publicity, safe havens, financial support, training and recruitment facilities to its affiliates, and reinvigorates smaller groups when they fall apart. It may not be directly involved in coordinating attacks, or operationally building militant organizations and their influence but pledging loyalty to the most notorious extremist organization puts smaller groups in a beneficial position. However, despite sharing similar Wahabi/Salafi ideologies, this does not indicate that these groups and their leaders may always work together. Alliances are tactical and at times opportunistic.

Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, a Jordanian cleric of Palestinian origin has inspired many followers through his writings, speeches and sermons in and around Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Syria. Maqdisi is also one of the strongest clerical voices on jihadist platforms on the Internet. Zarqawi came into contact with Maqdisi in a Jordanian prison in the early 1990s. Zarqawi, with almost no understanding of religion and jihad, was inspired by Maqdisi.

Born in Barqa, West Bank, in 1959, Maqdisi had to flee his hometown because of Israeli military incursions, migrating to Jordan where he became a naturalized Jordanian citizen. Studying religion at a local Jordanian madrassa (religious school), he moved to Kuwait during the 1970s as the Kuwaiti government supported the Palestinian cause and played host to more than 250,000 Palestinian refugees. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, Maqdisi decided to join the Arabs and Afghans fighting against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Before moving to Peshawar, Pakistan, then the hub of global jihadists, Maqdisi wandered around Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

Saudi clerics at the behest of the royal Saudi government issued *fatwas* against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and declared jihad as a *farz-e-ain* (obligatory for every single Muslim). Palestinian scholar Abdullah Yousaf

Azzam became Saudi Arabia's frontrunner whereas Maqdisi joined hands with Kuwait's charity organizations in Peshawar, extensively involved in financially and logistically supporting Arabs recruits travelling via Peshawar to Afghanistan.² Thousands of radicalized Saudis and Kuwaitis flocked to Pakistan to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan. According to analyst Khaled Ahmed, Maqdisi was radical in his way of thinking, attacking Western modernism, particularly its liberal democracy (Ahmed, 2014). Eighteen articles written by him were found in the personal effects of Mohamed Atta, the leader of the Hamburg Cell, who attacked the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001 (Ibid). He was also close to Azzam, who taught at the International Islamic University in Islamabad.

Maqdisi has written voluminously on topics related to jihad, democracy, apostasy and relations with non-Muslims. Ideologically a *takfiri*, Maqdisi's main focus is on 'jihad' and related legal issues such as killing of civilians, unarmed non-Muslims, apostate Muslims and destruction of property. He considers suicide attacks or what he refers to in typical jihadi jargon '*fidayeen*' attacks as the highest form of jihad by a mujahid. He explicitly confirms that suicide attacks are a legitimate means to fight the enemy, as long as they are used for the right purpose (Wagemakers, 2008). The legitimacy of suicide operations is stressed as long as a mujahid adopts the tactic to raise the word of God and inflict maximum damage to the infidel enemy, and finds no other tactic to achieve the desired effect (COEDAT, 2007: 67). As far as killing children and non-combatants is concerned, 'though he is not enthusiastic about killing them, he acknowledges the inevitability, and indeed necessity of such acts (McCants and Brachman, 2006: 170-171).

The Maqdisi-Zarqawi connection

Though Zarqawi and Maqdisi knew each other from their time in Afghanistan, their relationship strengthened in Suwaqah prison, 85 kilometers south of Amman, located in the middle of the desert. After establishing his jihadi network in Amman in 1994, Zarqawi planned to bomb

² Maqdisi had moved to Kuwait from Jordan during the mid-1970s seeing the opportunities provided by the Kuwaiti government to settle thousands of Palestinians in Kuwait.

hotels in Jordan, but was arrested before executing these attacks. In prison, he met Maqdisi who was involved in preaching jihadist ideologies and inciting violence against the King of Jordan. Maqdisi mentored Zarqawi and strengthened his jihadist beliefs.

After his release as a result of a general amnesty granted by new King Abdullah-II in 1999, Zarqawi travelled back to Afghanistan, under the Taliban regime at the time. Bin Laden who had known Zarqawi from their Afghan jihad days asked him to pledge allegiance to the militant leader which Zarqawi refused. Instead, he opened his own training camp in Herat with the Taliban regime's permission. As a result of his association with Maqdisi, Zarqawi had emerged as an arrogant, ultra-radical, violent, and uncompromising militant leader (Guardia, 2006).

Zarqawi's jihadist journey started in Pakistan during Afghan war (1979-89), culminating in Iraq in 2003. After 9/11, he had started to collude with Al-Qaeda and fought briefly alongside Al-Qaeda's Brigade 055 in Afghanistan against the US-backed anti-Taliban Northern Alliance forces. He slipped into Iran after the collapse of the Taliban regime after the US-led war in October 2001. Joining hands with Ansar al-Islam in the Kurdish regions of Iraq, he tried to reinvigorate an Islamist insurgency long before the American invasion of Iraq, targeting Ansar al-Islam from the start. This left Zarqawi without any option but to organize the Islamist insurgency in Iraq's urban districts. He had enough time to prepare for the launch of an Islamist insurgency supported by former militant trainees from Herat who joined his new organization, Tawheed wal Jihad. He asked Bin Laden for Al-Qaeda's Iraq franchise that the former recognized as Al-Qaeda had a negligible support base in Iraq. Zarqawi in return pledged an oath of allegiance to Bin Laden in 2004, changing his organization's name to Al-Qaeda in the Land of Two Rivers.

In conjunction with Maqdisi's philosophy on suicide bombing, Zarqawi unleashed a wave of suicide attacks across Iraq. Shia Muslims primarily became targets of Al-Qaeda's suicide attacks along with American and Iraqi security forces. The situation worsened as the country reached the brink of a sectarian war. Shias and moderate Sunnis in Iraq in lieu of this deteriorating

situation started to support the US military.³ Zawahiri even wrote a letter to Zarqawi, warning him not to indulge in brewing sectarian conflict, as Al-Qaeda Core wanted to avoid drifting into a sectarian war (CTC, 2010: 5).

The impact of Maqdisi on Zarqawi's jihadi endeavours was immense. He did not follow the Al-Qaeda playbook, rather banked on Maqdisi, whom he considered far more advanced in terms of using his explanation of Shariah laws for conducting suicide attacks. Maqdisi also considered democracy as a system of *kufir* or disbelief that opposed Islam as the biggest hurdle in the implementation of Shariah, or Islamic law. Based on his interpretation of commandments from the precepts of Islam, he also rejected man-made legislation as a negation of divine law, or Shariah (Al-Maqdisi).

Maqdisi goes into details to explain the virtues of jihad by elaborating on the concept of *al-wala' wa'l-bara'* (love and enmity for the sake of God), using this to justify rebellion against disbelievers and transgressors even if they are Muslim rulers.⁴

The post-Zarqawi era in Iraq

Zarqawi's lieutenants failed to carry forth his legacy of terror. Abu Ayub al-Masri also known as Abu Hamza al-Muhajir and Al-Rashid al-Baghdadi's deaths in 2010 almost brought the organization – then called Islamic State of Iraq – to a close. In 2010, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (Abu Dua) became the leader of Islamic State, and unlike Zarqawi and other former leaders he is a local Iraqi. Educated and unconventional in approach, Baghdadi made tactical decisions to move the depleted group to Syria where a civil war had begun by 2011. Much like his predecessors, he is influenced by Maqdisi's theology. He moved back to Iraq after developing personal rifts with Mohammad al-Joulani, the leader of Al-Qaeda's Syria franchise al-Nusra Front.

³The Awakening Movement (Anbar Awakening) was a movement of Sunni tribes in Anbar province in Iraq to counter the growing influence of Al-Qaeda which was controlling the state of affairs for Iraqis and non-Iraqis in 2007-08.

⁴*Wilaya* (power and authority) is pivotal in Maqdisi's ideological discourse which is a manifestation of the fact that fighting against disbelieving rulers on the basis of some argument and wanting *wilaya* in the affairs of the state is justified.

Although the influence of Maqdisi's teachings is apparent on the IS *modus operandi*, he has refused to accept the Baghdadi-led Islamic State as revealed in a statement on his website. Maqdisi has stated that, "whoever hastens something prematurely will be punished by being deprived of that for which he fights" (Oddonne, 2014). He further called Islamic State a 'rush job', 'forced', and 'illegitimate' (Ibid). Instead, Maqdisi has asked the Al-Qaeda leader Aymn al-Zawahiri and Baghdadi to reconcile (Joscelyn, 2014).

The IS under Baghdadi: leadership and structure

The Islamic State is at an advantage having included former Iraqi military officers in its ranks. Its organizational structure differs from when Zarqawi, the founder of the group held the top position. Previously, the rank and file mostly comprised of jihadi fighters trained at camps in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. Many of them were trained by Zarqawi himself while he was running his own training camp in Herat. After a change of leadership, IS under Baghdadi accepts former Iraqi army officers, Ba'ath Party leaders, and officers from the Republican Guard.

The sudden rise of Baghdadi amid jihadist ranks was expected. Baghdadi whose real name is Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai was born in Samarra in 1971. Belonging to a family of religious Salafis, unlike other top militant commanders, Baghdadi is well-educated in Islamic law and obtained his doctorate from Islamic University of Baghdad. Joining the Islamist insurgency after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, he remained a low-level commander in Zarqawi's organization, until his arrest by American forces in 2005. After remaining in custody at Camp Bucca in southern Iraq, he was finally released in 2009. At this time, the Islamist terror organization was breathing its last because successive leaders had not been able to consolidate and revive the group. Baghdadi took over the reins of power in 2010 and reinvigorated its structure. With depleted ranks, he moved to Syria where a civil war had just begun against the authoritarian regime of President Bashar al-Assad in 2011. Baghdadi managed to muster support and gathered a force of 12,000 Islamists, at least 3,000 travelled from western European countries (McCoy, 2014). In three years, the Baghdadi-led Islamist force has managed to make a comeback in Iraq.

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At present, Islamic State is noted to be the most well-equipped, and efficiently organized militant organization, as well as the wealthiest terror group with an estimated net worth of \$2 billion (Elliott, 2014).

Abu Ali al-Anbari

Abu Ali al-Anbari, an Iraqi Army general who held major operational positions during the Ba'ath Party era under Saddam Hussein is currently responsible for the group's military campaign against the Syrian regime, and operates in Syrian territories held by IS despite the fact that he hails from Mosul. Considered an opportunist among his rivals, Anbari first joined hands with Ansar al-Shariah, an Islamist terrorist group that operated in northern Iraq, but later defected to IS in mainland Iraq (Gorman, et al., 2014).

Abu Muslim Al Turkmani

Another former Lieutenant Colonel belonging to the Special Forces in the Iraqi Army under Saddam Hussein, who also served in Iraqi Military Intelligence, Turkmani's real name is Fadel Ahmed Abdullah al-Hiyali (Sherlock, 2014). Turkmani is responsible for governing Iraqi territories under the control of IS. His operational skills are said to be useful in defending and holding back the Iraqi Defense Forces. Three consecutive Iraqi army attempts to retake Mosul and its surroundings have been dashed by the military tactics of Turkmani.

Why Al-Qaeda might be losing ground in the Middle-East?

With increasing competition emerging between Al-Qaeda and IS, both terror groups have shown will and resolve to become the umbrella organization of worldwide jihadist forces. Another key issue that has emerged over the past decade is the desire to show strength and influence through high-profile terror attacks in order to gain media attention.

IS, though, a relative newcomer on the jihadist front and with an inexperienced leadership has managed to occupy Syrian and Iraqi territories, announcing a renegade Islamic State. Meanwhile, Al-Qaeda under the leadership of an experienced Zawahiri appears to have lost its spot in the limelight though recent months have seen the announcement of a new Al-

Qaeda wing, Al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent. IS having gained territory and advertised its brutal victories in Iraq and Syria on social media platforms – including the horrific killings of minority ethnic groups and tribal leaders – has attracted the attention of radical jihadist groups and young men and women worldwide recruited as frontline soldiers.

The creation of Islamic State has witnessed a plethora of jihadists wanting to win the IS franchise. Baghdadi proclaimed his caliphate with a message to all Islamist groups and Muslims to pledge allegiance to him (Goodenough, 2014). By September 2014, a wide range of Islamist terrorist groups in different parts of world had either pledged allegiance to or supported IS:

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

Some of the above mentioned groups are amateur terror groups, newly established or with low memberships. Most of them have been credited with few terror incidents. Established terror groups like Boko Haram and Abu Sayaf have also recognized the 'legitimacy' IS. Each has its own reasoning to support or join hands with IS but it will be the geographical location (of the group) that will emerge as yet another interesting issue. A number of *Wahabi/Salafi* clerics have also exalted the creation of Caliphate and approved its credentials. Some of those are listed below:

- Shaikh Abu Umar al-Kuwaiti

- Abu Yazid al-Qahar al-Khurasani
- Bilal ash-Shawasi al-Tunisi
- Abu Usama Musaidibn Bashir al-Sudani
- Abdullah al-Faisal al-Jamaiki
- Bilal Chaouachi of Ansar al-Sharia Tunisia
- Mamoon Hatem of Ansar al-Sharia (part of AQAP)
- Abdal Mujeed al-Heetari
- Shaikh Abu Wardah Santoso al-Indoneesi
- Anjem Choudary
- Musa Cerantonio
- Ulema of Jund al-Khilafah in the Philippines

Motivational factors for supporting IS

After Bin Laden, Al-Qaeda's chief Zawahiri has not been able to coordinate and plan major attacks against the US and its allies, which explains why security experts believe the militant organization's backbone was finally broken around 2011. Disappointed Al-Qaeda fighters, affiliated groups and movements began looking for a new terror base when IS appeared on their radar to provide such an opportunity after parting ways with Al-Qaeda in Syria.

Apart from becoming less significant after the death of Bin Laden, Al-Qaeda has lost its operational independence and its core group based in Pakistan because of increasing drone attacks and military operations. It has more or less become an associated movement linked to the Afghan Taliban in the region. This claim can be substantiated because Bin Laden swore allegiance to the supreme leader of the Afghan Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar in 2000, practically making his organization subservient to the Afghan Taliban.⁵

⁵After the death of Bin Laden in May 2011, Al-Qaeda's new chief, Zawahiri reaffirmed his position and reconfirmed an oath of allegiance to Mullah Omar. Despite this move, why we see many fighters flocking towards IS rather than Al-Qaeda at this time is because of the lure of power. Baghdadi rules over a territory almost the size of Belgium, with oil fields under its control, a large populace, safe havens, weapons,

But it is pertinent to note that smaller militant groups have joined the IS banner: ill-equipped, on-the-run, and ill-resourced Islamist groups mostly new in the arena of jihad. Many of these were previously associated with Al-Qaeda, propagating their ambitions and agendas, for gaining international media attention.

Security expert Daniel L Byman's model (2012) examines reasons why localized militant groups seek or break affiliations with major global groups. The Byman Model describes reasons for groups eager to associate and linking themselves with Al-Qaeda. The model focuses on motivational factors for getting Al-Qaeda franchise; the same model could be applied to study ISIS-affiliated Islamist terrorist groups.

Many of the terror groups collaborating with the Islamic State have limited membership; and have failed to coordinate high-profile terror attacks. Take the example of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), which is rejected by Islamist terror groups operating in its region such as Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on the basis of the former's criminal and uncompromising nature. The ASG has an estimated membership of 300, and considering it has a decade-old network in the Philippines, it remains a small, marginal group with little nuisance value, and restricted to criminal activities. Ansar Bail al-Maqdis in Egypt and factions of Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia are under tremendous pressure because their respective governments are working to destroy the infrastructure of these terror groups. It makes sense that weak and failing terror organizations are more susceptible to joining IS for reasons of overall protection, shared resources and power. Also cash-strapped, many established terror groups are looking to fill their coffers from the enormous resources held by IS (ranging from oil wells, funds coming from sympathizers, selling Iraqi artifacts in black markets and extortion). Al-Qaeda, in fact, set this precedence luring Islamist terrorist groups worldwide, financing terror attacks in exchange for using their brand. The IS franchise is proving more beneficial at the moment because of the available resources,

training facilities, jihad against a variety of enemies such as the US forces, Iraqi forces, Kurds, Yazidis, Shias, Hezbollah, Syrian forces and at least a chance to glance at arch enemy Israel. Al-Qaeda could only offer some space in the drone-attacked tribal areas of Pakistan where chances to survive the hell fire missiles are small.

geographical reach, number of fighters and the scale of its activities. Islamist terrorist groups are effectively utilizing these safe havens provided to them by IS. To gain global significance, IS will have to follow Al-Qaeda's footsteps, especially as it must face an international onslaught. Through foreign fighters in its ranks, IS will be able to retaliate against the countries involved in striking their fighting power and terrorist infrastructure in Iraq and Syria.

Unlike Al-Qaeda it controls an area as large as Belgium (Gilsinan, 2014), comprising territory in Iraq and Syria where it implements its own version of Islamic law. The operation of Islamic State is currently similar to what once used to be the Taliban-ruled regime in Afghanistan (1996-2001): open for an assortment of radical Islamist terrorist groups, equipped with available infrastructure for training camps. The only prerequisite is to pledge allegiance to an 'Islamic State's caliph'. Unlike tribal Taliban rulers, IS appears to have attracted hundreds of radicalized Islamist women from the west, also pledging allegiance to Baghdadi. They consider it a privilege to become wives and concubines of jihadists fighting against Iraqi and Kurdish forces. It has been stated that 31,000 fighters have joined the ranks of IS (Rajghatta, 2014). Reports in the British media have stated that twice as many British Muslims have gone to fight with IS than join the British armed forces. Khalid Mahmood, a Member of Parliament for Perry Barr in Birmingham in the UK estimates that at least 1,500 young British Muslims have been recruited by extremists fighting in Iraq and Syria in the last three years.⁶

Terror groups look for recognition which they consider pivotal in propagating their message. Recognition could be sought through a government's offer of talks, mediation by other governments, controlling ungoverned territories, and running a parallel judicial and administrative system.

⁶ In an interview in August this year, with *Newsweek*, Mahmood said the British government was failing to deal with home-grown jihadists attracted to travelling to Syria to fight along with IS. It is also well-known that young women have travelled from the UK to join IS as 'jihadi brides,' the two twin sisters from Manchester being an example where these teenagers were radicalized on the Internet.

Shared ideology brings like-minded fighters and recruits together, whereas common defence makes their alliance grow stronger. When Islamist groups with a common set of goals join hands to confront a single enemy which in most cases can be said to be either America and its allies or the 'apostate state' (keeping in view of 'near enemy, far enemy' concept), the alliances become stronger. With IS as previously seen with Al-Qaeda, many Islamist groups have found a platform to confront the common enemy.

Personal contacts are at times stronger than ideological ties. In Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda-run training camps provided global jihdistis a rare opportunity to develop such contacts. Elaborately planned terrorist attacks such as the East African Embassies' attacks in 1998, the USS Cole bombing in 2000, the 9/11 attacks in 2001, Madrid commuter train bombings, and the 7/7 London subway bombings are examples where personal contacts allowed Al-Qaeda affiliates to plan and carry out these attacks with success. IS might endeavor to do the same. Many Islamist ideologues and terrorists joining hands with IS had already sharing some level of interaction with the leadership. Since IS has broken ranks from Al-Qaeda, therefore, the same contacts developed during times spent together at Al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan are still workable. Other than low-level fighters, mid-level and senior militant commanders have had some sort of experience in key militant training camps in Afghanistan.

The Da'esh (Islamic State) Model

Despite the fact that IS was once part of Al-Qaeda and the latter remains the primary case study in gauging the nature of the Islamic State, there are certain areas where IS has been able to excel. The IS has been able to capture large areas in both Syria and Iraq in a short span of time. In the first eight months of its campaign in Iraq, 9,347 civilians lost their lives with another 17,386 wounded (Obeidallah, 2014). Since the Da'esh or IS as it is now termed is considered a successful model by many Islamist forces – even more successful than Al-Qaeda – it may be replicated by other aspiring terrorist organizations in the future. Studying IS strategies would be quintessential for both terrorist ideologues and academics examining the phenomenon of terrorism. There are countries where the Da'esh model could be replicated by militants in the future because of inherent weaknesses in governance.

The non-incremental approach

Unlike Al-Qaeda, IS follows a non-incremental model. The incremental model is divided into cycles, or added on piece by piece with the expectation that each piece is fully finished. Al-Qaeda strategist Seif al-Adl has described the Al-Qaeda plan in an elaborate manner. According to him, the plan is spread over seven phases: the awakening (2000-2003); opening eyes (2003-2006); arising and standing up (2007-2010); removing apostate Arab regimes (2010-2013); declaring an Islamic state/caliphate (2013-2016); total confrontation (2016 onwards); and definitive victory by 2020 (Roggio, 2005). Al-Zawahiri (2010) also chalked out a strategy, according to which phase-1 included global jihad's launching from the greater Middle-East, driving the US out of the region and establishing an Islamic caliphate in Egypt. Phase-2 entailed strengthening of the restored caliphate, jihad against the 'apostate states', and jihad against the West.

The above-mentioned incremental approach is not part of the IS strategy. Baghdadi's strategy is non-incremental in a way that it revolves around galvanizing a support base on the basis of available resources and territory under IS control. This strategy has not been fully analysed but has attracted a substantial number of followers in a short span of time. Being a local Iraqi and former Al-Qaeda operative, he understands the shortcomings and weaknesses of the Iraqi security forces, and the low morale of an already disgruntled minority Sunni population. The creation of a caliphate is another tactic that will continue to attract followers from Islamist organizations. This strategy could work in countries with a large plethora of Islamist terror organizations and Islamist parties, already espousing the same set of beliefs.

Exploiting poor governance and weak security

The Da'esh model could be applied where weak or silent neighborhoods are unable to protect themselves and poor governance and security does not guarantee their safety. The geography of Iraq allows IS to take over neighbourhoods and instil fear within local communities as virtually none can challenge its might. In the case of Afghanistan or Pakistan, this model may give rise to a similar Islamist movement because of weak governance and poorly monitored border regions. War-torn Syria, weak and ill-trained

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Iraqi security forces, and small insurgent groups like the Peshmerga are no match for the fire power of IS. The only neighbour that could challenge IS is Turkey with its second largest NATO army which would most probably not get involved in the conflict where Turkish forces have to fight side-by-side their *bête noire* Peshmerga, PKK and volunteers of the Patriotic Union. The chances of US ground troops getting into this fight are not high say security experts.

Exploiting the sectarian divide

Homogenous countries either in ethnic or communal terms are not viable options where the above model can be replicated. The IS model could work well in a heterogeneous country, home to a range of multi-lingual, religious and multi-ethnic groups. IS has capitalized on the ground situation in Iraq. With a historic Shia-Sunni divide in the region, IS benefits as deep animosities exist among the various religious sects and ethnicities in Syria and Iraq. Being a successor to Zarqawi, Baghdadi has been able to forge alliances with likeminded Sunni extremists against the majority Shia community in Iraq and with the majority Sunni community against the ruling Shia-Alawi elite in Syria. The same conditions are available for the replication of model in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, where ethnic or sectarian and communal issues are deep rooted.

Technology and militant recruitment

IS has attracted various Europeans and Americans to join its crusade in Iraq and Syria. Fighters from more than 50 countries have joined IS after its leader announced the formation of an Islamic caliphate. There are more than 10,000 foreign fighters in the ranks of IS (Tunisia: 3,000, Saudi Arabia: 2,500, Jordan: 2,200, Morocco: 1,500, Lebanon: 800, Russia: 700, France: 650, Libya: 600, UK: 400-500, and Turkey: 400) (Soufan Group, 2014). The estimated number of European jihadis is said to be at 3,000 (BBC News, 2014). The fact that recruits are educated and literate has allowed IS to mobilize a media campaign using social media platforms. This campaign means that a larger number of jihadists continue to join IS. The number of IS fighters has tripled in July-August 2014 from 10,000 to 31,500 (CBS News, 2014). And it is the use of social media that remains the hallmark of the IS campaign. The effective use of the

media with intermediary international channels broadcasting successful military campaigns directly to global audiences has been done through tech-savvy volunteers. According to Emerson Brooking of the Council on Foreign Relations, "the first big turning point was Mosul, ISIS put a lot of pre-planning into the social media arm of this offensive, and the effort paid off. You see a significant spike in English-language videos and images" (Siegel, 2014).

Ungoverned territories or failing states

Another condition that works to the benefit of IS are the presence of ungoverned territories in desired areas of operations. Not all fragile states are weak because of terrorism and insurgencies. The fragile/failed states index, as developed by Funds for Peace (2014) organization, is based on twelve indicators: 4 social, 2 economic and 6 political and military. It is observed that IS has managed to take control of territories where the government's writ was already weak or non-existent. The territories under IS were in fact ungoverned as the state was losing control in both Syria and Iraq. (Rand Corporation, 2007). The central government's authority does not extend in such areas as well. Notable ungoverned territories are the tribal areas of Pakistan, southern Saudi Arabia and Yemen-border regions, East African Corridor (Somalia), and in West Africa (Congo, Mali and northern Nigeria).

Learning from mistakes: the revival of Islamic State under Baghdadi

Islamic State has been around for more than 12 years but under its new leadership has emerged as lethal militant organization. Realizing the potential for 'jihad' in Syria after the beginning of Syrian civil war in 2011, IS moved its force to Raqqa (Syria). Syria allowed IS time and space to revive as an organization. Baghdadi, unlike his predecessor, trained in Afghanistan, spending a number of years in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. Before him, the IS chief in Iraq, Zarqawi was especially close to Taliban ministers during Taliban-ruled Afghanistan (Reidel, 2014). However, Baghdadi has learned from the mistakes of his predecessors but also from the Afghan Taliban while they were countering US and allied troops. His movements in and out of Iraq reveal the nature of this terror group and its grasp over ever changing asymmetric warfare tactics. With the exception of Nusra Front, Baghdadi has

not distanced his group from any other likeminded terror organizations; instead he has managed to merge many of the smaller groups under the IS umbrella during the conquest of Mosul and Kirkuk.

Baghdadi and his fighters have secured IS from complete destruction at the hands of US forces. After the consecutive deaths of Zarqawi (2006), Abu Ayub al-Masri (2010) and al-Rashid al-Baghdadi (2010), the militant group had no clear direction. Baghdadi has been able to salvage his forces, whose number had depleted to 800 by the end of 2010. The opening of Syrian front in 2011 was an opportunity that he tactically availed.⁷

Baghdadi took full advantage of Syrian civil war in terms of niche construction. He remobilized his forces with armoury looted from the Free Syrian Army and with American weapons originally destined for 'moderate' anti-Assad forces. The carefully planned invasion of Mosul was also part of his move to take control of territory. Looted Iraqi army's weaponry gives IS the military advantage that regular terror groups do not possess. Capturing dams and oil fields also provided IS with financial longevity. Selling ancient Iraqi artefacts looted from the Iraqi museums in the black-market has also earned money.

Operating within weak states and war-torn territories like Iraq and Syria and keeping the violence local is a strategy that usually keeps western governments out of the conflict. Failing states unable to contain the activities of violent non-state actors operating in areas where the writ of state is weak gives more space to violence. The Shia dominated Iraqi regime had already alienated minority Sunnis with some of its political decisions. The IS phenomenon in fact filled the vacuum created by the Shia Iraqi regime. In a way, it can be said that IS has also capitalized on both Syrian and Iraqi internal politics.

⁷ IS leader Baghdadi controls a force bigger than Al-Qaeda ever had at its operational height. IS foot soldiers may not be as battle hardened as those of the Taliban or Al-Qaeda Core, but their numbers are increasing. The tactics used by Baghdadi who has gathered IS fighters in Syria, and then moved them into Iraq shows fighting and coordinating prowess as Iraqi generals did not even realize the gravity of the upcoming challenges.

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As mentioned earlier, as a matter of policy, IS has not posed a challenge to Salafist/Wahabi groups operating in Iraq. The conflict with the Nusra Front is of a different nature – a clash between Mohammad al-Joulani and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the former was trying to salvage his depleted forces in Syria. Baghdadi during his victory marches has carefully avoided clashes with local Iraqi Salafi groups and even allowed many such groups to merge with IS. Baghdadi signed a truce with Free Syrian Army, formed tactical alliances with former Baathist militias, and non-jihadi disgruntled Sunnis in Iraq (Laub and Masters, 2014). Not getting involved with Sunni militias portrayed the IS as a vanguard movement of Sunni minority's rights in Iraq. Killing and defeating pro-American Kurds, Yazidis and Christians was also seen as nationalistic standpoint by Iraqi Sunnis.

Areas vulnerable to replicas of Da'esh model

Taking a leaf out of the IS book, other terrorist organizations, especially Islamist in nature, may take the lead in establishing the same model in their countries of operation. Islamist insurgency-ridden Somalia ranks second in the list of fragile states. Harkat al-Shabab al Mujahideen or al-Shabab is the principal Islamist group active in Somalia since early 2002, controlling a vast area. Shabab already controls large swaths of territories in southern Somalia, working to implement its version of Islamic law in Somalia and influencing neighboring states. Having 5,000 militants (both foreign and local Somalis), Al-Shabab is considered to be one of the strongest Al-Qaeda-linked groups in Africa. The case of Al-Shabab is linked with the failure of Somali statehood. By following the IS model, Al-Shabab could expand its territorial gains as no other force is in sight to check its advance as neighbouring Ethiopia and Kenya have failed to crush the group in the last five years (Masters, 2014).

Afghanistan could become next Iraq, if appropriate measures to strengthen the Afghan state are not taken. Mullah Omar proclaimed himself Amirul Momineen (leader of the faithful) in 1996. Pakistani Taliban groups such as Jamaatul Ahrar and other factions of TTP still consider the Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar as their supreme leader. Technically speaking Al-Qaeda is also part of Afghan Taliban because back in 2000 the then chief of Al-Qaeda Bin Laden had pledged allegiance to Mullah Omar. After the emergence of the Islamic State and Baghdadi's proclamation of a caliphate, Zawahiri

renewed his pledge of allegiance to Mullah Omar. The Afghan Taliban are not as strong as IS at this point in time but their consistent Islamist insurgency in Afghanistan is of ongoing concern for the Afghan government given the departure of NATO-led troops by the end of 2014.

The real test will emerge when the 350,000 strong Afghan security forces will take complete control for security. And with the presence of US security advisors in the country, the security situation may not worsen as seen in Iraq but otherwise the Afghan National Security Forces will have to ensure stability and fight militant groups hoping to exercise greater control. The Afghan Taliban may not be able to take back the reins of power but by following the IS model they could carve out large chunks of Afghan territory and proclaim an Islamic caliphate.

With a large plethora of Islamist terrorist and insurgent groups, Pakistan is now in its 12th year of fighting militancy. The 600,000 strong Pakistan Army remains the only line of defence when it comes to subverting the advances of militant terror groups.

Al-Qaeda Core, consisting of high profile leaders is reportedly based in tribal areas of Pakistan. The sectarian Islamist, Al-Qaeda-linked groups such as Lashkar-e-Jhagvi, the Punjab-based jihadi group Lashkar-e-Taiba (estimated to have strength in thousands of trained/armed volunteers) and foreign fighters from Uzbekistan (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan), Chechnya (Emirate Kavkaz) and Uighurs (Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement) are based in Pakistan and share resources, manpower and ideologies. The army has conducted military operations in the tribal areas over the past decade, the latest one being in North Waziristan termed *Zarb-e-Azb* which began in June 2014 to flush out Al-Qaeda fighters. The IS model is plausible in Pakistan in case of the emergence of a new agglomerate of existing Islamist groups.

Conclusion

The IS model will not only help understand this militant group's ideology but also how it operates and coordinates its activities. The growing number of IS affiliates is of serious concern to governments. Yet what appears interesting is that in the present Al-Qaeda is rapidly losing its following. The result of this competition between IS and Al-Qaeda implies that the latter will not only try

to stay in business but may launch a new wave of terrorist attacks to prove its power is not dwindling. The Al-Qaeda chief Zawahiri in competing with Baghdadi may activate his associates in order to safeguard the future of the organization and attempt to create more Al-Qaeda units as one recently emerged as Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent. Counter terrorism experts and policy makers will need to seriously make efforts to stop Al-Qaeda from planning terror attacks and simultaneously also contain IS.

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The evolution of militant groups in Pakistan (5)

Muhammad Amir Rana

Sectarian tensions gripped Pakistan in the late 1980s. Two prominent Ahl-e-Hadith scholars Allama Ehsan Elahi Zaheer and Maulana Habibur Rahman Yezdani were killed in terrorist attacks in 1986 and 1987, respectively. Then in 1988, Allama Arif Hussaini, President of Tehreek-e-Jafariya Pakistan (TJP) was assassinated followed by the killing of Maulana Haq Nawaz, head of Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) in February 1990. On December 11, 1990, Sadiq Ganji, an Iranian counselor was killed. Until 1992, both TJP and SSP had acquired arms to fight each other and also battle with law-enforcement agencies. That year, members of SSP attacked the police in Jhang in Punjab using rocket launchers killing five policemen. By 1994, sectarian violence had reached its peak killing⁷³ and wounding more than 300 in various different incidents of violence (Rana, 2004). This was when segments from almost all religious sects in Pakistan were involved in fermenting sectarian violence including the Bareilvis.

A previous backgrounder, titled “Evolution of militant groups in Pakistan (4)” published in the spring issue of this research journal focused on primarily on Shia sectarian groups. This follow-up research will review the evolution of sectarian groups belonging to other sects, mainly the Deobandis.

1. Deobandi hardliner sectarian groups

There are about 45 Deobandi organizations operating in Pakistan, out of which 33 are directly involved in promoting sectarian hatred. The following are known to propagate sectarian violence in Pakistan.

1.1 Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan

The banned SSP, now operating as Ahle Sunnat Wal Jammāt (ASWJ) was formed on September 6, 1985 in Jhang in Punjab. Founded by a group of Deobandi religious scholars, Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, Maulana Zia-ur-Rehman Farooqi, Maulana Isar-ul-Haq Qasmi and Maulana Azam Tariq, this group changed the sectarian landscape of Pakistan, triggering violent trends in religious discourse.

Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, a firebrand, rabidly anti-Shiite cleric from Jhang, a town in the Pakistan's Punjab, province, had become reputed for his overtly sectarian sermons.¹ When he was killed by unknown gunmen on February, 22, 1990 (*Haq Char Yar*, an Urdu monthly magazine), the worst incidents of sectarian clashes were witnessed. The SSP leadership held the Shia landlords, especially Abida Hussain, and the Iranian government responsible for this violence. To avenge the death of Jhangvi, the SSP formed an underground group called 'Jhangvi Tigers'.

Maulana Isar-ul-Haq Qasmi succeeded Jhangvi as the chief of the SSP. When Qasmi contested the 1990 elections for a seat in the National Assembly, he won from his Jhang constituency. However, he was killed in 1991. Maulana Zia-ur-Rehman Farooqi then took over the leadership of the SSP after the death of Qasmi. He also suffered the same fate when killed in a bomb explosion in the premises of the Lahore High Court on January 18, 1997 (Rana, 2003). He was succeeded by Maulana Azam Tariq.

Good with words, Tariq used his superior oratory skills of as a weapon (Tohid, 2003). During his stay at Binori Town madrassa in Karachi, Tariq developed the art of delivering firebrand sermons. Later, he travelled with many other students from this madrassa to Afghanistan to participate in the anti-Soviet jihad. In the war zone known for his oratory skills, he is said to have delivered emotional, inspirational speeches to motivate hundreds of 'holy' warriors (Ibid).

¹ A profile of Maulana Azam Tariq is accessible at <http://archives.dailytimes.com.pk/national/07-Oct-2003/maulana-azam-tariq-s-profile>

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Maulana Tariq was elected as a parliamentarian four times –in 1990 and 1993 to the National Assembly, and then in 1997 to the Punjab Assembly (Rana, 2003). The 1990 election was a particularly big success, with Tariq defeating government-backed candidate Sheikh Yousaf by a large margin in Jhang, a stronghold for the SSP. He was reelected to the National Assembly in 2002, winning the election while in prison.

As a member of the National Assembly, Tariq was particularly active and influential, attempting to rid the SSP of its sectarian tag and reorient the group as a moderate religious political organization. In 1995, he successfully inducted two SSP members into the Punjab cabinet headed by the chief minister Sardar Arif Nakai. He also managed to ensure that certain SSP members were released from prison, those who were jailed for their alleged roles in sectarian violence targeting Shias in Pakistan (Ibid).

Tariq was particularly concerned about what he believed was the SSP being used to maintain the sectarian divide in Pakistan. He believed that both TJP (a Shia group) and the SSP were supported by two foreign countries engaged in creating Shia-Sunni sectarian rifts and violence. He once said in an interview that both the SSP and TJP should be investigated to determine which is receiving funding from abroad (Rana, 2004: 107).

In October 2000, Tariq unveiled his vision for the Islamization of Pakistan at the international Difa-e-Sahaba Conference in Karachi in the defense of the Prophet's Companions. At this conference, he outlined his plans to convert Pakistan's 28 biggest cities into 'model Islamic cities' (Rana, 2003). These plans drew heavily from concepts that the Taliban were enforcing in Afghanistan by banning television, cinemas and music etc. The initial five steps were spelt out as follows: (*Zarb-e-Momin*, 2000):²

- i. Markets and shops must close with the *azan* (call for prayer).
- ii. Friday should be observed as a general holiday.
- iii. Bribes and impermissible businesses must be stopped.
- iv. Cable networks must be terminated.

² *Zarb-e-Momin* is a publication of the Al-Maymar Trust, ostensibly a charity organization known to primarily promote Islamist and jihadist views.

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- v. People should settle their disputes and take decisions in consultation with the *ulema* (religious scholars).

In his address at the conference, he stated: (Ibid):

“Let all the shops be closed with the calling of *azan*. If any trader does not obey, let other traders boycott him and thus compel him to fall in line. The traders must be persuaded that they should not allow sale of adulterated goods, narcotics, wine, and other impermissible items. The traders in these cities, in consultation with *ulema* and other individuals, should prevent fixing of dish antennae and operation of cable network. For resolving their disputes they should not go to the court or the police but approach the mosque where the *ulema* would resolve their disputes according to Islamic laws, as it is done in Jhang. And all this must be publicized in newspapers.”

Tariq had 65 cases registered against him, 28 of which were under various provisions of the Anti-Terrorism act. He spent a maximum of approximately six years in jail. His longest time served in prison began in August 2001 (until 2002) when the government banned the SSP along with seven other extremist groups (Ibid). Tariq contested the elections for a National Assembly seat in October 2002 while imprisoned and won from Jhang in Punjab. He was released from jail in November 2002 after a court ruled that the government had not produced sufficient evidence. He became a supporter of the government of the then Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali of Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-i-Azam but continued with his radical, anti-Shia views (BBC News, 2003).

In May 2003, Tariq announced the formation of a new group Millat-e-Islamia Pakistan which was a reincarnation of the banned SSP. He was on a country-wide tour to organize this rebranded organization when he was gunned down on October 6, 2003 along with four bodyguards in a drive-by shooting at a toll plaza near Golra Sharif in Islamabad. This latest attack was the fourth that had him targeted and one he did not survive.³ After Tariq's assassination,

³The first attack on Tariq's life took place in 1988 when he was associated with the SSP's Karachi chapter. He was targeted yet again with rocket launchers at Shahpur in

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scores of angry followers went on a rampage in Islamabad and vowed to further his struggle against the Shias (*Indian Express*, 2003).

The emergence of violent groups within the SSP

SSP members who supported violence continued to break away from the group from time to time to form violent sectarian organizations. Besides leading Sunni sectarian militant group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), six other similar organizations were formed between 1992 and 2004, including Jhangvi Tigers, Al-Haq Tigers, Al-Farooq, Al-Badr Federation, Allahu Akbar, and Tanzeemul Haq.

Different leaders of the SSP extend their patronage to these organizations, except the Al-Badr Federation that was established in Karachi. All other groups are operational in Jhang, Chiniot, and Faisalabad districts of Punjab. Jhangvi Tigers, Al-Haq Tigers, and Allahu Akbar later merged with the LeJ.

1.2 Behind the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi

With Riaz Basra as chief commander, LeJ was founded in 1996. Earlier Basra held the position of secretary for broadcasting and publication within the SSP. He was of the view that the ideas of Jhangvi, the founder of the SSP, should be disseminated through violent means. He often complained that the leadership of the SSP had forgotten the ideals of Maulana Haq Nawaz. Most analysts claim that the SSP leadership formed LEJ as a tactical move to divert government attention and sidetrack those who were convinced that it was a terrorist group rather than a political entity as claimed by SSP leaders (Rana, 2004).

The position of SSP on this issue is, however, different as it claims it has no relationship with LeJ. Despite the fact that it is widely known that both these

1993, which left him badly injured. The third attack, a bomb blast in the premises of the Lahore Sessions Courts in January 22, 1997 left him injured and the then SSP chief Maulana Ziaur Rehman Farooqi was killed. Other prominent SSP leaders of their time include Maulana Muhammad Ahmad Ludhianwi, Aurangzaib Farooqi, Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Nadeem, Khadim Hussain Dhalon and Maulana Aalim Tariq.

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organizations have links with each other with LeJ's members having been frequently seen in offices and madrassas affiliated to the SSP. Moreover, their disagreement does not center on the aims and objectives of the group, but on other structural issues. Many view such organizational disagreement with skepticism. It is suspected that SSP had formed the LeJ with the intention to keep its political agenda alive. To support this argument, it has been noted that members of LeJ remained in the same mosques and madrassas that are regarded as important centers for the SSP. It is no secret that SSP leaders have visited members of LeJ in jail (Ibid).

LeJ began its operations in 1996, targeting Shia government officers. Its organizational network was strong and complicated. The leader was given the title of a supreme commander under whom twelve commanders were meant to serve. A consultative committee was formed to lead the management of the LeJ. Every member and leader of LeJ gave up his original name, took up another *pseudonym* and fake identity cards were made in the new name. According to an important Jhang-based SSP leader, Riaz Basra had twelve fake identity cards in different names (Rana, 2004). For the supply of arms, a network was formed stretching between Afghanistan and Punjab, and from Punjab to Karachi. LeJ members did not go beyond 500 in number, but they added a bloody chapter to the history of terrorist violence. Its small numbers can be attributed to the oath-taking required for admission into the LeJ: members had to take an oath of death, pledging to sever ties from worldly relationships had to commit themselves to the cause. LeJ had divided its area of operation into separate units: the areas of Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, and Sargodha were under the command of Riaz Basra. Faisalabad, Multan, and Bahawalpur divisions were under Malik Ishaq and Karachi was placed under Qari Abdul Hai (Ibid).

By 2001, LeJ was involved in 350 incidents of terrorist violence.⁴ During Nawaz Sharif's second tenure in government between 1998 and 1999, dozens of its members were killed in police encounters damaging the organization's infrastructure. Unconfirmed media reports that appeared during that period hinted that LeJ had been paid Rupees 1.3 million to assassinate Nawaz Sharif;

⁴ Statistics are based on security and conflict archives maintained by Pak Institute for Peace Studies, Islamabad.

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Chief Minister of Punjab, Mian Shahbaz Sharif and Syed Mushahid Hussain, the former federal minister for information. The bomb explosion on 2, January 1999 on Raiwind Road in Lahore was said to be a part of this plan.

Rifts within the LeJ

A meeting of the Majlis-e-Shura of LeJ was held on 27, December 2000, at its centre near Kabul in Afghanistan. Among the participants were top leaders like Riaz Basra, Qari Abdul Haye, Akram Lahori, Zakaullah, Sajid Pathan, Athar Rehman, Tanveer Urf and Asif Ramzi. Asif Ramzi presented a blueprint for a future agenda that included efforts to release jailed LeJ leaders and plans to decapitate Shia organizations. Qari Abdul Haye and Tanveer Urf opposed this, arguing that as long as the military government was holding the fort such steps would invite more trouble for the organization, and that because the country was at a crossroads such a violent agenda would not be beneficial for the state.

When this disagreement threatened to turn into fisticuffs, Qari Abdul Haye demanded to examine the accounts and asked Riaz Basra. He claimed having seen records which pointed towards the embezzlement of LeJ funds. This was the first public revolt against Riaz Basra. However, Qari Abdul Haye had already consolidated his position in the organization; he was the chairman of the Majlis-e-Shura and in-charge of the group's military training camps in Afghanistan. After this dissension, Qari Abdul Haye *alias* Qari Asadullah *alias* Talha met important members of LeJ and with their help took charge of the group. He occupied training camps and snatched away vehicles belonging to Riaz Basra's supporters. Under these circumstances, an armed confrontation between both groups ensued in which several were injured.

It was at this juncture that the Taliban intervened and appointed Jaish-e-Muhammad's (JeM) Mufti Abdul Sagheer to arbitrate between both warring factions. Mufti Sagheer called a meeting between the two groups so they could reach a compromise, but Riaz Basra refused to take part on the grounds that he had already expelled Qari Asadullah from the organization. The latter's supporters also alleged that it was because of Riaz Basra's imprudent policies that Noor Gul, who was a close friend of Qari Abdul Haye, was killed in a police encounter. Noor Gul, an instructor at the Afghan training camp

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was an ammunition/explosive expert. In February 1999, he was involved in a conspiracy to kill Nawaz Sharif by bombing his car in Rawind, Lahore. He was arrested later and killed in an encounter with the police near Multan. The police claimed that some of his companions had raided the jail where he was being held to release him from police custody that led to the encounter when he died.

The end of the Riaz Basra chapter

Riaz Basra, the supreme commander of LeJ, remained a challenge for the police for twelve years. He was killed in a police encounter in Vehari district on 14, May 2002, wanted in 300 cases and with a reward of Rs 5 million on his head. Besides the charge of killing the Iranian counselor, Sadiq Ganji, he was accused of killing Sikandar Shah, chairman of the Shia Political Party, Syed Tajammul Hussain, an ex-commissioner of Sargodha, Syed Zulfiqar Hussain Naqvi, Mohsin Ali Naqvi and Muhammad Ashraf Marth associated with the SSP. He was also accused of killing twenty-five people in a bombing in Mominpura, Lahore. As a fugitive, Riaz Basra kept in touch with newspaper reporters, phoning them and giving media interviews. He had used at least ten fake names: Shahji, Abdurrahman, Ashraf Bhatt, Sajjad, Pir Bawaji, Chaudhary Sahib, and Haji Sahib.

The LeJ lost its central command when the police launched an extensive operation against the group in the late 1990s and later when it was proscribed in August 2000. This led to the emergence of internal differences and divisions among the group and many splinter groups emerged.

After 9/11, LeJ terrorists had joined the angry Kashmiri jihadists and tribal Taliban, dissatisfied with the sudden change in the state's policy forced to abandon jihad in the region. Major terrorist attacks between 2001 and 2007 in Pakistan were launched by this emerging alliance. The nexus was further strengthened when these small groups joined Al-Qaeda. Such alliances ideologically transformed sectarian groups injecting in them global jihadist tendencies.

This was the time when the LeJ was losing its sectarian identity and the group had become a tag name for small terrorist cells. Qari Hussain, a trainer of

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suicide bombers who was killed in a drone strike in 2010, had infused new life into the group while recruiting Punjabi and Karachi-based youth and re-initiating sectarian terrorist attacks.

Tariq Afridi, head of the TTP's Darra Adam Khel chapter, was the second individual who revitalized LeJ's violent sectarian agenda, launching deadly terrorist attacks in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The release of Malik Ishaq, founding member of the group who was facing trial for the killing of more than 100 Shia scholars and community leaders, further emboldened the group.

Although these facts injected new life into the agenda and operations of the group, on an organizational level it remained splintered and disconnected until recent times. Its Balochistan chapter, led by Usman Kurd, which targets the Hazara Shia community in Quetta, had little interaction with groups in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Seven other LeJ groups are active in Karachi and Punjab, including the Atta-ur-Rehman (alias Naeem Bukhari), Qasim Rasheed, Muhammad Babar, Ghaffar, Muaviya, Akram Lahori and Malik Ishaq groups. These assortments of groups have local agendas and indulge in local turf wars.

Asif Chotu, once a close aide of LeJ's Riaz Basra is known to have been reorganizing the group. He had joined the TTP in 2010 and reunited the scattered members of LeJ and on behalf of the TTP launched several operations across the country. He has approached other factions and now most of the splinter groups have come under one umbrella because of his efforts (PIPS, 2012).

1.3 Tehreek Difa Sahaba (TDS)

This group was formed by a Deobandi leader, Maulana Attaullah Bandyalvi in 1987 in Sargodha district of Punjab. The *mamati* school of thought,⁵ a hardliner Deobandi group, active against the Barelvi school of thought in Punjab and KP had inspired him to form the TDS.

⁵ *Mamati* Deobandis believe the Holy Prophet is not alive in his grave unlike the *hayati* Deobandis and Barelvis.

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According to an introductory brochure that was published by the group in Sargodha in 1992, the main objectives of TDS included preventing publication of literature reportedly by Shias maligning the Prophet's companion and stopping their (Shia's) 'atrocities'. One important aspect of TDS was that it was formed during the period when the SSP had gained strength in Jhang, the Multan districts of Punjab, and the neighboring districts of Sargodha, where the former was established. SSP had the same objectives as TDS, but it had the majority of *hayati*⁶ Deobandi members and for achieving their ends they were ready to align with other organizations, particularly Barelvis. The TDS were known for their slogan that stated the group would combat on two fronts, against Shiites and Barelvis at the same time. It gained incredible acceptability amongst *mamati* Deobandis whose representative organization at that time was Jamiat Isha't Al-Tauheed Wal Sunnah (Rana, 2004).

The TDS was run in an organized manner, down to the neighborhood level in different districts. It had its student wings in colleges. Circles or assemblies, including those focused on the Holy Quran were organized with great fanfare in the headquarters of the organization in Jamia Masjid Amir Muaviya. The group also had the support of various political powers.

1.4 Jamiat Isha't Al-Tauheed Wal-Sunnah

Jamiat Isha't Al-Tauheed Wal-Sunnah Pakistan is an important sectarian organization from the Deobandi school of thought. As mentioned earlier, it is the biggest organization of the *mamati* group of the Deobandis. Its foundation was laid down in 1957 in Mianwali, Punjab, by Maulana Husain Ali who was an alumnus of Deoband. However, Jamiat Isha't Al-Tauheed Wal Sunnah was given an organized structure by Maulana Syed Inayatullah Shah Bukhari, who spread its area of influence to upper Punjab and KP. Its objective is revealed in its name that is to promote the Oneness of God and the tradition of the Holy Prophet. It not only regards the Barelvis as apostates, but also casts aspersions on the *hayati* group of Deobandis.

2. Barelvi hardliner sectarian groups

⁶ They believe that the Holy Prophet is alive in his grave unlike *mamati* Deobandis who believe otherwise.

2.1 Sunni Tehreek (ST)

Before the inception of the ST, the tension between TJP and SSP was termed as a Shia-Sunni conflict. When the ST was formed, it stated that this was a Wahabi-Shia conflict and a third force, i.e. Ahl-e Sunnat (Barelvi) was also present. The ST further added to the intensity of sectarian tension. Instead of the Shias, Deobandis and Ahl-e Hadith became the targets of the ST. It appeared as if the organization was formed to undercut the influence of the SSP. But that did not happen, and all three big organizations started conducting internecine battles.

ST is a sectarian organization belonging to the Barelvi school of thought of Hanafi Islam. Founded by Muhammad Salim Qadri in 1990, it was placed under government surveillance on January 12, 2002. Originally belonging to Saeedabad in Karachi, Qadri started driving an auto rickshaw to earn a livelihood although he had passed his matriculation. When Dawat-e-Islami was founded in 1980, he became leader of its Saeedabad chapter. His rise commenced from then onwards. His incendiary speeches soon ensured him a place in Dawat-e-Islami and Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (PIPS, 2009). In the 1988 general elections, Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan nominated him as its candidate for a seat (PA-75) in the Sindh Assembly but he was defeated. After the elections, Salim Qadri left his taxi driving job and started a fabric business and a poultry farm. In 1990, he broke away from Dawat-e-Islami and formed the ST (Ibid).

The ST was formed as a reaction to the growing influence of Ahl-e-Hadith and Deobandi organizations. It received support from Jamat Ahle Sunnat, Anjuman Naojawan-e-Islam and the leaders of Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan. The ST was funded by the Barkati Foundation to safeguard the rights of the Ahle-e-Sunnat. However, the ST declared itself as a non-political organization and concentrated on four-points (Ibid):

- i. To safeguard the interests of the Ahl-e-Sunnat
- ii. To protect Ahl-e-Sunnat mosques
- iii. To protect common people from false beliefs
- iv. Handing over of Ahl-e-Sunnat mosques and shrines by the administration to the Barelvis.

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The ST complained that the Deobandi and Ahle-e-Hadith had monopoly over the administration, government posts, and religious and government institutions. Representation by the Barelvi sect was minimal. It asserts that Ahl-e-Sunnat cannot achieve their rights till they adopt the same tactics employed by Ahl-e-Hadith and Deobandi organizations.

From inception, the ST styled itself as a violent sectarian organization and began to target SSP and LeJ. It had a number of clashes with these two groups in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sahiwal (Punjab), and Nawabshah where seventeen ST workers had been killed until 1998. ST mainly targeted Ahle-e-Hadith and Deobandi mosques. It maintains that these mosques belonged to the Ahle-e-Sunnat but were later encroached by others.

The ST made its first show of strength on 18, December 1992 when it organized a rally at MA Jinnah Road in Karachi with the objective of putting pressure on the administration to hand over Masjid Noor (Ranchorh Line) to the organization. The rally turned violent and cars were burnt; dozens of people were injured and thirty-four ST workers were arrested. After this incident, the ST caught public attention as it increased the frequency of attacks on Deobandi and Ahle-e-Hadith mosques in Punjab and Sindh.

Salim Qadri was killed along with five others on 18, May 2001 after which sectarian clashes broke out in Karachi. SSP was blamed for this attack and Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith madaaris and mosques were attacked. One of the killers of Salim Qadri was killed on the spot in the cross firing. Later, he was identified as an SSP activist.

There was also a strong MQM connection, in the sense that both organizations have common enemies. Many of the elements of the ST were former MQM activists who had crossed over to ST after the army's crackdown on the MQM in the early 1990s. But ST emerged as a challenge to the MQM in the October 2002 elections when ST's leadership decided to adopt a political posture after January 2002 to avoid any sanctions on the party.

ST's resentment with Sipah-e-Sahaba and other Ahle-e-Hadith organizations continued. The ST leadership believed that the then Musharraf government

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would adopt a soft approach to contour jihadist and Deobandi sectarian organizations.

After Salim Qadri's murder, ST grew in strength in Karachi with its network spreading over fourteen districts of the country. However, Karachi remained its nerve centre.

Its central secretariat located in a huge building at the Baba-e-Urdu Road in Karachi, houses offices of the central emir and other leaders. There is also the office of Ahl-e-Sunnat Khidmat Committee, which is engaged in building new mosques and madaaris in Karachi, Hyderabad and other parts of Sindh. This committee has also established a hospital on a 2000-yard plot in Saeedabad, Karachi.

2.2 Alami Tanzeem Ahl-e Sunnat

Pir Muhammad Afzal Qadri formed Alami Tanzeem Ahl-e Sunnat on May 30, 1998 in the Gujrat district of Punjab. Its main objective was to exert pressure on the government for the enforcement of Shariah in Pakistan. For this purpose, Qadri organized protests in Rawalpindi on October 12, 1999 and was arrested. Similarly, he organized a demonstration at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi, and was imprisoned for four months. Pir Muhammad Afzal represented an extreme form of Barelvi persuasion.

3. Ahle Hadith hardliner sectarian groups

The Ahl-e Hadith Youth Force is the youth wing of Markazi Jamiat Ahl-e Hadith, which works from the local level up to schools and colleges. Its network is wide and considered to be the mainstay of Markazi Jamiat Ahl-e Hadith (Rana, 2004) as its charter and programmes are in consistence with the latter. This organization is known for its involvement in a number of sectarian clashes. The group not only distributes hate literature against other sects, mainly Shias and Barelvis, but also provokes sectarian tensions.⁷

⁷ Author's interview with a teacher of the Markaz al-Tauheed in Dera Ghazi Khan in 2004.

4. Attempts at countering sectarian violence

Till the late 1980s and early 1990s, sectarianism did not even qualify as an important issue for policymakers. Hence, no policies were devised to counter this menace. The indifferent attitude of successive governments allowed religious militant groups to multiply in numerical strength at an alarming rate. By turning a blind eye to their criminal and violent activities, governments tacitly permitted such groups to raise armies to kill one another in the name of religion (Abbas, 2002, 24).

The first serious initiative to resolve the issue of sectarianism was taken in March 1995 when various religious organizations gathered at a platform provided by the Milli Yakjehti Council (MYC) to bring an end to the incessant sect-related killings. Religious organizations of all sects, including hardliners like SSP and Sipah-e-Muhammad Pakistan (SMP) were part of the MYC. This alliance was founded at a time when religious groups and parties were facing one of the most serious crises in the history of their existence. The government had launched a large-scale operation against them, arrested more than 200 of their activists and put restrictions on seminaries (Ibid).

Religious and sectarian organizations also succeeded in finalizing a 17-point code of conduct for religious organizations which banned calling anyone a disbeliever (*kafir*), using derogatory remarks towards revered personalities of Islam, and granting full respect to the companions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and Ahl-e-Bait. While parties like Jamat-e-Islami and Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan were keen on getting some political mileage out of this alliance, militant sectarian organizations were not willing to become stooges and vehemently opposed any move aimed at making the forum a political alliance (Ibid).

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Understanding the fundamentals of a counterterrorism strategy for Pakistan

Farhan Zahid

Pakistan has been a frontline state in the global war on terror since 9/11. The country has suffered massively both in terms of human and material losses. With more than 49,000 people killed and the state suffering \$83 billion in economic losses, curtailing terrorism has proven challenging for successive governments.

Terrorism is a form of political violence. Almost every nation has experienced terrorist activities, although some have effectively defeated militancy by adopting strategies working for their environment. Experts have come to the conclusion that terrorist groups are rarely able to defeat the state, despite the chaos and fear that penetrates society. There are ways to defeat terrorist organizations: principally by decapitating them, through negotiations, repression, and/or by allowing them to re-orient. However, national policy decisions are required in order to tackle militancy. Pakistan's successive governments since 9/11 have failed to adopt a unified stance.

Despite condemning terrorism at the national level, Pakistan remains a victim of terror attacks perpetuated by home-grown militant groups, including sectarian outfits, for the last two decades. Previous governments have not been able to formulate a well-planned counter terrorism strategy. Security experts have argued that the need of the hour is to devise such a strategy and to implement it by ensuring that all state institutions and political stakeholders are working in tandem. It has also become a battle of ideas, but losing this internal war against militancy is not an option.

On February 24, 2014, Pakistan's federal government announced an internal security policy 2013-18 with three major elements: dialogue with all stakeholders; isolating terrorists from their support bases; and enhancing deterrence through capacity-building to enable the security apparatus to

neutralize threats to internal security. Apart from serious issues linked to the implementation of its various components, terrorism experts have noted that this national security policy could not be categorized to formulate a concise counterterrorism policy due to its wide and complex scope. There are many conceptual and functional gaps in the announced policy.¹

This paper aims to provide a model counterterrorism (CT) strategy, examining measures required to fight increasing home-grown terrorism and extremism. Additionally, it will analyze measures that could be used to de-radicalize society. A model CT strategy for Pakistan should primarily focus on the following fundamental elements:

- To defeat terrorist threats by utilizing all necessary means. These means should focus on all kinds of terror threats emanating from violent and non-violent Islamists, nationalist insurgents, and ethnic and sectarian radicals etc.
- To stop radical ideologies from taking root within Pakistani society, especially among the youth, through public school curriculums and textbooks, and in religious schools;
- To obstruct the growth of extremism, cut support for extremist religious groups and de-radicalize society;
- To take measures for making Pakistan a modern and moderate Islamic nation as envisioned by its founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah;
- To win the hearts and minds of the masses in order to defeat those who have embraced violent radical ideologies; individuals, group or sympathizers;
- To re-orient those misled into following the doctrines of extremist religious groups and integrate them back into the mainstream fold; and
- To initiate all necessary means, including dialogue, fighting extremist groups, negotiations, economic development, legal reforms, and training for security forces. Equipping the state's security apparatus is essential.

¹ For details, see a critical review of the National Internal Security Policy (2013-18) published in the Spring 2014 issue of this research journal.

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- To uphold Pakistan's constitution, enforce the writ of the state and ensure the rule of law at any cost. Pakistan's Constitution guarantees the safety of its citizens, and it is consistent with universally accepted fundamental human rights.
- To develop and strengthen a counter-extremism narratives based on Islamic traditions and norms of tolerance, justice and human rights and also promote the need for understanding a shared socio-cultural aspect of life for communities of all faiths.

Policy objectives

- ***Strengthening the writ of state***

The primary objective at this crucial state of affairs must be to re-establish the writ of state. Pakistan has gone through critical periods in the recent past, partially because of the war on terror in that this has affected its internal security, given its shared porous border with Afghanistan and shared militant groups able to find support and sanctuary in both countries. In spite of this, resources must be pooled to strengthen the weakening writ of state. By defeating Al-Qaeda Core – based in Pakistan's tribal region – and linked extremist groups, placating Baloch separatists, and resolving ethnic terrorism related problems by addressing local issues could be a start. This process of neutralizing the extremist threat within the state can be swiftly achieved, if we are able to devise means for coordinating and strengthening our law enforcement and security forces through training and resources.

- ***Eradicating terrorist safe havens***

Eradicated terror safe havens inside the country without distinguishing between the 'good' and 'bad' Taliban is critical. Miscreants and terrorists must not be allowed to use internal territory for their activities whether targeting state institutions or western-led troops across the border. Historically, Pakistan has been periodically asked to crack down on terror safe havens and non-state actors within its tribal regions – the result seen in June 2014 with the ongoing North Waziristan operation. Eradicating safe havens from Pakistani soil shall remain in focus and should be considered the very first step in rooting out terrorist sanctuaries.

- ***Destroying all terrorist networks***

The next step must be to destroy terrorist networks using all available means. Our security apparatus needs to be upgraded, counterterrorism activities coordinated and resources updated. Adopting basic principles of counter terrorism and counter insurgency would entail clearing those militant infested safe havens before assisting to rebuild communities (displaced by the fighting) by capitalizing on state resources. Hence, it's *sine quo non* for the state to take necessary actions safeguarding its territory so that the allegations against the country are addressed when it comes to curbing terror activities and destroying traditional sanctuaries. This would also satisfy the international community showing long-held concerns that certain Pakistan-based terror groups such as the Haqqani Network are complicit when it comes to attacks on western interests in Afghanistan.

- ***De-radicalization and counter-extremism***

Strategies must be devised to combat extremist ideologies. There is cogent evidence that radical extremist ideologies have taken roots in the country since the Afghan War of the 80s. Radicalization is a process, which takes root in a gradual and subtle manner. Pakistan is not the only country experiencing the growth of radicalized young people. Current curriculums must be redesigned and amended with essential Islamic notions of peace and tolerance. Moreover, identifying the causes of radicalization will lead to finding workable solutions. Another option is to take a leaf out of other countries' experiences in countering violent extremism. Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Algeria, Malaysia, Indonesia and the United Kingdom have been involved in running successful de-radicalization programs. Priorities must be chalked out and simultaneously implemented vis-à-vis de-radicalization programs.

- ***Capacity building of civilian security forces***

There is an urgent need to reequip our forces. Our military forces are trained to fight conventional wars, and so unaccustomed to asymmetric warfare.

Police forces are trained to combat crime and hardened criminals and not fight urban guerilla warfare. This lack of training has led to hundreds of thousands of casualties within the forces both civilian and military. Upgrading the police force, with modernized equipment and techniques for cities like Karachi, is even more important. The police structure is obsolete and rustic; there is an urgent need to revamp the entire traditional structure of this force. There is need to reinvigorate the confidence of police officers and this will not only help support them fight terrorists in urban cities, but also organized crime linked to such extremists groups. The image of the police force over time has been shattered for its incompetency and so newly inducted educated and energetic officers with specialized skills are required. There is a need to find a mechanism which shall not allow for political interference and influence in police matters. A modern, well-equipped and better trained police force is the best line of defense in combating terrorism. We must also focus on training local police officers in countries with better experience of fighting terrorist groups so that they might come back with skills that can be used. Algeria, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, and Turkey are examples.

- ***Capacity building of civilian intelligence networks***

Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. Good intelligence is the best weapon against terrorism. The early disruption of terror plots requires intelligence. Efforts to coordinate intelligence networks both civilian and military is needed but with more than 20 intelligence organizations, most fail to share and coordinate their efforts allowing terrorists an open playing field. Civilian intelligence organizations are currently in a dilapidated state of affairs. The civilian-led Intelligence Bureau and police units of the Special Branch and Criminal Investigation Departments lack equipment, manpower and both traditional and modern equipment to collate and analyze information. Therefore, it is pertinent to reorganize this intelligence collecting apparatus and above all improve coordination with a few good men at the top. An option would be to create a new central organization (civilian-led) directly under the Prime Minister's secretariat and completely independent and with the primary focus restricted to counter terrorism efforts.

- ***Addressing public concerns and building consensus***

With growing public concern given the ongoing military offensive in North Waziristan, there is an interest to learn more about why extremist ideologies are causing havoc – in the form of attacks on minorities and other vulnerable groups – and what the state is doing to prevent such violence from becoming rampant. The state must use the media to propagate and disseminate religious edicts promulgated by highly reputed national and international clerics to advocate against suicide bombings and the killing of innocent people of all religions when targeted. All political stakeholders must be in consensus with how to handle and decrease terror attacks.

Elements of the CT policy

- ***Understanding and addressing the causes***

Terrorism is a complex phenomenon with experts even differing on its definition. Every country defines the phenomenon according to its own needs. First, the phenomenon of terrorism must be redefined as our current definition (ATA, 1997) of terrorism is fairly broad. The anti-terrorist act must be amended and adjusted to current needs. Poverty, illiteracy, the failure of the criminal justice system, hate speech, compounded by the rise of religious fervor and extremism in the aftermath of the Afghan War has given support to intolerance, sectarian and religious strife. There is need to establish a counter terrorism policy institute at the state level for studying the causes and reasons of terrorism using a wider perspective. This institute could support policy makers when chalking out a future course of action. The inclusion of the non-governmental sector, intelligentsia, retired military and civil officers, diplomats and academia should not be ignored here. The sole responsibility of this institution should be to advise government and its departments in countering terrorism and extremism.

- ***Capabilities***

As mentioned earlier, the diminishing capabilities and capacity of the armed forces and police needs attention. Specialists and experts are needed on the subject. Trained operatives adept in fighting highly motivated and skilled terrorists, and modern intelligence and counter terrorism equipment, including new surveillance tactics are required. Although training academies

for the police force can be found in all provinces a new training facility at the federal level for Special Forces to be trained in counter terrorism could be of benefit.

- ***Intentions and designs of terrorist groups***

The need to know the enemies violent radical ideologies and designs is important when devising strategies to counter the spread of terrorism. The prerequisite is to study and analyze the terrorists' goals and targets, their ambitions and national and global designs and agendas. Their links with other terrorist groups both domestic and international must be studied. This operational knowledge is essential if security forces are to counter extremist groups who have trained foot soldiers.

- ***Legislative front***

Detained terrorists must be treated in a just and fair manner showing resolve for the rule of law and integrity. This will require consistent legislative effort to upgrade anti-terror laws, on need-to-need basis. A concrete set of laws would help strengthen counter terrorism efforts. No extra-judicial measure should be allowed to take root.

Instruments

- ***Effective diplomacy***

Diplomatic efforts must be doubled to portray a positive picture of Pakistan that is fighting terror on its own home soil. International assistance must be sought in developing our counter terrorism infrastructure. For example, the current police structure would need international training partners. Advice on how to counter terrorism must be sought globally.

- ***Body of anti-terrorism laws***

The skills of investigating officers must be improved while redefining terrorism with special focus on extremist ideologies as propagating acts of terror and violence.

- ***Curbing terrorist financing***

In the post-9/11 scenario, many countries have revised and upgraded their financial mechanisms to curb terrorist financing. There is an urgent need to review efforts in this regard to combat terrorism. Anti-money laundering laws must be framed to stop the flow of funds from overseas to charities in Pakistan. Charity collections within the country should closely be monitored and if deemed necessary must be documented.

- ***Effective use of force***

Above all policy makers must take apt decisions about the use of force. Collateral damage must be avoided. We must not forget our values and norms and should not allow terrorist groups to capitalize on cases of inhumane treatment of detained terrorists. Only civilian leadership should decide where and when to use force.

- ***Role of the intelligence community (surveillance)***

As discussed earlier, the intelligence community has to be at the frontline in the war against terrorism and extremism. Concrete information from both human and technical intelligence units could play a pivotal role in preempting acts of terror.

- ***Coordination***

Counter terrorism is a concerted effort. No single department of the state is able to take on terrorism single-handedly but using a combination of practices, techniques, and tactics will prove important. Coordination amongst ministries and inter-departmental rapport is a must for achieving the desired results. In view of preparing a long term counter terrorism culture the need is to develop a broad forum for cooperation.

Conclusion

Terrorism comes cheap whereas counterterrorism is expensive. A concrete counterterrorism infrastructure must be developed. A new intelligence organization solely for counterterrorism purposes, advanced training

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facilities, a policy institution for formulating new policies, and upgrading legislation are steps to be taken immediately take into consideration.

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