Islamic State Khorasan (Isis-K) In Post Us Withdrawal Afghanistan

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Abstract

The withdrawal of United States (US) forces from Afghanistan marked a significant turning point in the country's security landscape. This research article investigates the emergence and evolution of the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) in Afghanistan following the US withdrawal. The research begins by providing an overview of ISIS-K's origins, highlighting its establishment as an affiliate of the global Islamic State (ISIS) organization in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. The article then examines the factors that contributed to the group's rise and expansion, including its recruitment strategies, ideological appeal, and exploitation of local grievances. Furthermore, it explores the complex relationship between ISIS-K and other militant groups operating in Afghanistan, such as the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The study assesses the current capabilities and territorial control of ISIS-K, analyzing its operational tactics, funding mechanisms, and recruitment networks. Additionally, it delves into the group's efforts to exploit social media and online platforms for propaganda and recruitment purposes, examining the role of virtual networks in sustaining and expanding its influence. Furthermore, this research article examines the immediate and long-term implications of ISIS-K's presence in Afghanistan for regional and international security.

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Overall, this research article provides valuable insights into the evolving landscape of ISIS-K in Afghanistan post US withdrawal, shedding light on the complex dynamics of terrorism and extremism in the region.

Introduction

ISIS or Daesh is a Salafi jihadi gathering and it works in South Asia in two subjects one is Khorasan and the other is Gazwa tul Hind by utilizing both philosophical names the group seeks to make a caliphate here and to execute this they are running different wilayat's or as such governate so it has 3 proper establishments or wilayat's and one is wilayat Khorasan which is in Afghanistan Pakistan and Hindustan. Casually a design is available in Bangladesh as well. as jihadist radicals they need to bring down the current structure which is democratic and in Afghanistan the so-called Islamic government of Taliban and to make their own Sunni caliphate in these areas.

He further stressed on al-Qaeda's commitment to the Jihadist cause in Bangladesh against the government, Rohingya Muslims in Burma and Muslim minorities in India alongside freedom of Kashmir. This was plainly an endeavor to tell ISIS that South Asia is their battleground and they wouldn't permit any outcasts. After nine months, on July 2015 it was declared that Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, had died in 2013 and the news was kept mystery around then. AQIS has attempted to launch prominent, yet fruitless assaults in Pakistan including the endeavored seizing of Pakistan Naval force Vessel. This shows that the goal is clear; AQIS needs a productive assault to lay out its credentials and shrink the space for ISIS. Zawahiri made Asim Umar, a veteran of Pakistani origin the Emir of AQ's new Sub-continent province, who

frequently releases a sound message on issues connected with South Asian Jihadi scene. "Why is it that the Muslims of India are totally absent from the fields of jihad - Rise? Awaken! Participate in this global jihad to give a final push to the collapsing edifice of America." He likewise went on with his exercises as a whole and gave an assertion on the new uprising in Kashmir after the killing of Hizbul-Mujahideen commandant Burhan Wani. (Sheikh, 2017)

Methodology

The paper is built upon descriptive, investigative and qualitative research method. Qualitative research is basically the exploratory research. It helps to gain an understanding of fundamental reasons, views and inspirations and delivers visions into the issue to develop concepts. The paper has used resources such as articles by various organizations, books and news reports, additional useful records will be referenced about incidents with the presence of ISK in Afghanistan. The study does not use the sampling methods and will depend on secondary data mostly. While primary data will be compiled with the help of interviews which will be conducted with carefully structured interviews.

Ideology of IS-K

A detailed interview was conducted for this study with The Khorasan Diary. According to The Khorasan Diary ISK is a transnational organization with at its core an ideology that does not recognize international borders, hence its areas of operation and aspirations cover multiple regional countries as they see them interconnected in the medieval province of Khorasan. As a consequence, ISK propaganda tries to connect all regional developments – political, religious, and social – to one single denominator, which is the un-

Islamic character of the current status quo in the region. Indeed, ISK interprets all "deviant sects" of Islam in South Asia (that are all those sects whose interpretation of Islam is not in line with ISK ideology) as a product of the corruption of moral and religious values by the West and their "puppet regimes" in the region. This corruption brought, according to the core of their ideology, a deterioration of the social fabric that they interpret as the traditional, golden age of Muslim societies. The organization maintains that this corruption allowed other non-Muslim social and religious groups to "submit" Muslims in the region. On the other hand, ISK claims the group offers a return to "pure Islamic origins", which consists in eradicating any trace of local uniqueness of the societies in South Asia and replacing it with a utopian global caliphate.

The key elements of ISIS-K's ideology include:

1. Caliphate: Like its parent organization, ISIS-K aspires to establish a caliphate, a transnational Islamic state governed by strict and puritanical interpretations of Sharia law. The group sees itself as the sole legitimate authority to lead the Muslim community, and it seeks to expand its territorial control to achieve this goal.

2. Takfirism: ISIS-K adheres to the doctrine of takfirism, which allows them to label other Muslims, even those who do not share their extremist views, as apostates deserving of punishment. This justifies their violent actions against not only non-Muslims but also Muslims whom they consider to be "impure" or not adhering to their strict interpretation of Islam.

3. Jihad: ISIS-K considers armed jihad as a central tenet of its ideology. The group justifies violence and terrorism as a means to defend and

expand its territorial ambitions, eliminate perceived enemies, and purify the Islamic community.

4. Sectarianism: ISIS-K has targeted not only non-Muslims but also different Muslim sects, including Shia Muslims, whom they view as heretics. The group has been involved in deadly attacks against Shia communities in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

5. Apocalyptic Beliefs: The group subscribes to apocalyptic beliefs, where they envision a final battle (Armageddon) between the forces of Islam and their enemies, which they believe will lead to the establishment of their caliphate.

6. Global Jihad: While ISIS-K initially focused on regional goals in Afghanistan and Pakistan, it has also expressed aspirations for global expansion and has attempted to attract sympathizers and foreign fighters from different parts of the world (Benmelech & Klor, 2020).

It is important to note that ISIS-K's ideology represents an extreme and violent interpretation of Islam, and the vast majority of Muslims reject their beliefs and actions. The group's actions have been widely condemned by religious leaders and governments worldwide, who view them as a dangerous terrorist organization that threatens peace and stability. (Glaser, 2017)

Group Structure

IS-K keeps a classified structure of leadership, governed by a chief named as emir presently the emir is Shahab al-Muhajir. IS-K top authority comprises of an Advisory Board called Shura, with commandants at the local level and leaders liable for different practical components of IS-K organization, like strategies and intelligence. While early heads of IS-K to a great extent came from the local faction of TTP leaders who established the IS-K, this has broadened, and al-Muhajir is accepted to be of Middle Easterner

origin IS-K at first has been driven by a commandant from external district. One of the examination of 2016 about the group observed that a larger part of mid-level IS-K leaders were previous Taliban warriors. Later assessments of the group's authority have tracked down a significantly more extensive scope of earlier group affiliations, remembering previous al Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Taiba for the Indian region fighters. These warriors frequently have critical regional information and mastery in extremist fighting, raising their strategic viability. (Chassman, 2016)

ISKP has made recruitment progress through exploitation of dissections among present jihadist networks, proposing monitory benefits, and advancing battleground advantages by the ISIS's central group in Syria and Iraq. While there are a few distant warriors in IS-K positions, this enrollment has been related to a "trickle" instead of windfall, and the obliteration of the Islamic State regional caliphate in Iraq and Syria didn't prod an enormous arrival of Islamic State warriors to Afghanistan. As a governate of the Islamic State, IS-K keeps in touch with Islamic State authority in Iraq and Syria yet additionally holds a level of sovereignty in the ways of its activities. For instance, not like other Islamic State members in Asia, IS-K has seldom used ladies warriors in battle (Hasan, 2016).

ISKP depends on numerous income streams to fund its tasks. The U.S. Department of the Treasury surveys that IS-K nurtures its funds through a mixture of financial support, donations, and exaction from central Islamic State authority. Moreover, the Treasury presumes that ISKP held modest monetary reserves as of 2020 while additionally depending on a huge organization of hawalas informal money brokers in urban communities like Kabul and Jalalabad to transfer money. (Garret, 2016).

Prospects of ISIS in South Asia

ISIS has broken with al Qaeda and is now consider as an opponent, it sticks wildly to Salafism, and it dismisses the authenticity of different factions of Sunni Islam — including Deobandism. Conversely, most South Asian extremist groups are Deobandi and firmly aligned with al Qaeda. Therefore, South Asian military groups won't precisely greet ISIS to their local wholeheartedly. All things considered, we should not get complacent. There are three unmistakable situations under which ISIS could situate itself to turn into a powerful force in South Asia (Sheikh, 2017).

ISIS: local alliances

Jihadist outfits in South Asia, and especially the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban, are famously broken. A few rebel groups, at this point not fastened to al Qaeda, have declared their devotion to ISIS. That is nothing unexpected. As I have mentioned already, Taliban splinter groups are strikingly similar to ISIS in their specific acts of barbarism and the technological savvy with which they advertise them via online platforms. (Rana, 2015)

As investigator Arif Rafiq has highlighted, different rebelled jihadists might possibly enter the ISIS network. These incorporate "disappointed commandants" of the Haqqani organization and individuals from Lashkar-e-Taiba (a Salafist association with connections to Pakistani intelligence) dissatisfied that the group isn't doing attacks in India. One more possible group of recruits are Afghan Taliban hardliners that could forsake their association who are willing to develop good ties with the Afghan government.

As a matter of fact, numerous South Asian extremists' either pledgees' allegiance to or declared tactical support for ISIS are only explanatory and have been confused with formal expressions of loyalty. There is little motivation to accept anything will happen to them. In any case, ISIS has officially

coordinated maverick South Asian extremists leaders into its positions (Khattak & Amin, 2015). They incorporated Hafiz Saeed Khan and Abdul Rauf Khadim, designated by ISIS as the top heads of the Khorasan group. Khan is a previous Pakistani Taliban officer, while Khadim — who was killed in an air strike in Afghanistan recently — is a previous Afghan Taliban pioneer and Guantánamo prisoner. Moreover, Mufti Hassan Swati, a Peshawar-based head of the Khorasan group, has been partnered with Ahrar-ul-Hind — a Pakistani Taliban splinter group laid out a year ago (Rana, 2015).

Partnerships with ISIS

Despite their extreme differences with the group, South Asia's significant extremist associations can manufacture relationships of convenience with ISIS. Inside South Asia's cloudy extremist milieu, rivalries and alliances are everything but durable. The Afghan and Pakistani Taliban are operational partners and ideological allies, yet they frequently contradict each other's strategies (the previous has blamed the latter for being excessively brutal) and have even battled against one another. The Haqqani network has connections to Pakistani intelligence, however a few years back, the group, then, headed by a young commandant named Baitullah Mehsud — later the counter state Pakistani Taliban's first preeminent head— waged war against the Pakistani military. Moreover, rival groups of the Pakistani Taliban have battled one another, just to later look for reconciliation (Lushenko & Stebbins, 2019).

South Asian extremists have an extended history of changing allegiances. Lately, Ilyas Kashmiri, Asmatullah Muawiya, and Pole Gul — each of the one-time essential resources of the Pakistani state — have repudiated their connections to their patrons, and moved their help to the counter state al Qaeda and Pakistani Taliban. (Fayyaz, 2020)

Stripped down to essential ideologies and strategies, there is minimal that separates South Asian extremists groups from ISIS. There are now signs that Pakistani jihadist groups have been integrated into ISIS's strategic and optional plans. Security examiners contends that Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, seemingly Pakistan's most powerful radical group, is battling for ISIS in Iraq. Review too that ISIS has conjured the name of Aafia Siddiqui in its proposed detainee exchanges. Siddiqui, a Pakistani ladies detained in Texas on terrorisms charges, is a cause célèbre in Pakistan — yet beyond that country somewhat couple of individuals, including extremists, express a lot about her. This recommends the presence of Pakistanis inside ISIS's positions, or possibly a work to recruit them (Johnson, 2016).

Indeed, even the main obstruction to cooperation between South Asian extremists and ISIS the previous' close connections to al Qaeda and the latter alienation from it might be conquerable. Review the extremists who threatened Paris last month. While the two men that went after the Charlie Hebdo office asserted loyalty to al Qaeda's Yemen associate, the one who attacked the legitimate supermarket and who seems to have composed his activities with the Charlie Hebdo attackers was connected to ISIS. Obviously, ISIS's parted from al Qaeda doesn't block cooperation. (Fayyaz, 2020)

IS-K and Taliban

IS-K in Afghanistan is more like an alien, with its provincial objectives separating it from different non state actors working in Afghanistan, specifically the Afghan Taliban. While the Taliban principally looks for the removal of external powers from Afghanistan, IS-K objectives go outside the region, similar as its parental association ISIS. At the point when the IS formally declared its venture into the region khorasan, with Hafiz Saeed as their emir, the Afghan Taliban without wasting any time showed their

resistance to the organisation, dismissing its chief Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. Previous Taliban head, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, supposedly kept in touch with Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, cautioning " that there is space for just a single banner and initiative" in Afghanistan - an obvious sign that there was just a single State in Afghanistan, led by Mullah Omar. The Afghan Taliban have a background of establishing both long and short period coalitions with local radical organisations, in particular al-Qaeda (Osama,2016). Pressures between IS-K and Afghan Taliban were obviously started from the commencement of the latter, and have unavoidably lead to fierce conflicts between the two opponents. Possibilities of combination between the Afghan Taliban and IS-K in this manner, don't appear to be possible dissimilarities in their political objectives. (Glaser, 2017)

The Deobandi School of Thought is followed by the Afghan Taliban, under the authority of late Mullah Muhammad Omar Akhund, while Salafi Takfirism is followed ny IS-K, under its philosophical chief Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. Aside from the difference of ideology, purposeful geographical limits and ethnic composition are two extra aspects that separate the organisations from one another. For one's purposes, the Taliban are a native group, involving Afghans who are principally ethnic Pashtuns. IS-K interestingly, involves a few ethnicities, including Afghans Pakistanis, Asians and Uzbeks. Besides, while the Taliban limit to a regional agenda, inside the territories of Afghanistan, IS-K on the other hand, has a international plan, and is a part for the more extensive global caliphate of the IS. (Glaser, 2017)

Differences between the ISKP and Afghan Taliban

	Taliban	Islamic State
Leader	Mullah Muhammad Omar Akhund	Abu Bakr al Baghdadi
Ideology	Deobandi school	Salafi Tukfirism
Agenda	Local agenda limited to Afghanistan	Global agenda establish Islamic Caliphate
Make up	Indigenous Afghans - ethnic Pashtuns	Different nationalities: Pakistanis, Afghans, Uzbeks and Central Asians

Table 1 Difference between ISKP and Afghan Taliban (2017)

The previously cited dissimilarities have showed themselves into a deadly war between the two opponents. IS-K without wasting any time has attacked the Taliban and started captivating their region. The power with which the organization has showed its hostile mission on territory of Afghanistan was not normal and hasn't seen previously, unapologetically questioning the supremacy of the Taliban on the soil of Afghanistan. Dispute inside the Afghan Taliban on authority, especially in 2015 subsequently the demise of Mullah Omer and resulting nomination of the late head of Taliban Mullah Mansoor, nevertheless conflicts in regards to reconciliation dialogs with Kabul, additionally isolated the group. Numerous members of Taliban who went against dialogs were more inclined towards to alliance with IS-K. Accordingly, the IS-K benefited from these distinctions, and subsequently, numerous Afghan Taliban warriors and officers absconded and merged with IS-K. Among the noticeable individuals incorporate, Rauf Khadim, Mullah Najib Mullah Abdul, Syed Emarati and Mullah Qahar. Aside from political distinction with the Taliban, one more central point which became the reason

of conflict was between the Taliban and the ISKP is capture the resources of Afghanistan (Noor, 2021). Only In 2017, a huge number of individuals were exiled by brutal fights among IS-K and Taliban groups in Nangarhar, connected to the control of lapis lazuli, powder, marble, resources creating critical income for the group Control of these stores has been essential to the development of IS-K. (Safizadeh, 2019)

 War over Influence, Territory and Resources

The existence of the IS-K in Farah, Jowzjan, Kunar, Ghazni, Faryab, naranghar, Sar-e Pul, Ghor, and Kunduz, prompted a brutal contest over area and assets with the Taliban. These conflicts started in late 2014 and endured concluded in 2015 prompting huge damage on the two sides. Perceiving that IS-K represents a serious danger to the Taliban, in 2015 the second started an enrollment contract to regain miscreants, and appointed "special warriors" to face IS-K warriors. The killing of Taliban leaders by IS-K in the same year set the Taliban in a place where they had to extract from a few vital regions. By 2015 in Nangarhar, IS-K had figured out how to combine itself in 8 areas. Notwithstanding, regardless of these increases, ISKP neglected to accomplish such a situation in Farah and Helmand. The Afghan Taliban had the option to get Farah free from IS-K powers, prompting the migration of Abdul Razeq, the IS-K leader of that area, to Nangarhar. An unexpected disaster for the group was the passing of Abdul Rauf Khadem, Khorasan leader, killed by US backed coalition in February 2015 - subsequently, his superiority in Helmand was ended (Bobokuloy, 2016).

The ISKP at first attempted to grow its impact; nonetheless, in 2015 and 2016, the group had the option to re-form in Nangarhar which saw serious conflict among them. The contention between the IS-K and Afghan Taliban tested the Taliban on a few frontages in which a large number of the Taliban's

strong areas became a threat from ISKP. As a matter of fact, in June 2017, the ISKP verged on seizing the area of Tora Bora from their opponent. Albeit this improvement was a significant reason for alarm for the Taliban, the assassination of a portion of the IS-K' seniors leaders by coalition powers, with the killing of Hafiz Sayed Khan in July 2016, Abdul Hasib in, and Abu Sayed, in 2017, gave the Taliban much required time to additional encounter them. Qari Hekmat, a significant leader Afghan Taliban (Basit, 2017). In 2017, deserted from the group and launched another position in the Jowzjan territory - this led to the extension of the group, prompting huge conflicts among Afghan Taliban and IS-K (Taneia, 2019).

Albeit the Taliban comprised a panel to review ex Taliban individuals, especially they neglected to do as such. Essentially, in early 2018, the Taliban executed an endeavor to recover areas in the Jowzjan district namely Darzab and Qushtepa, yet were failed in acheiving as such. In the same year, Afghan powers killed hekmat and was succeeded by Mawlavi Habib Ur Rahman as his replacement. In the following year, the downfall of ISIS's caliphate in Syria and Iraq was declared, giving a potential sign of its prospect in Afghanistan. In spite of the event was viewed as a significant setback for IS-K, the group keeps on capturing different areas in Afghanistan, featuring its free capacity of survival minus the help from its parental association. Subsequently, the IS-K keeps on representing a grave danger to the eventual fate of Afghanistan. IS-K has been able to endure its existence and exercises over consistent financing results in " popular help prompting more financing and calculated help " This financing originates from different sources, going from unlawful tax collection, extraction and unlawful mining of minerals and gemstones (Ibrahim & Akbarzadeh, 2020). Specifically, lapis lazuli is an extensive type of revenue for the IS-K who has been battling with the Taliban over its excavating control

in Nangarhar. IS-K is accepted to create critical incomes from these exercises, with the unlawful mining of powder alone contributing a huge number of dollars. (Taneia, 2019)

Acknowledgment of the group's rising impact and authority has prompted activity by coalition powers, as well as the Taliban, with every one of the three focusing on the ISKP in order to stop the group's exercises to recover an occupied territories or group's further progress. Albeit the group has experienced huge damage for its administration, as well as fighters, including the causalities of more than 1600 commanders, and 20 of its chiefs, the ISKP has still figured out how to stay active and relevant (Basit, 2017).

Regional Considerations and Narratives

Afghanistan's neighbors, Russia, Iran Pakistan, China, and the Central Asian countries all has experienced the ill effects of the developing threat of ISKP, and subsequently, faced challenges of insecurity and terrorism. Albeit these nations have had dynamic interests in Afghanistan previously, at present it appears to be that they seem to share a typical vision for Afghanistan. This conceives a conspicuous regional job, acknowledgment of the Afghan Taliban as a real political authority and fundamental component of the peace talk, and eliminating and defeating IS-K to accomplish stability and peace. In such manner, concerns about IS-K's growing impact and power were discussed in a tri-lateral meeting in 2016, Moscow, where Pakistan, China and Russia communicated their concerns about the developing capacities of IS-K. There is equal consensus among Afghanistan's neighbors on the danger the IS-K postures to stability in Afghanistan and likewise, the region. The group's presence is a significant issue for Iran who, similar to Pakistan, has confronted repercussions from terrorism in Afghanistan and furthermore fears the danger of the IS-K. Iranian authorities have communicated that it is fundamental for

the Afghan government to unite and maintain peace with the Taliban, as the Taliban is the group that can eliminate IS-K (Basit, 2018). The persistent danger presented by IS-K, the Taliban also have perceived that rising divisions and rebellions inside the group will eventually debilitate their presence and impact. Besides, it could likewise make a vacuum for the IS-K to fill. (Noor, 2021)

Predicting the grave danger presented by the IS-K, there has been an acknowledgment inside the Taliban that they can never again work in detachment and counter the IS-K alone. Subsequently, they have contacted local countries which are against the IS-K. One such suggestion occurred in May 2015, when the Taliban, headed by Mohammad Tayyab Agha made a trip to Iran trying to shape a coalition with Iran, against the IS. Likewise, the danger of IS-K to Russia has prompted a change in its international strategy. Russia has expanded its commitment with local nations, extending military ties with Pakistan by setting up an anti-terror cooperative military commission, explicitly to counter IS-K's impact in Afghanistan. Lately, such a tactical drive has never been shaped to address conceivable danger of the Afghan Taliban, regardless of the fact that the group has more area, more noteworthy strength in numbers, and undeniably more impact contrasted with ISIK. This gives a sign of Russia's view of the Afghan Taliban as a genuine political authority that is of a least harmful option than the IS. As a matter of fact, reports of meetings among Russian and Taliban authorities show expanding collaboration between the two, to the degree of Russia giving intelligence to Afghan Taliban to counter IS-K. (Noor, 2021).

The Russian Foreign Ministry declared freely in 2017 that Russia is sharing intelligence based knowledge to the Afghan Taliban to counter IS-K' impact in the area. Besides, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan's (IMU)

loyalty with IS, reported in 2015 was a stressing incident for Uzbek authorities, given the previous' endeavors to remove President Islam Karimov's administration back in 2001. The loyalty implies that Uzbekistan can't permit IS-K to prosper in Afghanistan, as the prospects of collaboration with the IMU against the Uzbek state is currently almost certain. The Central Asian state wants to see a quiet and stable Afghanistan, and in this way, has really made efforts to deny IS-K' space to extend and fortify, subsequently debilitating the IMU (Muzharay, 2022). This means Uzbekistan has taken certain measures to fortify the Afghan government by extending ties, signing agreements in different fields including health, farming, advanced education, and starting development projects as railways and power transmission. (Taneja, 2020)

Also, instability in the Xinjiang area and Beijing's economic objectives in Afghanistan illuminate China's reservations regarding IS-K presence. The independent district of Xinjiang, possessed by Uighur Muslims, has been a cause of problem for the Chinese for a long while - the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) has been prompting violence and nurturing hostile feelings against the Chinese state, bringing about widespread discontentment and low-level brutality. The Chinese has the fear that the ETIM might track down safe-haven in Afghanistan, permitting them to execute cross-border attacks against China with terrorist groups like IS-K. Moreover, economic interests as telecom, copper mining and oil extraction in Afghanistan, and an interest to safeguard them, made China to work with neighbors to counter IS-K. China has likewise proclaimed its full help for the Afghan peace talks, featuring the significance of negotiation and dialogue, and acknowledging President Ghani's endeavors. An Afghan led process demonstrates that Kabul can expect support from China in its desire to look for a peaceful political environment, with none of its proposition going against Chinese goals so far. (Taneja, 2020)

Acknowledgment of the Afghan Taliban as a political entity through the Afghan peace process will likewise deny IS-K space to thrive and proceed with its exercises, as Afghan security powers has focused more on disposing the group. Local concerns with respect to the rise of the IS-K stay unaltered. In July 2018, Pakistan facilitated the intelligence heads from Russia, China and iran to examine counter terrorism approaches, focusing specifically on the rising threat of the IS-K in Afghanistan. Chiefs from the four states agreed over collective measures for eliminating the IS-K from Afghanistan. It has been accepted that Pakistan, Iran, China, Russia and the Central Asian States have a comparative perspective on the IS-K and the danger the group presents. However, differences, exist among US and Russia, explicitly in their evaluation of the danger and limit of IS-K as far as the quantity of warriors the group has (Fayyaz, 2020). The evaluation of "1000 to 3000 ISIL warriors" by Broad John F. Campbell, US leader of NATO-led powers in Afghanistan from August 2014-Walk 2016, remains as a stark contrast to the figure of "10,000 fighters" cited in Walk 2016 by Zamir Kabulov, Russia's special presidential envoy for Afghanistan. This contending story on the strength of IS-K in Afghanistan, mirrors the veering objectives of the two partners, featuring the competition between the two superpowers with the two sides blaming each other for controlling the figures to support their advantages. Russia blames US for supporting IS, or not doing what's necessary to counter its aggressive statement. The US, then again, blames Russia for misrepresenting the figures of ISKP warriors to legitimize the activities of the Taliban and legitimize them, and support them (Abroad, 2019).

Tactics and Targets of ISK

Despite of the fact that its capacity has weakened since its peak in 2018, IS-K proceeds to plot and lead assaults in Afghanistan. IS-K warriors continues

to execute suicide bomb and remote explosive against citizen's targets and militant and security forces. For instance, ISKP took responsibility regarding a May 14, 2021, blast during Eid al-Fitr at a mosque in Kabul that killed 12 people and injured more than 20. Different attacks on citizens have involved the use of guns, executions, and brutal kidnappings. On June 8, 2021, for instance, ISKP militants started shooting at Hazara deminers in Baghlan Territory, killing 10 and left 16 injured. ISKP additionally takes part in armed conflicts with security powers, the Taliban, and other terrorist groups, however these turned out to be less continuous following ISKP's losses and loss of region in 2018.

From January 2020 to July 2021, ISKP led 83 assaults, causing 309 deaths. As displayed in Figure these assaults have targeted citizens (35 attacks) and security powers (28 attacks), including NATO troops and Afghan military, policing, other security powers. Thirteen of the episodes since January 2020 were either suicide assaults or violent conflicts against Taliban (CSIS, 2021).
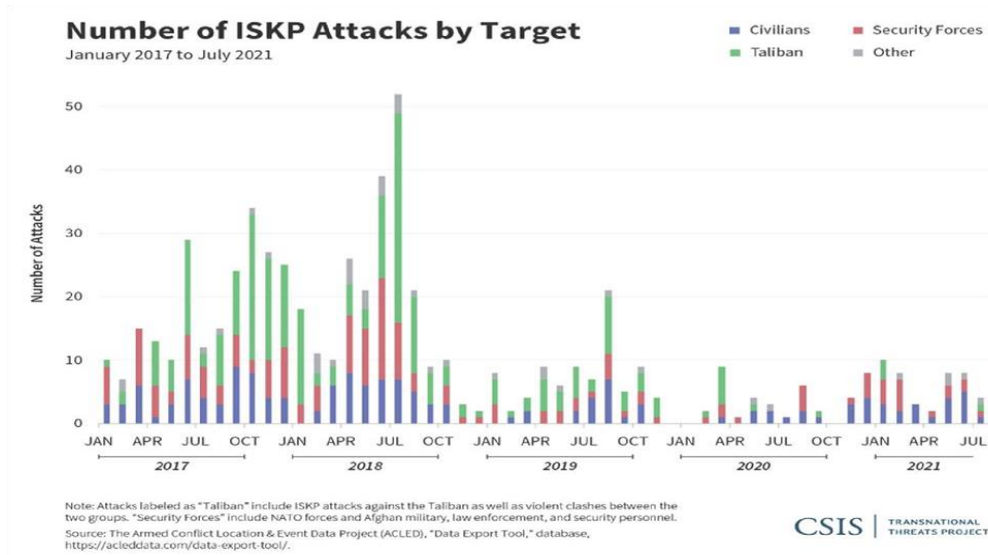

Figure 2 Number of ISKP Attacks (CSIS, 2021)

. The above presented data doesn't include the barbaric suicide attack at the Hamid Karzai International Airport on August 26 which killed at least 183 individuals including children and women. This attack is considered as the most deadly suicide attack of IS-K after the reformation of group in 2019.

ISIS post US-withdrawal

In August 2021, the U.S. military withdrew last remaining soldiers from Afghanistan, which prompted the Taliban's fast takeover and the bringing down of the U.S. - supported government in Kabul. Somewhat more than a year after the fact, the Taliban are still in charge, and concerns continue in the West over their binds with al-Qaeda and reports of human rights violations. Simultaneously, ISIS-K, a part of the Islamic State in Afghanistan that is known for its vicious agenda and objective of militarily crushing the Taliban because of partisan contrasts, has proceeded with its mission of sectarian differences all through the country (Beradze, 2022).

Over the past year, ISIS-K has kept a constant flow of attacks against different easy objectives in the country, specifically minorities. It also has attacked the Russian consulate in Kabul, killing two Russians and four Afghan citizens in a remote control attack. This is reported first time that any Russian nationals were killed in Kabul since the withdrawal of Soviet fighters from Afghanistan in 1989. As per an UN report, a sum of 700 regular citizens have been killed and 1,406 injured since the Taliban's takeover — and quite a bit of this violence has been executed by ISIS-K. A few American commanders have even communicated concerns that the group is "solidifying its foothold" in Afghanistan (Mumtaz, 2016).

The brutalities and violence of ISIS-K against Afghan people is extremely concerning and shows how the group is still a source of instability for the country. In any case, cautiously analyzing the group's exercises

uncovers that ISIS-K has neglected to connect with the Taliban in significant, one to one conflicts even in regions that were already ISIS-K's strong hubs. ISIS-K has sometimes trapped ambushed isolated spots of the Taliban, yet, overall, the group has stayed away from active clashed with the Taliban that would permit it to assert regional control. (Fruchtman, 2023)

ISIS-K's current strategies proposes that it remains hierarchically frail. The gathering doesn't appear to have the ability to conduct major composed attacks that would overpower Taliban government. It likewise appears to lack confidence to work in ways that could cause any threat to the existence of Taliban' government.

During an interview with The Khorasan Diary, their representative added, "ISK is the most serious threat to Afghanistan's civilian population right now. In its long war against the Taliban, ISK is trying to destabilize Afghanistan as much as possible to create rifts into the social fabrics of Afghan society in order to exploit weaknesses and gain new support. We saw how in 2014- 2015 ISK was able to conquer swathes of territory in Achin and Nazyan districts of Nangarhar because the local tribal society was weak. ISK has developed a long-term strategy for Afghanistan which sees the Taliban as the main enemy, and in order to topple the current government – which remains a utopian goal for ISK – the group will try to stop the Taliban from transitioning from an insurgency group to a proper government".

ISIS and Hazara attacks post US Withdrawal

According to Human Rights watch, IS-K' members in Afghanistan, has attacked the minorities especially the hazara community repeatedly at their offices, mosques, and even schools. The leaders of Taliban have prepared practically nothing to guard the minorities from unlawful attacks or brutal

attacks or to give important medical and financial assistance to help affected people and their families.

After the US withdrawal in 2021, as Taliban gained control of Afghanistan, the IS has accepted the charge regarding 13 assaults against the people of Hazara and has been responsible for around 300 deaths and with like 700 injured individuals. The Taliban's continuous restriction on the media, led towards many attacks have never been reported. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) announced that new attacks by the group on the people of hazara in Kabul injured and killed more than 120 individuals.

According to Fereshta Abbasi, Afghanistan researcher at human rights Watch "Since the Taliban has taken control of Afghanistan, ISIS-associated warriors have committed various merciless assaults against individuals from the Hazara group as they go to class, to work, or to pray, without a serious reaction from the Taliban leaders". "The Taliban have a commitment to safeguard in danger networks and help the survivors of assaults and their families."

The Hazara are a dominant Muslim sect linked to Shia' that have met abuse and discrimination by different Afghan Authorities for more than 100 years during the 1990s, Taliban made the Shia Muslims their target for genocide and other violent acts. Now the Taliban' are again returned to government, the community have been progressively worried for their wellbeing and either the new government will protect them or not. "They never like us" according to one of the community member in Bamyan region. "Previously when they were in power, they opened fire and executed suicide attacks against us." (Zahid, 2021).

The Taliban representative In October 2021, Saeed Khosty, assumed that they will make sure the security of factions: "As a capable government, we are liable for safeguarding all residents of Afghanistan, particularly the country's community groups " In any case, since January 2022, they don't seem to have given addional security in Kunduz, Mazar-e Sharif, and Kabul territories, where assaults have killed many citizens.

Human Rights Watch distantly consulted 21 victims of assaults, and relatives of them, in Kabul and Mazar territories among April and July, utilizing protected communications. The IS-K accepted the responsibility of the April 19 suicide attack at Abdul Rahim Shahid Secondary School in the west Kabul adjacent to Dasht-e Barchi - a dominatingly Hazara and Shia region - that killed and harmed 20 children, staff, and teachers. "There were dead bodies everywhere," said a survivor. "Bodies were separated into pieces, and you could see blood everywhere." (Fruchtman, 2023)

IS-K additionally accepted the charge regarding the April suicde attack on one of Afghanistan's biggest mosque of shia', Seh Dokan Mosque located in Mazar-e Sharif, killing atleast 31 individuals and injured 87 others. On April 27, unknown men killed 5 Hazara men enroute to the dae-e- Suf coal mine in Samangan territory. The following day, an explosive blast killed 9 individuals and injured 13 others Hazara travelers in Mazar-e Sharif. A Hazara citizen of Kabul who had seen numerous past attacks said: "Our kids need to go to class, our ladies need to visit clinics, and we need to go to mosques. For this multitude of we want to have a real sense of reassurance. For the sake of God, these spots can't be targets - quit killing us all over the place."

The United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan Richard Bennett concerning the attacks on Shia, and Hazara minorities. According to Him, "turning out to be progressively precise in nature and reflect

components of an organizational approach, along these lines bearing signs of crimes against humans"

The assaults, beside their destruction, leaves a survivors and families of victims in terrible trauma, restricting their income, imposing burden by depriving them of their bread earners. "We don't send our kids to school any longer, and we close our workplaces as early as possible," said a man who lost his 45-year-old kin in the Seh Dokan Mosque assault. "The mosque has additionally been shut since the assault."

For females, losing a male relative has especially collective and financial costs, particularly for young ladies who are now widowed. Limitations of Taliban on females' right to move freely and to work have made it difficult for certain women to make money and become liberated.

Assaults on Hazara' by the IS-K disregard is against the International laws, which stays applicable in Afghanistan. The Taliban's inability to give security to the minorities as well as economic and medical help to survivors and their victims' families, moreover Taliban approaches that disregard human rights, especially those on young girls, worsens the damage these attacks cause. "Leaders of armed groups may one day face consequences for their barbarities against Hazaras and different networks," Abbasi said. "Taliban authorities who are unable to make a move to safeguard hazara and other communities from assault might be complicit in these serious crimes." (BBC, 2023)

Conclusion

The research paper delved into the complex and multifaceted phenomenon of ISIS-K in Afghanistan, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of its origins, activities, and regional implications. The findings of this study underscore the urgent need for sustained international attention and cooperation to counter the threat posed by this terrorist organization. The

conclusion highlights the key takeaways from the research and emphasizes the significance of adopting a multifaceted approach in dealing with ISIS-K.

1. Emergence and Evolution of ISIS-K: The paper illuminated the emergence of ISIS-K as a splinter group of the Islamic State (IS) and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Over time, it has evolved to assert its presence through brutal acts of violence, targeting civilians and security forces alike. The study revealed that ISIS-K has exploited the existing fault lines in the Afghan society and exploited vulnerable populations to further its agenda.

2. Regional Implications: The research explored the regional implications of ISIS-K's presence in Afghanistan. The group's ability to recruit fighters from neighboring countries and collaborate with other terrorist organizations has exacerbated security challenges in the broader South Asian region. The risk of cross-border terrorism and the potential for ISIS-K to become a destabilizing force loom large, necessitating a coordinated regional response.

3. Ideological and Sociopolitical Factors: The paper highlighted the importance of addressing the ideological appeal of ISIS-K and understanding the sociopolitical factors that contribute to its growth. Radicalization efforts, economic disparities, and governance issues play a pivotal role in attracting new recruits and garnering support from disenfranchised communities. Consequently, countering ISIS-K requires not only military measures but also socio-economic and political reforms.

4. Counterterrorism Strategies: This research identified the need for comprehensive counterterrorism strategies that encompass a combination of military, intelligence, and law enforcement measures.

To effectively combat ISIS-K, it is essential to disrupt its financial networks, curb its recruitment efforts, and dismantle its operational infrastructure. Moreover, regional collaboration among countries facing similar threats is crucial to share intelligence and coordinate efforts.

5. Humanitarian Concerns: The paper highlighted the devastating impact of ISIS-K's attacks on civilians, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing humanitarian responses. Providing aid and support to victims and displaced populations is not only an ethical obligation but also helps in countering the narrative of terrorist groups like ISIS-K.

6. Post-Withdrawal Scenario: The research examined the implications of the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan on ISIS-K's activities. While the withdrawal brought an end to the US-led military presence, the paper argued that continued engagement through diplomatic and development initiatives is essential for stabilizing the region and preventing further growth of extremist elements.

In conclusion, the presence of ISIS-K in Afghanistan remains a significant security challenge with far-reaching consequences for the region and beyond. Addressing the issue requires a holistic approach that combines military, political, and humanitarian efforts. International cooperation and regional coordination are paramount in countering the menace of ISIS-K and ensuring the long-term stability of Afghanistan and its neighboring countries. As the situation continues to evolve, policymakers must remain vigilant and adaptable in their response to this evolving threat. Only through collective action and sustained commitment can we hope to mitigate the impact of ISIS-K and work towards a more secure and peaceful future for Afghanistan and the wider region.

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