

Transnational Militant Network in Pakistan: An Analysis of Al Qaeda and Islamic State

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Abstract

The presence of international militant networks within Pakistani territory became a major security challenge to Pakistan. The diffusion of Al Qaeda and Islamic State from the tribal belt to the urban centers of Pakistan expounds their capability of networking within the local settings. This paper intends to illustrate the presence, links and structure of Al-Qaeda and Islamic State in Pakistan through a qualitative analysis by using descriptive and exploratory approach. The article insight the formation and presence of Al Qaeda and Islamic State in Pakistan, which has become a main fault line of militant nexus particularly after the post 9/11 developments.

Keywords: Al Qaeda, Islamic State, Pakistan, militancy, Terrorist organizations

Introduction

The phenomenon of International militant networks has brought a pivotal change in the national and international perspectives to security. In this context, Pakistan has been facing the challenge of international terrorist networks for more than a decade. These networks works as a franchise by developing a strong web of allegiance, affiliation and recruitment across the border. The role of technology and internet has been ground breaking in proliferating the agenda of terrorist. The case of Pakistan in this regard provides a metaphoric example that how multiple factors including the geography, internal dissent, ideology, religious extremism and external factors can contribute in providing a base for international militant networks to plan and operate within the state territory. The presence of Al Qaeda and Islamic State (IS) in Pakistan expounds as to how these networks operate and expand their activities. The following discussion entails an analysis of the origins of Al-Qaeda and Islamic State and their expansion to South Asian chapter particularly in Pakistan. It signifies that transnational militant groups have strong networking with the local groups and affiliates to carry out their activities that eventually makes a complex juncture of militant networking that

becomes a major security challenge for the state, as happened in Pakistan. In addition, their ideological beliefs, organizational structure and networking mechanisms illustrates their overall agenda and the new concept of transnational and international terrorism.

Origins of Al Qaeda

Al Qaeda was formed in the concluding years of Jihad against Soviets in Afghanistan in 1988.¹ The success against Soviets, one of the super powers of the world, provided an exceptional self-reliance, motivation and confidence to the foreign fighters in Afghanistan. The ten-year struggle provided them a cause in which they were committed to give their lives for it. Significantly, the cause had religious manifestation, which was perceived as their major strength. The formation of Al Qaeda was significant as it provided a formal base and structure to radical elements that took up arms and inflict terrorist activities to achieve their agenda. Al Qaeda also gave a new posture to non-state actors, as previously non state actors were mostly local in nature, or they were confined to a specific territorial area but Al Qaeda was successful in globalizing its agenda along with its structure and ideology. In this context, the role of Osama Bin Laden, the leader of Al Qaeda, is exceptionally significant as his own wealth and connections provided a unique valor to the organization.

Figure 1: Strengths of Al Qaeda

Extraordinary wealth² ↔ Philosophical foundation ↔
Operational expertise

The gradual rise of Al Qaeda can be understood by analyzing the developments that took place in Arab world and Afghanistan in 1970s and 1980s. Al Qaeda emerged under the environment of Afghan Jihad and later on expanded under the umbrella of anti-American sentiments which escalated when the US troops were stationed in Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of Gulf war (1990-1991).

¹ The 9/11 Commission Report, 'The Foundation of the New Terrorism', July 22, 2004, 56 <https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/911comm-sec2.pdf>

² According to the commission set up for 9/11, Al Qaeda paid Taliban government in Afghanistan nearly 20 million dollars a year. Along with Bin Laden's wealth, local funds, investment in gold, diamond and other illicit activities. For further details, see, John Roth, Douglas Greenburg and Serena Wille, *National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/staff_statements/911_TerrFin_Monograph.pdf

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The spread of Salafism in the Muslim world incited group thinking to proliferate the concept by resurging the traditional religious text and by promoting a hard violent rhetoric for other theologies. In 1980s, initially Arab fighters in majority joined Al Qaeda along with other foreign fighters including Uzbeks, Tajiks and north Africans. After the end of Soviet occupation in Afghanistan in 1989, Al Qaeda shifted its focus on a more multifaceted objectives and activities. In 1990s Al Qaeda acted more as a franchise by setting their structures in different parts of the world stretching from Asia to Africa.³ The movement of Osama bin Laden from Afghanistan to Saudi Arabia and then Sudan⁴ also played a vital role in expanding Al Qaeda outside Asia and the Middle East. In 1996, Bin Laden came back to Afghanistan (Jalalabad) when country was in control of Taliban under Mullah Omer. Al Qaeda's agenda of creating a global Salafi-Wahhabi Caliphate by projecting anti-American and anti-western posture gave it an international projection, which most of the terrorist groups seeks to advertise their agenda. In 1998 Bin Laden through a fatwa declared that it is legitimate to kill Americans and all Muslims should participate to fulfill this duty.⁵ The attack on Tanzanian and Kenyan US embassies in 1998 and USS Cole in 2000 reflected Al Qaeda's access to high profile targets as well as its tactical capability. Consequently, the attack of 9/11 on the US territory further projected the capacity of Al Qaeda as a leading terrorist organization. The formation of Taliban government in Afghanistan in 1996 provided a secure base to Osama Bin Laden to develop training camps for Al Qaeda recruits. Americans established that Al Qaeda is involved in the 9/11 incident and consequently attacked Afghanistan in 2001. The then Taliban government in Afghanistan refused to hand over

³ United States Institute of peace, Wilson Center, The Jihadi Threat, ISIS, Al Qaeda, and beyond, 2016, 15-19; URL: <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/The-Jihadi-Threat-ISIS-Al-Qaeda-and-Beyond.pdf>. Also see, John A. Turner, *Religious Ideology and the roots of the Global Jihad: Salafi Jihadism and International Order*, 2014, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 103-39.

⁴ Osama Bin Laden was hosted by General Omar al Bashir and religious leader Dr Hasan al Turabi in Sudan. For further details see, Nielsen, Rohan Gunaratna & Anders (2007) 'Al Qaeda in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan and Beyond'; URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10576100802291568>, 775-807.

⁵ Major T.R. Copinger-Symes British Army, Is Osama Bin Laden's 'Fatwa urging Jihad against Americans' 2007, dated 23 February 1998 justified by Islamic law?; URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14702430308405051>, 44-65.

Bin Laden and other members of Al Qaeda. Consequently, it further dispersed Al Qaeda members outside Afghanistan and Pakistan became a main hideout for the recruits. This was the time when Al Qaeda not only expanded its structure but also developed and furnished its links within Pakistan. In 2003, as a result of the US intervention in Iraq, Al Qaeda became active in Iraq and its adjacent areas as well. In addition to it, Al Qaeda's policy of localization gave it an access to reach out across the world by adjoining their message with the local issues by using the power of ideological association. Particularly in the aftermath of Arab spring, this phenomenon has been observed in Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Libya, where weakness of state has empowered Al Qaeda and other militant groups.⁶ Thus, Al Qaeda has a different role, place and strategy for each state and region which may differ according to terrain, local conditions and state resistance. Its expansion within the Sunni communities by manipulating either sectarian discord, issues of governance, communal and ethnic conflicts along with external interventions and anti-imperial aspirations have strengthen its diversified form of structure and tasks. The combination of being anti-imperialist and anti-western along with waging Jihad against the pro-west regimes including Saudi Arabia and struggle against Jews and Crusades is instrumental to Al Qaeda's ideology that the organization uses according to its area of operation. Ideology tends to be a real driving force for Al Qaeda. Their leaders portray it as a struggle against tyranny and infidels. In addition, speeches of Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri illustrate the objectives and overall orientation of the organization. Bin Laden's networking with the people like Abdullah Azzam, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abdur Rab Rasul Sayyaf provided a strong knitting of Salafi-Wahhabi religious doctrine which was used as a stratagem to expand their agenda across the globe.

⁶ Angel Rabasa, 'Beyond Al Qaeda: The Global Jihadist Movement': *RAND cooperation*, 2006 URL https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2006/RAND_MG429.pdf; Katherine Zimmerman, Al Qaeda's Strengthening in the Shadows: *American Enterprise Institute (AEI)*, (2017) URL: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM05/20170713/106235/HHRG-115-HM05-Wstate-ZimmermanK-20170713.pdf>, 1-12.

Table I: Content Analysis of Osama bin Laden speeches

Sample speech	Themes	Analysis
'Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places' published in Al Quds Al Arabi, August 1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zionist-Crusaders alliance • Muslim bloodshed in Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon in particular • US presence in Saudi Arabia • Confessing his visit to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sudan • Confessing his presence in Afghanistan (which he termed as Al Khorasan region) 	United States under the cover of UN and her allies is involved in the blood shed of Muslims across the world. Moreover, during the second Gulf war (1990-1991) the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia became a main bone of contention between Bin laden and Saudi government
Video recorded address of Osama bin Laden, 7 th October, 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humiliation of Muslims at the hands of US and her allies • Twin tower attacks • Division of world into the camp of infields and faithful 	US and her allies (Israel) are involved in the bloodshed against Muslims in Palestine and Iraq. In the start of speech bin laden talked about the attack on world trade center as blessing of God to the fighters whose aim is to destroy America

Sources: www.cnn.com (2001) www.press.uchicago.edu,
www.theguardian.com (2001) Osama bin Laden's fatwa 1996 - IS MU

The above stated speeches points out the target enemy, victims and theater of warfare by Al Qaeda. The following figure shows the main areas of operation of Al Qaeda which depict their global nature.

Figure 2: Theaters of Al Qaeda activities at global level

Source: Zimmerman (2017) Abuza (2003)

Al Qaeda's structure, presence and links in Pakistan

Al Qaeda's inception can be traced in Peshawar in August 1988, when Osama bin Laden formally announced the organization in a meeting with his colleagues.⁷ Keeping in view the historical context of Al Qaeda, the geographical proximity of Afghanistan and Pakistan along with the evidence collected from intelligence and security agencies, it becomes evident that Al Qaeda has been able to establish its links with the local militant groups to carry out its activities and to manage safe hide outs in Pakistan. It mostly operates in loose pockets and informal structures where militant groups share an ideological framework with them. In addition to it, the presence and movement of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan also explicates his networking in Pakistan. Osama bin Laden came to Afghanistan in 1980 to participate in Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union. Along with his teacher Dr. Abdullah Azzam,⁸ he set up

⁷ Op.cit., The 9/11 Commission Report, 2002, 56.

⁸ He was a Palestinian who taught at King Abdul Aziz University, Saudia. Osama bin Laden was a student of Abdullah Azzam in the university. It was there that bin Laden was inspired by him. He was among the first Arabs who went to Pakistan to join and facilitate the Afghan Jihad.

Maktab al-Khidamat⁹ (MAK) in 1984, a guest house for Arab Mujahedeen in Peshawar who after taking training were launched in Afghanistan for Jihad against the Soviets.¹⁰ It is said that Maktab distributed around 200 million dollars of aid coming from west in Afghan Jihad.¹¹ Hamid Mir, a leading journalist in Pakistan, who also interviewed Bin Laden in 1990s in Afghanistan, in one of his programs endorsed this fact that when Osama Bin Laden decided to participate in Afghan Jihad, he set up his center of activities in Peshawar. They used to convince volunteers for Jihad and provided air ticket and logistics to recruits. He further narrated that Bin Laden had rest houses in Islamabad, Peshawar, Kurram agency and one in South Waziristan.¹² After the end of Afghan war, Bin Laden globalized Al Qaeda's activities to transform it into an international militant outfit as discussed earlier. In this regard, Jason Burke explained that Al Qaeda works as a capital firm which connects with the other firms, provide finances and assistance in advice.¹³ Al Qaeda acts not only as an organization but as an ideological radical movement which he termed as 'Al Qaedaism'.¹⁴ After the US intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, Al Qaeda found a new base of operation in Pakistan as it sought hideout in the tribal area of Pakistan initially and later on it was diffused in the urban centers when Pakistan Army started military operations in the tribal belt. It is said that core leadership including Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri at that time sought safe heavens and had frequent movement in areas adjacent to Pak-Afghan border and to an extent in Iran. It is an interesting observation that an

⁹ Most of the Arab volunteers came in the Maktab to join the Afghan Jihad. It was also used as a funnel for arms and money. It is also known as Afghan Service Bureau. Osama Bin Laden joined Abdullah Azam but later on, it is said that due to some differences bin laden formed Al Qaeda.

¹⁰ Bruce Riedel, 'The 9/11 Attacks' Spiritual Father: Brookings Institution', 2011; URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/the-911-attacks-spiritual-father/>

¹¹ Weili Wu, Irina Sakharova, 'Al Qaeda Terrorist Financing and Technologies to Track the Finance Network Technical Report UTDCS-25-10', 2010: *Selected Papers in Security Studies*; URL: <https://personal.utdallas.edu/~bxt043000/Publications/Technical-Reports/UTDCS-25-10.pdf>

¹² Hamid Mir, *Geo News*; URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qF1ElmcVMU8>

¹³ Jason Burke, 'Al Qaeda' *Foreign Policy* (142), 2004, 18-26; URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4147572>

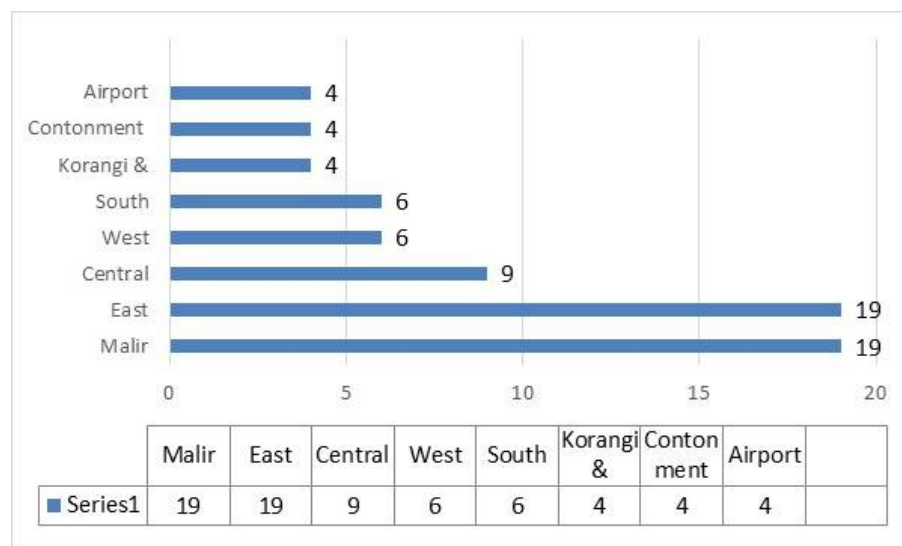
¹⁴ For this reason, even after the killing of Bin Laden in 2011, Al Qaeda was able to sustain and act.

international terrorist network like Al Qaeda completely changed its operational strategy after 2001 from being internationalized to becoming allied with closed local groups. It divided its activities into different, regions, countries and then adjusted differently in different cities. In case of Pakistan, it operated in small cells working independently. It made Al Qaeda's activities easier as if one group is identified by the security agencies it does not provided clues to reach the other groups. In addition to it, it incorporated a new brand of urban militants who got education from universities. They were either motivated by the ideological doctrine of senior Al Qaeda members like Bin Laden, Zarqawi and Zawahiri or mostly by other leading Salafist. Their agenda of remaking the globe was inspirational to the people who had utopian ambition towards the society. Moreover, the recruits of local militant groups including Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Harakat-ul-Mujahedeen (HuM) and Al Badr also worked for Al Qaeda.

From 2001-2004, high profile terrorist targets including attacks on the then Chief of Armed Staff (COAS) and President General Musharraf, attack on crops commander Karachi and other top governmental officials put security forces to review and locate the militant group behind such activities. A report published in leading Pakistani Newspaper in 2004 reveals that Al-Qaeda militants has changed its strategy in terms of its recruitment and organization. This new brand of Al Qaeda militants operates in a small group mostly having less than ten members. They do not had access to senior leadership of Al Qaeda but they received funding from the network that keeps them activated and intact. They had been paid between \$170 to \$340 monthly.¹⁵ Furthermore, Al Qaeda's presence in Pakistan was not only reported in tribal areas but main city centers also became striking hideouts for the group. A report published in the United States traced Al Qaeda's presence in Karachi, the industrial hub of Pakistan. The report stated that out of 102 attempts of arrest action between 2001 to 2017, around 300 people have been arrested by the law enforcement agencies who were suspected to have links with Al Qaeda.¹⁶

¹⁵ Al Qaeda seeking new recruits in Pakistan (2004); URL: <https://www.dawn.com/news/373281>

¹⁶ Don Rassler, 'Al-Qa`ida in Pakistan: A Metric Problem?', *Combating Terrorism Center*, 2017; URL: <https://ctc.usma.edu/al-qaida-in-pakistan-a-metric-problem/> Zia Ur Rehman, *The News*, 2017; URL: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/234032-Arrests-since-911-show-al-Qaeda-maintaining-presence-in-Karachi-report> Greg Bruno (2009), 'The al-

Figure 3: Al Qaeda suspects arrested from different areas of Karachi

Source: Rassler (2017)

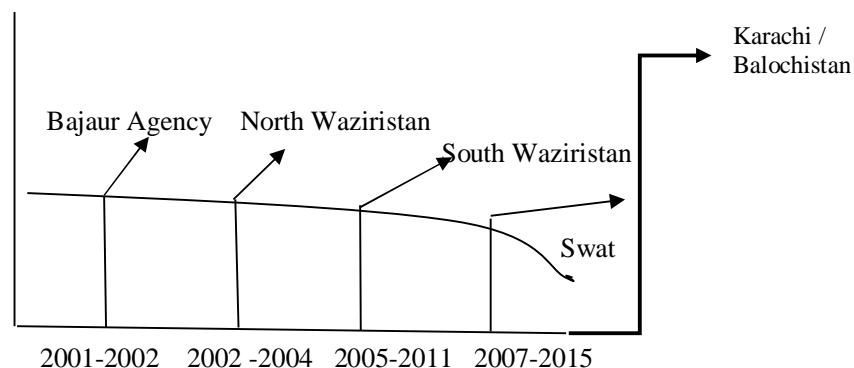
In addition to it, many terrorist plots of Al Qaeda had links within Pakistan. According to one report, Muhamamd Sadiq Khan, Sajjad Tanveer and others who were involved in 2005 London bombings visited Pakistan several times.¹⁷ Heritage Foundation report also revealed that out of sixty-one people affiliated with Al Qaeda, those who were convicted in Britain, twenty-seven of them got training either from Afghanistan or Pakistan. The report further mentions that Gordon Brown, then British Prime Minister once stated that, 'Three quarters of the most serious terrorism cases investigated by British police have links to al-Qaeda in Pakistan'.¹⁸ Rohan Gunaratna along with Anders Nielsen

in their work has provided a very comprehensive and detailed description of working of Al Qaeda and its movement across Pakistan after 2001 in particular. They too have endorsed this fact that after the US attack on Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Pakistan became a new base for militant organizations and particularly for Al Qaeda as their core leadership shifted in Pakistani areas. Initially Bin Laden and Al Zahawari took shelter in Waziristan. Later Al Zahawari established strong connections and base in Bajaur Agency along with members like Furaj al Libi. Along with this, core operational members of Al Qaeda like Khalid Shiekh Mohammad and others penetrated into the city centers, most notably in Karachi and Baluchistan. It was the time when Al Qaeda was successful in attaining the support of like-minded individuals mainly from non-Arab activists. In 2003, Al Qaeda faced setback as security forces captured Khalid Sheikh Muhammad (KSM) and other active militants from city centers. It was the time when Al Qaeda again, shifted and to an extent limited, its activities in the tribal belt. From 2005-2011, till the killing of Osama Bin laden in his alleged compound, Al Qaeda maintained strong connections in tribal agencies and was loosely affiliated with the local groups in the urban areas. The change of main command within Al Qaeda, security related military operation by Pakistan and presence of the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, all contributed towards limiting the Al Qaeda activities in Pakistan. From 2011 onwards, Al Qaeda tried to keep itself intact and functional as it was perceived that the absence of Bin Laden would rupture the outfit but it was successful to sustain. Moreover, the military operations conducted by the armed forces of Pakistan in the tribal belt and intelligence-based operations in the urban centers like Karachi became a decisive factor in gradually dismantling Al Qaeda network in Pakistan. Ayman Al Zahawari reorganized the organization by establishing regional wings. In this respect in 2014, formation of Al-Qaeda Indian sub-continent (AQIS) was a significant development in the South Asian region.

Qaeda-Taliban Nexus', *Council on Foreign Relations*; URL: <https://www.cfr.org/expert-roundup/al-qaeda-taliban-nexus>

¹⁷ Peter Bergen, 'Al Qaeda, the Organization: A Five-Year Forecast', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 2008, 14-30; URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40375772>

¹⁸ Lisa Curtis and Theodore Bromund, 'The Pakistan-Britain Terror Connection: Lessons and Warnings for the United States', *The Heritage Foundation*, 2009; URL: <https://www.heritage.org/terrorism/report/the-pakistan-britain-terror-connection-lessons-and-warnings-the-united-states>

Figure 4: Al Qaeda and core leadership presence in Pakistan

Source: Nielsen (2008)

Al Qaeda Indian Sub-Continent (AQIS)

After the change of command in Al Qaeda from Bin Laden to Aymen al Zahawari, the functional and structural approach of Al Qaeda further changed. It was structured into regional wings but the resilience of core leadership remained an important component of Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda's Indian sub-continent wing formed in 2014 by Mulana Asim Umer. He was apparently very active in producing literature for religious indoctrination. Books published in Urdu language are available online which reflects their approach and strategy to reach out the audiences and to develop a militant mindset within the masses. Reportedly these books are also translated in Uzbek, Pashto and Arabic script.¹⁹ Following themes are being extracted from his online books in order to understand Al-Qaeda's philosophy and tactics of radical indoctrination.

Table 2: Al Qaeda Indian sub-continent (AQIS) Chapter Publications

Name of Book	Main argument of the manuscript
<i>Adyan ki Jhang: Deen-e-Islam ya Deen-e Jhamboriyat</i> ²⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Democracy and Islam are parallel concepts Democratic pillars in a state including parliament, judiciary and media are un-Islamic forums Democracy is a tool of infidel forces against Islam Mujahedeen are pious Call of Jihad by Mujahedeen against Muslim states is just as they have deviated from the right path (the author in particular has focused on Pakistan as an example) The then government of Pakistan is part of evil alliance of west, India, Israel
<i>Teeseri Jang-e Azeem aur Dajjal</i> ²¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author dedicated the book to the mothers, sisters and daughters who have lost their son, brother and fathers in the battle of Islam The author has explained that the success of Afghan Jihad against the Soviets in 1980s was not because of American weapons but because of the help of angels who came from sky to help the Mujahedeen Narrated the events which will appear at the end of times The author has emphasized a lot on the bounties which mujahedeen will get after life.
The Army of Anti-Christ-Blackwater ²²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis of presence of Blackwater in Pakistan Blackwater is involved behind terrorist activities in Pakistan American war on terror is a conspiracy against Islam Products like coco-cola should be prohibited as they are working against Islam Acknowledging the activities of Taliban e.g. the author has mentioned that Taliban shot down three American helicopters which killed 14 Americans in Afghanistan Sympathetic towards Abdul Aziz (of Lal masjid in Islamabad) America is narrated as the biggest terrorist The author has also acknowledged the role of women who has given their sons and brother in the path of Islam The author urged women to send their men in the fight against infidels

²⁰ Mulana Asim Umer, 'Adyan Ki Jhang: Deen-e-Islam ya Deen-e-Jhamboriyat', *Idara Hitteen*, 2013, 1-201; URL: https://ia601005.us.archive.org/23/items/AdyanKiJang_201311/Adyan%20Ki%20Jang%20By%20Maulana%20Asim%20Umar.pdf

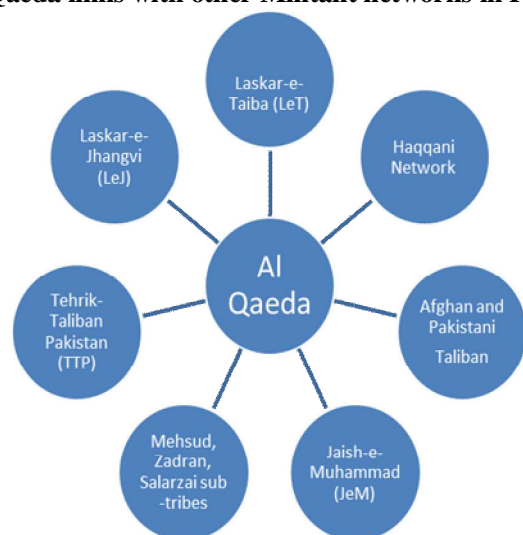
²¹ Mulana Asim Umer, 'Teeseri Jang-e- Azeem aur Dajjal', *Al Hijra Publications*, 2007, 1-260; URL: https://ia600604.us.archive.org/35/items/TeesriJang-e-AzeemAurDajjalByShaykhAsimUmar_996/TeesriJang-e-AzeemAurDajjalByShaykhAsimUmar.pdf

²² Mulana Asim Umer, 'The Army of Anti-Christ-Blackwater', *Jamia Hafsa Urdu forum*, 2009, 10-230; URL: <http://www.mediafire.com/file/99qj521yq2e3vee/Dajjal+Ka+Lashkar+%5Bkutubistan.blogspot.com%5D.pdf>

¹⁹ Abdul Basit, 'Asim Umar –“New Kid on the Block”?', *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis*, 2014, 8; URL: <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/CTTA-November14.pdf>

Despite the fact that Al Qaeda functions at a low profile, but apparently their operational capability has been reduced in Pakistan with the passage of time mainly due to the operations of Pakistani security forces in the tribal belt as well as in the urban centers. In addition to it, the emergence of Islamic State (IS) diverted the allegiance and linkage of local militant groups from Al Qaeda to IS. It is evident that militant and terrorist groups seek projection to register their presence and fear among the society. Local and regional outfits mostly use the labelling of transnational network to gain attention and recognition at a massive level.

Figure 5: Al Qaeda links with other Militant networks in Pakistan



Source: Weinbaum (2016) Nielsen (2008)

Islamic State of Iraq and Levant/Syria (ISIS)

The IS appeared on the forefront in 2014, when large proportion of territory across Syria and Iraq were captured by its militants. It is considered as a split away faction of Al Qaeda, under the leadership of Abu-Bakr-Baghdadi. IS emerged as one of the most brutal, lethal terrorist organization in the contemporary era. The tactical usage of terror through mass killing and beheadings along with immense use of social media to globalize their ideology, and controlling large swathes of area established a new reign of terror which had a global impact. The IS developed such an ultra-orthodox and radicalized version of Islam that was generally not accepted even in the traditional conservative camps.

As per a White House briefing, the ISIS operates in eighteen countries, divided into three categories, which also includes Pakistan. The stated goals of the IS includes creation of a Caliphate based on their own rigid and false interpretation of Islam. For this purpose, administrative control of territory based of Salafi-Wahhabi ideology was the main target of IS predominantly in Iraq and Syria.²³ In this context, the way the IS demonstrated its political posture and objectives by capturing and controlling the areas represents the hypothesis of Bruce Hoffman that violence and terror are used for political aims. Besides this, main ideology of the IS revolves around their strong beliefs that in which they considered themselves as 'true' Muslims against all others. Additionally, to fight against Islamic State is equivalent to apostasy. They have an extreme anti-Shia stance to an extent that they considered them disbelievers. The IS unlike other militant outfits considering Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood as traitors of Islam.²⁴

Table 3: ISIS presence across different countries.

Core States	Syria and Iraq
Official branches	Nigeria, Yemen , Libya, the Sinai Peninsula, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Caucasus region, south of Russia
Aspiring branches	Bangladesh, Egypt, Philippines, Mali, Indonesia, Somalia

Source: Homeland Security Wire News (2016)

The IS has extensively used various modes of media to increase their following. Along with the use of twitter and Facebook, the IS published its online magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. The content used in the magazines depicts the core ideology of the IS in which the war between martyrs and crusades has been narrated. Moreover, it has focused on an offensive side of Jihad by portraying the pictures of beheadings. In addition to it, the stories of female who have converted to the IS beliefs

²³ Katherine Bauer, 'Beyond Syria and Iraq: Examining Islamic State Provinces', *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 2016, 1-108; URL: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/beyond-syria-and-iraq-examining-islamic-state-provinces>

²⁴ Cole Bunzel, 'From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State', *The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, 2015, 10; URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-ideology-of-the-Islamic-State.pdf>

is discussed.²⁵ The aim of this propaganda is to explain the content and language of their working to the targeted audience. They also tried to attract recruits from the west to join the organization by adapting various media tools. Mostly, militant and terrorist organizations work like commune in which they show resilience and allegiance by seeking homogeneity in terms of belief system, common enemy and cooperation in operational zones with other militant networks as happened in case of Pakistan, where militants took Pakistan as an epicenter of their activities. In this context, the IS presence in the shape of ideologue or their activities is not unique in Pakistan. The IS inspired small groups are active in urban centers of Pakistan. Furthermore, former Tehreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP) factions also used the IS label to project their activities by showing allegiance to the IS, which has a global recognition. Like-minded small groups may have direct or indirect link with IS. From 2014-2015, many individuals from regional and local militant networks joined ISK. In 2014, six TTP leaders showed their allegiance to Baghdadi that became instrumental for the lower cadres of recruits as well.²⁶ In this context, a report prepared by Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS) on security, identified the existence and activities of IS in Pakistan. According to it, the IS has been active in Baluchistan and northern part of Sindh. As per report, in six attacks 153 people were killed.²⁷ There are several examples that shows IS suspected activities in Pakistan. In 2017, a Lej-Al Alami and IS militants were targeted in Mastung, Balochistan by the security forces. A bomb making factory was also destroyed by Pakistan armed forces. In a statement by the media wing, military stated that, '(LeJ-AL) was reportedly making efforts for communication with ISIS and intended to facilitate establishment of ISIS

²⁵ Dr. Haroro J. Ingram, 'Dabiq, Issue 15: A Call to Islamic State's Enemies as the Caliphate Crumbles', *ICCT-International Centre for Counter Terrorism-The Hague*, 2016; URL: <https://icct.nl/publication/dabiq-issue-15-a-call-to-islamic-states-enemies-as-the-caliphate-crumbles/>; Marius Steindal, 'ISIS Totalitarian Ideology and Discourse An Analysis of the Dabiq Magazine Discourse', 2015, 6-80; URL: https://nmbu.brage.unit.no/nmbu_xmli/bitstream/handle/11250/2383344/steindal_2015.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

²⁶ Amira Jadoon, Nakissa Jahanbani & Charmaine Willis, 'Challenging the ISK Brand in Afghanistan-Pakistan: Rivalries and Divided Loyalties', 11:4 (April 2018), <https://ctc.usma.edu/challenging-isk-brand-afghanistan-pakistan-rivalries-divided-loyalties/>

²⁷ ISIS on rise in Pakistan; URL: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/isis-on-rise-in-pakistan-report/articleshow/62415527.cms>

foothold.²⁸ In addition to it, Karachi also beheld the penetration of like-minded IS inspired militants. One of the CTD official in Karachi narrated that they have targeted such like-minded groups which mostly belong to educated class and were stimulated towards the IS ideology. Most of the militants, according to the official, previously belonged to some other militant or religious group. Furthermore, a women group under the name of Idara-e-Al Zakirah Academy in Karachi, working for fund raising was also reported. Their activities includes brainwashing common people in their community. Educated women were also part of the wing.²⁹ Therefore, Tribal belt, Karachi city and Balochistan province are the main urban centers of the IS activities in Pakistan. Whereas; Tehreek Taliban Pakistan and Laskar e Jhangvi Al Almi are two main groups working with IS in Balochistan.

Tactical and Ideological rivalry between Al Qaeda and Islamic State

The origin of Islamic State as an off shoot of Al Qaeda in 2014 illustrates the differences that existed within the leadership. It is being observed that IS emerged as a much more intransigent group as compared to Al Qaeda. Their modus operandi includes the acquisition of territory, beheading, extreme opposition to other religious sects along with the implementation of harsh laws (for instance, in Iraq) explains the ideological and operational shift in their organizations. The leading publications of IS and Al Qaeda in South Asia provides an insight into these organizational differences. In the South Asian region, Al Qaeda has been far less vocal then Islamic State. For instance, IS has criticized Al Qaeda approach towards the issue of sectarianism and Al Qaeda's relationship with Taliban mainly due to Taliban's negotiations with US. IS perceives that Al Qaeda is dominated by its affiliates Taliban rather than controlling them. Therefore, this anti-Taliban rhetoric of IS has bought major shifts in IS and Al Qaeda's working in Pakistan and Afghanistan in the recent past years. Furthermore, particularly in case of Pakistan, IS attacks on Sufi shrines and religious sects reflects their staunch and aggressive ideological and tactical posture.

This intra-militant rivalry has altogether changed the strategic and tactical landscape of transnational militant nexus in Pakistan and

²⁸ 'Pakistan says raid on cave hideout stops Islamic State "foothold"', *Reuters*; URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-islamic-state-idUSKBN18Z1Q0>

²⁹ Salis bin Perwaiz, 'In Karachi, ISIS Present in Spirit only', *The News*, 2016, URL: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/93457-In-Karachi-ISIS-present-in-spirit-only>

Afghanistan. Though IS has been able to gain influence in Afghanistan and Pakistan but the Taliban victory in Afghanistan has provided Al Qaeda an opportunity to rejuvenate their presence and role in the region due to their past theological, ideological and close relationship with the Taliban cadre. Therefore, it would be interesting to see that to what extent Al Qaeda provides a background support to Taliban against IS in Afghanistan. Consequently, their exclusion from Afghanistan may inflict a strategic setback to Pakistan for which Pakistan needs to enhance and maintain their counter terrorism efforts in tribal belt of Pakistan and Balochistan in particular.

Another significant development is the gradual interest of Al Qaeda and IS, in particular, in Kashmir. For example, Islamic State Hind chapter claimed the responsibility of an attack on the street hawker. It was a second attack of such nature against civilians in Srinagar in which alleged involvement of IS was observed. But keeping in view the local dynamics of Kashmir, it is evident that Kashmir based jihadi groups may not provide space to their militant networks in their years long local struggle.

Conclusion

Al Qaeda and Islamic State both explicates the new trend of terrorist structures and their capacity to operate across borders by making local connections with individuals and other local, regional and transnational militant networks. For this purpose, they have been able to expand their operational base through ideological affiliates and strong networking. Despite the military operations, Pakistan has been one of the pivotal areas where both the groups have been able to penetrate within the tribal belt as well as within the main cities of Pakistan. Their links with the local militant groups within Pakistan expounds the complicated nexus in South Asia. Ideological affiliation, geographic proximity with Afghanistan, presence of ideologically like-minded militant groups within Pakistan all contributes to the operations of Al Qaeda and IS in Pakistan. Therefore, IS strives for a larger role in Pakistan and Afghanistan as compared to Al Qaeda that has worked more like a sleeper cell in small groups in Pakistan.