

IS ISIS A THREAT TO INDIA? AN ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW

Dr. Shailendra Deolankar

Associate Professor in Political Science and Joint Director of Higher Education
Mumbai Region, Maharashtra, India

ABSTRACT

The rise of the terrorist organization, ISIS which has an ultimate objective of restoring the caliphate (Islamic world) is considered as the most significant development in international jihadism since 9/11. ISIS is no more a concern confined only to Iraq and Syria but has also raised genuine concerns in the Indian security establishment about the radicalization of Indian Muslim youth. ISIS certainly has the potential to destabilize the social fabric and rule of law in India, if timely steps are not taken. The present paper reviews the possible threat of ISIS to India and discusses various facets associated with identifying and combating this global challenge to humanity. It is proposed that this issue should be viewed as a national crisis and handled at the central level with efficient use of modern technology. Creating a sense of collective responsibility and public awareness are also of utmost importance.

Keywords: - Islamic state, Terrorism, Indian security, ISIS

CONCEPTUALIZING THE THREAT FROM ISIS

On the eve of Republic Day in India, The Indian National Investigative Agencies had arrested suspects who were thought to have associated with the international terrorist organization named ISIS. This incident along with the previous arrests of suspects allegedly associated with the ISIS has raised serious questions. Is the social environment in India growing bothersome due to this event, why is the attraction towards ISIS growing especially among the Muslim youths? Why has the ISIS turned its attention towards South Asia? How far is India under the threat from this international organization? To what extent is Pakistan involved in this? Is the internal security scenario in India efficient to deal with the terrorist attacks from an international terrorist organization? What should we do while facing the threat of ISIS? This research article goes into the details of these questions and tries to analyze growing influence of ISIS in India and its implication for the Indian social fabric.

For the last couple of years, the organization named 'Islamic State' is making attempts to flame up the thoughts of the Muslim students in India, especially through the social media (Chadha, 2015). Also, many incidents are discovered wherein, some students from India are trying to check the websites and material regarding this organization and seek acquaintances in relation to the organization. Also, the attempts of some students to join the organization are exposed. Similar to the attack that took place in France recently, an attack was planned on the occasion of the Republic day through the ISIS affiliated Indian organizations like SIMI and Indian Mujahidin on the order from ISIS. This plan could not be executed as the investigative agencies of India detected it well in advance.

Almost all the terrorist attacks which took place in India for last one decade- especially since 2008, were mostly done by SIMI and Indian Mujahidin. Out of these organizations, the Indian Mujahidin has already explicitly declared its linkages with the Islamic state. Also along with that, they have reportedly established a branch of ISIS in India. It is known that 25-30 officials from this organization, have gone and aligned with the ISIS in Iraq and Syria (Ningthoujam, 2014). Initially, the number of people inclined to join ISIS was negligible, however; with time this number is escalating which in turn gives rise to an anxious atmosphere. In the backdrop of these developments, the question arises that has the ISIS now turned its attention towards India? Thus, it has now become necessary to think upon what arrangements should be made from our side to control the propagation and dissuade Muslim youth from getting into this hazard.

CHANGING DIMENSIONS OF INTERNAL SECURITY IN INDIA

If the ISIS has turned its attention towards India, then in that case the issue of India's internal security will grow more complicated. Because, prior to this for decades India was fighting against cross border terrorism which was nothing but Regional Terrorism. The terrorists trained at the camps in Pak-occupied Kashmir were involved in the attacks in India. The militants from the Organizations like Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Taiba were trying to intrude in India through the borders of Kashmir and Punjab. These organizations which the Indian system had to fight were influential merely in the South Asian region. This means that India has not dealt with International Terrorism till contemporary times. Organizations like Al-Qaida, Taliban and ISIS have also not yet taken the liability of any attacks on India. However in the present context, while looking at the growing network of ISIS, it can be inferred that India will now have to face the threat of International Terrorism. Thus, until now we used to look at the issue of internal security from the regional terrorism perspective and build our arrangements and capabilities accordingly. Now with the threat from ISIS, it is necessary to think about the internal security in the view of international terrorism. Till the date, we were facing the terrorists coming from Pakistan and have developed defense machineries regarding the same. For the same purpose, we had increased the surveillance on the borders; also our intelligence agencies had focused their attention over the terrorist organizations promoted by Pakistan. However, only this will not be sufficient now.

INDOCTRINATING YOUTH THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA: ISIS STRATEGY

The ISIS is making use of latest tools like Internet and social media in order to regulate the activities in India right from West Asia. Social Media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Whatsapp are being used for this cause (Greene, 2015). These modes are free and their scope is also much wider. Thus, terrorist activities occurring via these channels are not easy to trace and to deal with. It is a challenge for our security system.

CHANGING NATURE OF TERRORIST THREAT TO INDIA

On the other hand, the nature of current terrorism has completely changed and also its scope has increased. One thing should be understood that the ISIS has not yet directly reached India, but an organization like Indian Mujahidin; which is involved in many attacks in India has directly declared its affiliation and accountability to ISIS. Therefore, ISIS has indirect participation and entry in India. Through this, such regional organizations have received a cover or a 'Global Umbrella'. This can be a serious threat in the future. The reason behind this is that ISIS is a prosperous and a rich organization. It has millions of dollars in its hands and is funded by the rich Sunni countries of the Gulf region. This money can be supplied to the terrorist organizations in India which can boost their power and motives.

IS INDIA A PRIMARY TARGET OF ISIS?

There are different opinions about whether ISIS has really turned its attention towards India. India is not on a prime priority for ISIS. Their major target is Europe and there are certain reasons behind this. From 1950 to 1980, many refugees went to Europe from West Asia and these refugees are not absorbed in the socio economical mainstream by the native community. Thus, there is a sense of inferiority disenchantment among these Muslims. There is a growing discontent among these Muslims because of the constant discrimination. Organization like ISIS is taking the advantage of this discontent in the Muslims. Due to this, the main focus of ISIS is towards Europe. Thousands of youth have joined ISIS from European countries. In comparison to these nations the amount of participation from India is negligible. Moreover, most of the West European nations such as the members of NATO are bombarding the ISIS destinations in Iraq and Syria under the US leadership. The NATO war on ISIS has compounded ISIS antagonism against Europe.

WHY IS ISIS TURNING TOWARDS SOUTH ASIA?

Now the question is even after getting adequate support of local Muslims in Europe, why is ISIS turning its attention towards South Asia? There are reasons to it. Firstly, whenever a superpower withdraws from a certain region or a subcontinent, there is a vacuum of power which gets created. Often, there is a conflict for bridging this vacuum. ISIS has also originated through such phenomenon. The NATO forces were active in Iraq. In 2012, these forces were withdrawn, which created a vacuum of power. In 2012, ISIS started bridging this vacuum. The NATO forces have also mostly withdrawn from Afghanistan in 2015 and ISIS is trying to bridge this vacuum of power. Afghanistan's geographical location is strategically crucial. It goes without saying that if Afghanistan comes under control, South Asia, West Asia and Central Asia will also come under the control. The reason behind this is that the borders of Afghanistan are joined to all these subcontinents. In south Asia, borders of Pakistan and Uzbekistan are joined to Afghanistan, while in the West Asia, borders of Iran are joined. This is the reason why ISIS has turned its attention towards South Asia from West Asia. ISIS had accepted the responsibility of some attacks which took place in Afghanistan in last couple of years. This needs to be noted. Secondly Pakistan's role behind the ISIS threat to India also needs to be considered. The ISIS flags which are frequently seen in Kashmir nowadays and also the activities which are visible in the name of ISIS in India can have a contribution and encouragement from the Pakistan secret agency ISI. Presently, ISIS may not be directly threat to India but to create such delusion can be a conspiracy from ISI. It is thus necessary to understand the conspiracy behind this. Pakistan is nowadays infamous as an exporter of Terrorism. The American President Barack Obama in his last State of Union address has also clearly mentioned that Pakistan has grown into a paradise for terrorists. On this ground, it is possible that Pakistan and ISI may try to portray before the world India as the paradise for terrorists and also that it is from India that many Muslims are becoming terrorists. Second point may be that today, majority of the attacks by terrorists are planned in Pakistan. The attacks in Chechnya, Africa, Europe, and America had the involvement of these terrorists. Due to this, the world has created an image of Pakistan as a Factory of Terrorists. Thus, in order to change this image, Pakistan is passing onus on India. It can be a well planned action of Pakistan to create an impression that now India is exporting terrorists. Pakistan wants to show the world that the Muslim youths from India are increasingly attracted to ISIS and they are ready to and fight anywhere in the world. It wants to demonstrate that in future, India is going to become the exporter of terrorism. And for this cause, the youths from India are been taken into ISIS. Pakistan can undertake such actions to keep away from getting its image soiled.

The third possible reason why ISIS has turned its attention toward India is the hunt for volunteers and fighters. There is a competition for supremacy within Al-Qaida and ISIS. Al-Qaida is now aggressive towards ISIS. Also, the Taliban in Afghanistan has intensified its opposition towards ISIS. Till today, ISIS used to get Pathani fighters from these organizations which it no more acquires. In Chechnia, the Pathani fighters were seen as the main terrorists. They used to work for Al-Qaida and Taliban. However, both of these organizations have gone against ISIS. Thus, now ISIS is in the search of new soldiers and a new land. As a part of this search it has began to look towards India and also South East Asia.

MUSLIMS IN INDIA AND ISIS

Though the danger of ISIS is minimal for India today, still it can grow in the future years. Till today, 50-75 are caught while taking part in ISIS from India. If we see the age group of people looking for websites and taking information over ISIS and contacting them, they range between 22-30. This age group can easily be manipulated and inflamed or fall prey to bribes. However, one good thing is seen in India is that the older Muslims in India have demonstrated complete antagonism towards ISIS. There have been anti-ISIS demonstrations from organized Muslim groups in Maharashtra and India. Also some of the parents have also voluntarily given the information of their children to the police who were drawn towards ISIS. In the year before, some youths had tried to go to Bangladesh and the Syria via Bengal. At that time, their parents had themselves informed the police regarding this. From this incidence it can be inferred that though the young Muslims are being captivated by the flawed publicity, enraged and bribes, still the older Muslims are totally

isolated from the organization and are in turn cooperative towards the security system in the country. Secondly, people from rural areas are not getting attracted towards this while the youth living in the Muslim areas of urban cities like Bangalore, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad are increasingly getting influenced due to their proximity to social media (Sood, 2015).

WHY ARE THE INDIAN YOUTHS GETTING ATTRACTED?

Now a question which arises is that if the older population, rural Muslim youth is aloof from the clutches, why is it that the young people from the cities ranging from 22-30 years becoming victims of this organization? After analyzing this, it can be said that these youths are victims to the daydreams which are fondly shown by the ISIS. The dreams that the Muslim empire as it was before 1920 can come back with all its power and also that the Caliph and its caliphate can be reestablished are publicized by the ISIS (Singh, 2014). Youth gets attracted towards these euphemistic ideologies. Today, as compared to the other nations, the Muslims in India are more secure, other Islamic nations are under constant conflict and there are negligible numbers of democratic nations amongst them. This is the reason why youths from such nations get attracted towards ISIS. However this is not the case in India. In India, Muslims are given all sorts of political liberties. Also, the older Muslims are well acquainted with the conditions in India. Thus, they do not fall prey to such delusions. However, it should be thought upon as to how to combat the youth from getting attracted to ISIS and how to face the threat of terrorism in Future.

TO STRENGTHEN THE INTERNAL SECURITY SYSTEM

Current security system in India is equipped as per the regional and cross border terrorism. Now if an organization is entering our borders then major changes have to be done in the mechanisms, resources, and the methodology of investigation and security. One of it is 'Coordinated Efforts.' Coordination between all the agencies at central level is necessary for this. Also, along with that, use of modern technology is also important. Thus, central coordination and use of modern technology are the factors to be analyzed. Till today unlike Israel we have not perceived terrorism as a foreign attack or a state of emergency but as an internal security concern. As per the Indian constitution internal security is the subject which comes under the realm of state jurisdiction in Indian federation. Thus if at some place, a terrorist attack takes place, the problem has to be tackled by the help of police force itself, they can face challenges and limitations while fighting the terrorism. Hence terrorism is not being seen as a national issue or concern. If that issue is seen as national crisis then it can be tackled by the national agencies. For that a National Counter Terrorism Center has to be established at the central level. It would play a crucial role in acting and coordinating counter terrorism activities from central levels. Also, some central counterparts should also be given right to intervene in its functioning. Modern technology should be also used to the fullest.

NEED TO INCREASE INTELLIGENCE SHARING WITH OTHER NATIONS

ISIS is not only a threat to India alone but to the whole world. Islamic state has posed a challenge in forth of every nation in the world today (Schmid, 2015). Thus, India will get large support from the foreign countries. Keeping this in mind, we must look forward to the intelligence sharing. It is due to the tips given by French and American intelligence; we could get hold of the suspects in the nations on the eve of the republic day. The French intelligence had made us alert that an attack like France can take place in India as the president of France was present as the chief guest of the event. America had also shared eminent intelligence information regarding this (Bunzel, 2015). In future, such sharing will have to grow up; some nations from West Asia can also help India in this context. The government of Israel has developed a technique to deal with the terrorism spread through social media. Thus, we must take help from Israel.

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY IS ALSO IMPORTANT

Along with all this, we need to look at the socio economic questions of Muslims in the country more seriously. It is necessary to take steps to eradicate the problems of this community and resolve the issues of poverty and unemployment amongst them. It is crucial to take policy oriented steps to bring them into the mainstream. Also, it should be realized that the state alone is not responsible to deal with terrorism, as this is a 'Home Grown Terrorism,' public intelligence is also equally important. It is important to raise the amount of secret news and information from the public and civilian domain, also every citizen must stay aware, alert and be responsible and accountable to the cause.

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