

## Islamic State in Afghanistan: Challenges for Pakistan

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### Abstract

*The Islamic State (IS) Wilayat-e-Khorasan, expanded at an alarmingly fast rate. However, because of losses, at the hands of both the Taliban and U.S.-backed Afghan forces, Islamic State's future in Afghanistan was somewhat jeopardized. Nonetheless, seeing as the IS claimed responsibility for two deadly attacks on the Christian community in Pakistan's south-western province of Balochistan among other such incidents it is no wonder that Pakistani counterterrorism officials are concerned about the spill-over of this faction of IS into their country. The recent efforts by Pakistan to safeguard its borders in the form of military operation and fencing have shaped a scenario in which the threat level for Pakistan is now on minimum level. The threat for Pakistan is more ideological in nature and needs to be defended with credible de-radicalization programs. It is pertinent to note here that Daesh is at the back foot and is adopting the tactics of negotiation instead of violence. Using qualitative data, this paper aims at analyzing Daesh as a potential threat for Pakistan, after considering the internal efforts done by*

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*Pakistan to counter this imminent threat; to what extent these efforts have secured Pakistan from this evil threat and what is still needed to be done. It will also aim to showcase that even though Pakistan must take the necessary measures, Daesh has not and will not be able to expand in Pakistani territory.*

**Keywords:** Daesh, Afghanistan, Zarb-e-Azab, Radd-ul-Fasaad, Khorasan, Balochistan, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, NACTA

## **Introduction**

Extending from Mosul to Paris, Ramadi to London, Yemen to the United States, the world has been sanctified from the cruel touch of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or Daesh. Their capability to attract thousands of people (irrespective of background or social class) to join a cause known particularly for its ruthless practices of beheadings, suicide bombings and stabbing is a sign of not only their savagery but also of their power to persuade, radicalize and recruit. In recent years the Taliban fraction has split up, mainly due to ideological differences. This has given cause to Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) factions which are hiding out in Afghanistan to find a new group to pledge allegiance to in order to reformulate. Daesh offers them just that.

At the end of 2017 a black-and-white flag was seen fluttering near a highway in Islamabad. It bore the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS) symbol and at the base were the words: "Khilafat is coming".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Police Remove Islamic State Flag Waving in Islamabad," *New Age Islam*, September 24, 2017.

The Islamic State's (IS) Afghan wilayat, known as the Islamic State in Khorasan, originally grew alarmingly fast. It is pertinent to note here that it is not Afghanistan that is responsible for the growth of ISIS instead political grievances, ideological and sectarian divide and uncontrolled porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan is the major cause of the footprints of ISIS in the region. However, the fast rise was hindered by losses, at the hands of both the Taliban and U.S.-backed Afghan forces. This has somewhat endangered Daesh's future in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, seeing as the IS claimed responsibility for two deadly attacks on the Christian community in Pakistan's south-western province of Balochistan among other such incidents it is no wonder that Pakistani counterterrorism officials are concerned about the spillover of this faction of IS into their country.

According to the fourth wave of terrorism, any terrorist outfit wants to continue their expansion albeit in short spurts. They try to achieve this through opening up new branches. David C. Rapaport who crafted the waves of terrorism theory explain the wave as " It is a cycle of activity of activity situated in different time periods and is characterized by having both expansion and contraction phases. A defining feature of wave is that it is international in character: similar activities would occur in different countries in a specific period of time, all with a predominating energy that shapes the groups characteristics and relationships with each other." Rappaport linked fourth wave with religious fundamentalism. In fourth wave the major causes of terrorism were identified in overlapping area of religion and politics. However with the rise of Al-Qaeda and ISIS the dimensions started changing and the scholars are forced to think about fifth wave of terrorism and its new dimensions of violence.

The concept of fifth wave of terrorism is new but cannot be ignored because of its relevance in today's conflicts. The tactics of violence adopted by ISIS such as rape, killing and use of children in violent activities are identified in fifth wave of terrorism. In addition to this international groups act more legalistic and pluralistic which is the main concern and imminent threat for Pakistan.

It is thus imperative for Pakistan's security establishment to ensure that all measures are taken to counter this threat. Especially since, the downfall of the Daesh in its strongholds in Iraq and Syria are almost complete, they will look to expand and gain foothold in other voids that are usually created because of instability and civil war. The recent efforts by Pakistan to safeguard its borders in the form of military operation and fencing have shaped a scenario in which the threat level for Pakistan is now on minimum level. The threat for Pakistan is more ideological in nature and needs to be defended with credible de-radicalization programs. It is pertinent to note here that Daesh is at the back foot and is adopting the tactics of negotiation instead of violence.

This paper aims at analyzing Daesh as a potential threat for Pakistan, after considering the internal efforts done by Pakistan to counter this imminent threat; military operations securing the Pak-Afghan border and creating a social resilience in society; to what extent these efforts have secured Pakistan from this evil threat and what is still needed to be done. Using the overlapping theories of both the fourth and fifth waves of terrorism, It will aim to answer, what are the implications of IS presence for Pakistan and what measures should be taken?

### **Presence of Daesh in Afghanistan**

If historic events are analyzed the roots of ISIS can be traced back to 1999 but its activities came into prominence during the Iraq

invasion in 2003. Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian jihadist of the Salafi school of thought came to be known as the father of ISIS.<sup>2</sup> As the number of attacks increased on the coalition forces with a new wave of suicide bombings and beheading of hostages, it attracted more fighters to join the militant group. Due to its effectiveness on field it Al-Qaeda took the militant group under their umbrella.<sup>3</sup>

Afghanistan became source of concern since 2001 because of US foreign policy shift towards this region. In response to 9/11 attacks when US started military action against Al-Qaeda, Taliban government decided to give their unconditional support to Al-Qaeda. The long war of almost more than 16 years US government has lost around 2000<sup>4</sup> lives of its soldiers and spent around 120 billion dollars for reconstruction and rehabilitation in Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup> The threat from Al-Qaeda was not over yet when all of a sudden Islamic state started appearing on screen in Afghanistan in late 2014. Islamic State is trying to expand in Afghanistan to gain the strategic objectives in the region. IS's main objective is to capture all historic Muslim lands and unite them under the rule of caliphate and then to start a war with the west.<sup>6</sup> External affiliated groups of the IS from all around the world is facilitating in establishing a transnational caliphate outside the borders in Iraq and Syria. IS is aiming to expand itself in the region of Greater Afghanistan commonly known as Khorasan as this region holds a significant

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<sup>2</sup>Hassan Hassan, "The Sectarianism of the Islamic State: Ideological Roots and Political Context," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 13, 2016.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>James Fallows, "The Tragedy of the American Military," *The Atlantic*, November 23, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/01/the-tragedy-of-the-american-military> (accessed August 13, 2018).

<sup>5</sup>Idrees Ali, "Taliban Gains in Afghanistan Threaten Costly U.S. Reconstruction," *Reuters*, June 09, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-afghanistan-reconstruction> (, accessed August 13, 2018).

<sup>6</sup>"What's the Appeal of a Caliphate?" *BBC News*, October 26, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-29761018> (accessed August 13, 2018).

importance because of its Islamic historic background.<sup>7</sup> Currently, IS presence in Nangahar province is a matter of concern for Pakistan because this presence is growing in terms of military capability and social interaction.<sup>8</sup>

However the rise of ISIS was the failure of major political strategies designed by the United States to manage the invasion. From the day the Saddam Hussein statue, the symbol of power & control was brought down Iraq only worsened. IS presence in Nangahar and aim for establishing Khorasan has some serious implications for Pakistan. After Operation Zarb-e-Azb and Operation Raddul Fassad the splinter groups of Pakistani militants are seeking support of Organizations like IS. The militants hiding in Afghanistan are reuniting under a new brand. This consolidation makes IS a threat beyond borders. Although US military has launched a drone attacking campaign against the presence of IS and attached many IS leaders during 2016-17.<sup>9</sup>

### **Presence of Daesh in Pakistan**

The geopolitics and conflicts in the Middle East are increasing the sectarian identities and ideologies of particular groups of Sunnis and Shiaa Muslims all over the world. For Pakistan too, this is not a good omen. Primarily 20 percent of the country's population is Shia.<sup>10</sup> The attacks on Barelvis claimed by the Islamic State (IS) and

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<sup>7</sup>"Religion and Secularism in the Middle East: A Primer," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, (2015), <https://www.fpri.org/article> (accessed August 13, 2018).

<sup>8</sup>"Analysis: Why Is Russia warming up to Pakistan?" *Dawn*, February 27, 2018, , <https://www.dawn.com/news/1392060> (accessed August 13, 2018).

<sup>9</sup>"America Launches Drone Attacks on Islamist Terrorists in Niger," *Express Tribune*, July 30, 2018, <https://www.express.co.uk/996296/us-launch-drone-attack-islamist-terrorist-niger-africa> (accessed August 13, 2018).

<sup>10</sup>"Pakistan: How Shia Muslims differ from Sunnis; treatment of Shias, particularly in Lahore and Multan; government response to violence against Shia Muslims (2010-December 2013)," *Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada*,

its allies; such as the attack on the Shrine of Shah Noorani in Balochistan in November 2016<sup>11</sup> and Lal Shahbaz Qalandar<sup>12</sup> in Sindh in February 2017, is evidence of the growing sway of IS and its message of declaring all those who do not adhere to its message as heretics. The emergence of IS in Pakistan and IS-linked attacks in league with anti-Shia militants, such as JuA, Jundullah and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi al-Alami (LeJ-A), are dangerous developments, especially where Sunni-Shia sectarian relations are concerned.<sup>13</sup>

In 2014, when IS declared the Islamic state, after capturing significant territory in Iraq and Syria, it also had impact on far right wing and militant organization of Pakistan. Later on, they announced their 'Plans for Pakistan', as a part of new province under their caliphate, Khorasan.<sup>14</sup> This raised alarms bells in security agencies, but on other hand, the weakened extremist militants groups saw this as lucrative opportunity to restart the fight under new banner. This has been further corroborated by Zahid Hussain, an expert on the Middle East: "The Islamic State (Daesh) might not have a strong organizational structure in Pakistan but we have thousands of members of banned groups sympathetic to the (their) ideology. They subscribe to the Islamic

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January 9, 2014, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/52eba0284.html> (accessed February 12, 2019).

<sup>11</sup>"Attack on Shah Noorani Shrine in Pakistan Kills Dozens," *Al-Jazeera*, November 13, 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/11/dozens-casualties-attack-pakistan-shrine-161112141000715.html> (accessed August 14, 2018).

<sup>12</sup>Mohammad Hussain Khan, Qurban Ali Khushik and Imtiaz Ali, "At Least 70 Dead as Bomb Rips through Lal Shahbaz Shrine in Sehwan, Sindh," *Dawn*, February 16, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1315136> (accessed August 14, 2018).

<sup>13</sup>Najibullah Quraishi, and Jamie Doran, "ISIL and the Taliban," *Al-Jazeera*, November 01, 2015, <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/specialseries/2015/11/islamic-state-isil-taliban-afghanistan-151101074041755.html> (accessed August 14, 2018).

<sup>14</sup>Sd Muni, and Vivek Chadha, "Report: Terrorism Emerging Trends, Asian Strategic Review, 2016", *Institute for Defence Studies & Analysis* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2016), 189-209.

State (Daesh) world view". His words can be evidenced by graffiti that appeared in the areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Karachi in 2014.<sup>15</sup> Even though the perpetrators were immediately dealt with it signaled alarm bells for the security forces.

Noreen Leghari's<sup>16</sup> disappearance from her hometown of Hyderabad in February 2017 was registered as a kidnapping until she reached out to her parents through social media and confirmed her allegiance to Daesh: "I'm in Syria for jihad. Stop searching for me."<sup>17</sup> Unknown to everyone, she was still present in Lahore and planned to detonate herself in a crowded church in April. Fortunately her plan was foiled by security forces. It was a major example of IS's growing reach in Pakistan. Even young Pakistani women and educated youth from liberal families have proven responsive to the IS brand of extremism. In June 2017, China has expressed "grave concern" over reports that Daesh had killed two Chinese teachers in Pakistan.<sup>18</sup> In March 2018, Iran warned Pakistan of the threat of Daesh along its borders.<sup>19</sup> Russia also

<sup>15</sup>Javed Aziz Khan, "Daesh Graffiti Appears in Peshawar," *The News*, February 07, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1387889> (accessed August 15, 2018).

<sup>16</sup>"Noreen Leghari Confesses to Involvement in Terrorist Activity," *Geo News*, April 17, 2017, <https://www.geo.tv/latest/138420-Noreen-Leghari-confesses-to-involvement-in-terrorist-activity> (accessed August 14, 2018).

<sup>17</sup>Fatima Bhojani, "Isis is on the Decline in the Middle East, but Its Influence in Pakistan Is Rising," *Washington Post*, May 5, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/05/05/isis-is-on-the-decline-in-the-middle-east-but-its-influence-in-pakistan-is-rising/?utm\\_term=.3658522233a2](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/05/05/isis-is-on-the-decline-in-the-middle-east-but-its-influence-in-pakistan-is-rising/?utm_term=.3658522233a2) (accessed August 15, 2018).

<sup>18</sup>"China 'gravely Concerned' as IS Reportedly Kills Two Teachers in Pakistan," *Pakistan Today*, June 09, 2017, [https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/06/09/china-shows-grave-concern-as-teachers-reported-killed-in-pakistan/?fb\\_comment\\_id=1160627100710423\\_1160639167375883](https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/06/09/china-shows-grave-concern-as-teachers-reported-killed-in-pakistan/?fb_comment_id=1160627100710423_1160639167375883) (accessed August 13, 2018).

<sup>19</sup>"Iran, Pakistan Stress Fight against Common Border Threats," *Pars Today*, June 01, 2018, <http://parstoday.com/en/news/iran-i89182iranpakistanstressfightagainstcommonborderthreats> (accessed August 13, 2018).

raised security concerns and together with Pakistan plans to establish a commission on military cooperation to counter the IS threat in Afghanistan.<sup>20</sup>

IS does not have direct territorial access inside Pakistan, but conducts activities through proxies. Most of these local militants groups with ties to IS are second generation jihadist, who emerged after 9/11 and had ideological similarities with Al Qaida and TTP. They were also and heavily involved in spurring on sectarian conflict with the aim of creating a Sunni Islamic state in Pakistan. Security analyst and Director of Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, Amir Rana, state that "These terrorist outfits usually play a bluff. Daesh has a nexus with other terrorist organizations like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) in the country so they don't completely play the bluff here. The security report 2017 by the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies also pointed towards increasing footprints of IS on the Pak-Afghan border."<sup>21</sup>

A deadly mix of violent Sunni militant groups, many belonging to banned groups that are thriving under new names, have cloaked themselves under the banner of Daesh. On 25 April 2017, an attack carried out by a pro-IS terrorist group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) killed fourteen people.<sup>22</sup> The targets were Shia Muslims. JuA, which splintered from the Pakistani Taliban in 2014, is a strong advocate of anti-Shia ideology and pledged allegiance to the Islamic State

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<sup>20</sup>Ayaz Gul, "Russia, Pakistan Form Anti-Terror Military Cooperation Commission," *VoA News*, February 20, 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/russia-pakistan-military-cooperation-commission-against-islamic-state/4262801.html> (accessed August 13, 2018).

<sup>21</sup>Pakistan Security Report 2017 Full Report, Report: *Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies*, 1st ed., 10 (2018), <https://www.pakpips.com/article/book/pakistan-security-report-2017> (accessed August 14, 2018).

<sup>22</sup>"Narrative Summaries of Reasons for Listing," *UN*, July 06, 2017, <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/?type=All&page=1> (accessed August 13, 2018).

Khurasan (ISK) in 2014. In the last two years, JuA has merged with the IS to target Shia Muslims across Pakistan.

Another important group affiliate of IS which is still active in Pakistan is Lashker-e-Jhangvi- Al-Alami. They harbor an extreme anti-Shia ideology and have been involved in killing of Hazara Shia community. They were also responsible for numerous terrorist activities in Balochistan, such as the 2016 attack on the Police Academy in Quetta.<sup>23</sup> Lashker-e-Jhangvi is also extremely important because it is heavily invested in the political sphere of the country. Along with LeJ, many other groups have also pledged allegiance to IS, such as Jundullah, a group formally associated with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. More importantly members of TTP who escaped after Operation Zarb-e-Azab have also joined IS, and now work under the IS banner.

According to former National Security and Foreign Affairs Advisor Sartaj Aziz: "Daesh is not a major threat for Pakistan...the threat of Daesh can be suspected in the tribal areas where the government believes that it has significant military operations in place to combat it".<sup>24</sup> Daesh presence comes at a time when counter-terrorism operations in Pakistan are in full force and there has been a decline in violent activities. Given that nearly 160,000 troops are stationed in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), it would be a miracle for Daesh-linked militants to gain any semblance of control in the region.<sup>25</sup>

It must be kept in mind that even though the ongoing counterterrorism operations in Pakistan have resulted in terrorist

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<sup>23</sup>"Pakistan: LeJ behind Police Academy Attack in Quetta." *Al-Jazeera*, October 26, 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/pakistan-lej-police-academy-attack-quetta-161025160102452.html> (accessed August 13, 2018).

<sup>24</sup>Maryam Nazir, "Daesh in South Asia," *Journal of Current Affairs* 1, no. 1&2 (2015): 1-17.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

asylums and terror command and being demolished, the detente of Daesh can provide fractured militants and groups, immunity to enter its fold for the purpose of reviving. "Pakistan still faces the threat of Daesh but Afghanistan is the prime location of the group where its fighters get arms and training,"<sup>26</sup> as stated by Mohmand, a retired brigadier of the Pakistan Army.

In June 2017, the Pakistan Army announced that they would launch operations in the tribal areas of Rajgal and Shawwal to flush out Daesh militants which were trying to get a foothold in Khyber Agency.<sup>27</sup> According to DG ISPR, Major General Asif Ghafoor, Daesh had no organized infrastructure in Pakistan and the Army would not allow them to take foothold in the country.<sup>28</sup> This is not to deny that the group does have a network in Pakistan in the form of ideology adaption by already present military groups in the country. In addition to this the element of this ideology is such low in Pakistani society that they can barely survive. It is salafi school of thought that welcomed their ideology in Pakistan and this is the weakest point of the ISIS. This weak point is further aggravated in Pakistan because of the diverse sectarian mix of the society. There are two major sectarian groups in Pakistan commonly known as Barelvi's and Deobandi.<sup>29</sup> According to ISIS ideology the major group Barelvi's is the idolaters and should be eliminated. Therefore

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<sup>26</sup>Tahir Khan, "The Rise of Daesh in Afghanistan Is Raising Alarm in Pakistan, Say Experts," *Arab News*, April 1, 2018, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1277356/world> (accessed August 13, 2018).

<sup>27</sup>Saad Sayeed, "Pakistan Launches Military Operation in Tribal Areas Targeting Islamic State," *Reuters*, July 16, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-militants/pakistan-launches-military-opera> (accessed August 15, 2018).

<sup>28</sup>"Daesh, JuA Have Access to Pakistan's Educational Institutes: DG ISPR." *Samaa News*, April 06, 2017, <https://www.samaa.tv/news/2017/04/daesh-ju-a-have-access-to-pakistans-educational-institutes-dg-ispr/> (accessed August 15, 2018).

<sup>29</sup>Ashok K Behuria, "Sects Within Sect: The Case of Deobandi-Barelvi Encounter in Pakistan," *Strategic Analysis* 32, no. 1 (2008): 57-80.

one can argue that the ideological grounds in Pakistan for the expansion of ISIS are not as soft and perceived by international community. Infact ISIS may face opposition by certain strong sectarian groups as ISIS destroyed sacred shrines in Syria and Iraq. There are many reasons: firstly, Ahl-e-Hadith or Salafis are a minority group in Pakistan; secondly, they are not likely to swear loyalty to a group that has been declared as heretics by scholars and thirdly, Jamat-ud-Dawah (the largest non-political Salafi group) has defied Daesh ideology and modus operandi. Hence, regardless of being political or otherwise, Ahl-e-Hadith organizations have been facing continuous decreasing ranks and will continue to remain paltry to such an extent that Daesh will not be able to take authority.

It must be noted however, that the above converse does not entail that Salafis are the only group that have pledged allegiance to Daesh. The first leader of the Khorasan Chapter, Hafiz Saeed Khan was a Deobandi is evidence enough.<sup>30</sup> He had previously headed the TTP Orakzai Agency (FATA) and had joined Jamatul-Ahrar before ensuring support to Abu Baker Al-Baghdadi. Henceforth, the situation is a complex one. Clusters that are battling to withstand the Pakistani military operations are pledging allegiance to Daesh in Afghanistan in order to survive. Aside from Ahl-e-Hadith and Deobandi factions, renunciations have taken place in the Jamat-e-Islami as well. Individuals from the Jamat-e-Islami sister chapter in Afghanistan, the Hizb-e-Islami also have been defecting to Daesh. Desertions from TTP, Jamat-ul-Ahrar and Afghan Taliban are now a commonality.

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<sup>30</sup>"IS Leader in Afghanistan Killed, US Believes," *BBC News*, August 12, 2016, [http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Islamic\\_State\\_of\\_Iraq\\_and\\_the\\_Levant](http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Islamic_State_of_Iraq_and_the_Levant) (accessed August 15, 2018).

The Salafi commanders do not have full authority over the Khorasan chapter. This is an indication of the fact that the group has adopted a tailored policy in Afghanistan to attract Deobandi fighters. Despite this since the group has not been able to adjust to the tribal norms which prevail in Afghanistan, a bigger effect could not take place.

Keeping all things in mind, this is not to say that Pakistani authorities need to keep a watch on any signs of influence of Daesh in the country. On February 22, 2017, Pakistan Army announced the launch of a nationwide military operation- “Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad”, according to the statement issued by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the army’s media wing. The ISPR Press Release 87/2017 (Pakistan Defence) stated: “Pakistan Army launches “Operation Raddul-Fasaad” across the country. Operation aims at eliminating residual/latent threat of terrorism, consolidating gains of operations made thus far and further ensuring security of the borders. Pakistan Air Force, Pakistan Navy, Civil Armed Forces (CAF) and other security / Law enforcing agencies (LEAs) will continue to actively participate/intimately support the efforts to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the country.

All the security agencies of the country are united on the point after Army Public School attack that all the operations done across the country can normalize the situation only for a limited time period and once they are concluded the sleeper cells will again get activated as we have observed that the militants have done a significant damage during the recent elections of 2018. All the sympathizers who provide support to militant groups in any form must be dealt with iron hands. Many investigations reveal that the masterminds of many attacks in Pakistan are planned by such people who are apparently living a normal life. The issue of radicalization in varsities is another issue in this regard. For all

these concerns raised National Action Plan (NAP) seems to be the only document which can provide some relief to the society if implemented in true spirit. In the starting phase of implementation it seems like NAP is actually taking a nap but the situation changed when National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) released its first progress report of NAP in December 2017. According to the statistics of that report all 20 points of the NAP showed a progress, the only point that has been ignored in this plan is the point of legal reforms. This point is the base of all and needs to be taken on the serious note.

Even though there is a least to none chance of Daesh being able to operate within Pakistan, authorities need to monitor the group's activities in Afghanistan primarily because any expansion will in all probability start from the porous Pak-Afghan border. Operations like Zarb-e-Azb complemented by National Action Plan are the main source of preventing evils like IS from entering in our society.

It is pertinent to note here that the threat of ISIS for Pakistan is not of ideological in nature rather it is because of ISIS growing in Afghanistan. Also the splinter groups of TTP hiding in Afghanistan trying to rebrand them are a matter of concern for Pakistan. To control this threat leaving scars on Pakistan's society Pakistan will have to develop a strategy on two fronts. Internally, Pakistan's strategy and its progress is quiet impressive in the past few years as a nose dive decline in terrorism is explained in the graph mentioned above. There is still a room of improvement; Pakistan will have to deal with the problem of home grown extremism. Externally, the most immediate threat is from Afghan side. The porous border with Afghanistan needs the attention. Fencing of Afghan border and surveillance has been doubled but the mistrust and level cooperation from Afghan side is very low. The recent government though is trying to negotiate with Afghans but still the

international community needs to play its role as well. A stable Afghanistan is in the interest of both Pakistan and the region.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In Iraq, IS found a void in the marginalization of the Sunni Muslim population. Presently, Pakistan is faced with internal disenfranchised groups who have pledged allegiance to IS. Sectarian fault lines which can be exploited by these groups exist in Pakistan. In February 2017, the armed forces of Pakistan launched an operation 'Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad'<sup>31</sup> across the country — a country-wide crackdown against terrorists and extremists. Hence, security is on the foremost priority list of the Pakistan Government. Following are the recommendations for consideration of the government:

- 1) FATA reforms as per the will of National Action Plan must be implemented in true spirit so that the political and economic uplift of the area may result in the solution of the problem.
- 2) Beside security oriented measures the government should also focus on the agenda of social reforms.
- 3) Main problem is extremism, which leads to terrorism. Extremism can only be dealt using widespread strategies that challenge the ideology and mind-set of the militant organizations. The literature needs to be modified and the fading values of tolerance and patience are needed to be taught so that the young minds do not grow up with a 'jihadi' or 'radical' mentality.
- 4) In March 2018, Pakistan's National Counter-Terrorism Authority (NACTA) launched a drive to eradicate social media platforms of

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<sup>31</sup>"Pakistan Army Launches 'Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad' across the Country," *Dawn*, February 22, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1316332> (accessed August 15, 2019).

Daesh recruiters targeting the youth. Similarly, content on madrassas is required.

- 5) Madrassa reforms are the need of the hour. The immediate solution may be that all rules and regulations for NGO's are applied on Madrassas to control the situation.
- 6) Prison reforms should also be introduced. Prisoners are educated about the extremism and terrorism.