

Islamic State and India

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1 Introduction

- Islamic state previously known as **the Islamic state of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)**, has recently declared its aim to establish an **“Islamic state based on Sharia law or Islamic Caliphate”**.
- This group is led by **Abu Bakr-al-Baghdadi**. This So-called Islamic State burst on to the international scene in 2014 when it seized large swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq. It has become notorious for its brutality, including mass killings, abductions and beheadings.

2 Goals of IS

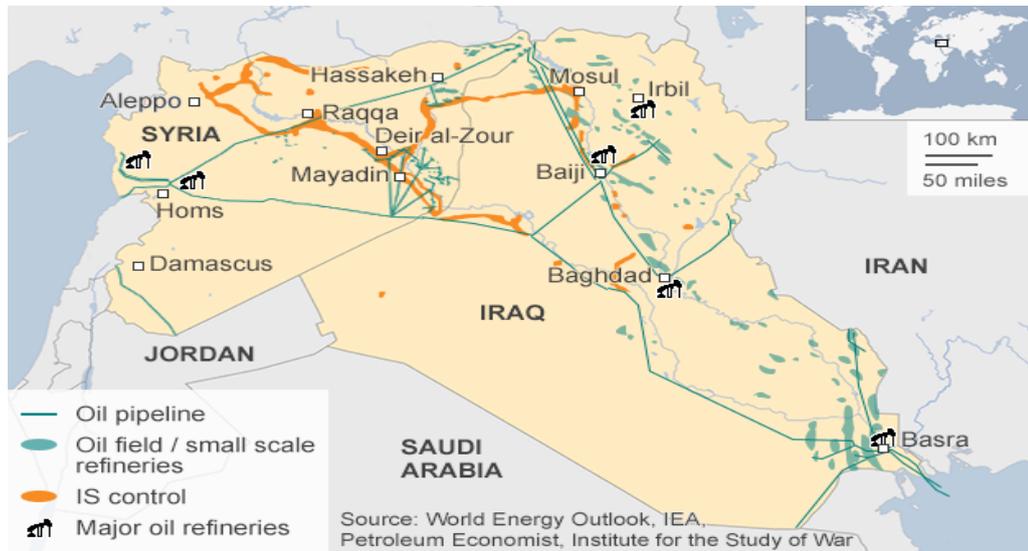
- IS has also told other jihadist groups worldwide that they must accept its supreme authority. Many already have, among them several offshoots of the rival al-Qaeda network.
- IS seeks to eradicate obstacles to restoring God's rule on Earth and to defend the Muslim community, or umma, against infidels and apostates.
- This group has welcomed the prospect of direct confrontation with the US-led coalition, viewing it as a harbinger of an end-of-times showdown between Muslims and their enemies described in Islamic apocalyptic prophecies.
- IS has begun imposing Sharia law in the towns it controls. Boys and girls must be separated at school; women must wear the niqab or full veil in public.
- Sharia courts often dispense brutal justice, music is banned and the fast is enforced during Ramadan.

3 IS origin

- The **sectarian struggle (Shias, Sunnis and Kurds) is the main cause behind the unrest**.
- The mostly **Sunni dominated ISIS** claims that the present Iraqi government put in place by west (U.S) in Iraq after the removal of Saddam Hussain (Sunni) has deprived Sunni population of its rights.
- The balance of power now after Saddam tilted towards Shias in Iraq.
- The group exploited a growing perception among many Sunnis that they were being persecuted by the Shia-dominated government led by Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, starved of resources and excluded from a share of power.
- The arrest of senior Sunni political figures and heavy-handed suppression of Sunni dissent were the best recruiting sergeants ISI could have. And it helped the new leader re-establish the group's influence.
- These deprived Sunni group formed militia which it called as ISIS, later they added Syria and this group got funds and training from al-Qaeda.

4 Expansion of IS

- The Islamic State group, comprised of militant Islamist extremists from the Levant to North Africa to the Caucasus, is likely to expand in the Middle East and **“project force globally,”** with few countries stepping up to push back against the group's expansion.
- The Islamic State group, also known as ISIS or ISIL, came to global attention in June 2014 when it overtook Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, and declared a caliphate comprised of territory in Iraq and Syria.
- Its de facto capital is in Raqqa, Syria, but branches and supporters have emerged elsewhere, including North Africa, Afghanistan and the Caucasus, as new members declare their allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the group's leader.
- Various oil pipelines and refineries have been covered by IS.



- The Islamic State terror group, also known as IS or ISIS, plans to take over large parts of the world, including almost the entire Indian subcontinent, by the next five years, according to a chilling map that features in a new book on the dreaded terror group.
- According to the map, said to be issued by the Islamic State, it plans to take control of the Middle East, North Africa, most of the Indian subcontinent and parts of Europe, within the next five years, to complete its caliphate.
- The caliphate - a state governed by Sharia law which ISIS plan to claim - covers areas from Spain in the west to China in the east, the Mirror reported citing the map. The map reveals the calculated way ISIS plans to take over the world by 2020



5 Islamic State's influence in India

- India is home to more than 170 million Muslims, giving it the second-largest Muslim population in the world, behind Indonesia.
- India is always on radar of Jihadi terrorist organisations, the threat is increased by many times.
- India is a major target for ISIS and Al Qaeda because it has a very large Muslim Diaspora, regular conflicts with a Muslim country and experiences violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims on a regular basis.
- This provides for a very stable breeding ground for jihadist radicalisation and recruitment.
- India is already among 19 regions on the list of Islamic State targets. To get strengthened against India, Islamic State has already started tying up with anti-India terror groups which increased the intensity of this threat.
- IS has vowed to convert India into **Khurasan State** and published the map of Khurasan as well. The Islamic State jihadist group announced that it has established a province in Khurasan, a historic name for a region that covers Afghanistan, Pakistan, parts of India, and other surrounding countries.

- The expansion of the ISIS caliphate into Khurasan comes barely four months after al-Qaeda declared the formation of a new branch in the Indian subcontinent. According to experts, the region depicted as part of Khurasan has been a fertile area to encourage people to pick up arms.
- Unlike neighbouring Pakistan, an “Islamic republic” with a slightly smaller Muslim population, secular India hasn’t historically provided many recruits for the likes of al Qaeda. Explanations include the social integration of Indian Muslims and their long reconciliation with minority status in a majority Hindu country.
- But today’s ascendant jihadists want to change that. As Islamic State marched through Iraq last year, it published recruiting materials in Hindi, Urdu, Tamil and other languages spoken in India. When at least four Indians went to Iraq as fighters, officials in New Delhi sounded alarms.
- Signs of Islamic State’s influence are also being seen in Kashmir, the region claimed by both India and Pakistan and the scene of a decades-long battle by militants against Indian rule.
- There have been some cases of young Muslims getting radicalised in India, but at the moment it does not seem a large-scale threat.
- Intelligence and police sources in New Delhi and Kashmir said the flags were first seen on June 27 in a part of the state capital Srinagar, and then in July when India’s only Muslim-majority region was marking Islam’s most holy day, Eid ul-Fitr.
- Some IS graffiti also appeared on walls of buildings in Srinagar.
- Islamic State is also trying to lure Muslims in mainland India, who make up the world’s third-biggest Islamic population but who have largely stayed away from foreign battlefields despite repeated calls from al-Qaida.
- In mid-July, an IS recruitment video surfaced online with subtitles in the Indian languages of Hindi, Tamil and Urdu in which a self-declared Canadian fighter, dressed in war fatigues and flanked by a gun and a black flag, urged Muslims to enlist in global jihad. That came out just weeks after four families in a Mumbai suburb reported to the police that their sons had gone missing, with one leaving behind a note about fighting to defend Islam. It soon turned out that the men had joined a pilgrimage to Baghdad.
- Recent months have brought several reports of Indian Muslims being arrested and deported back from the Middle East.
- Well publicized reports of attacks and intimidation of Muslims in some parts of the country by fringe groups claiming to represent the right wing have added to the sense of alienation among India’s largest minority group. Fears have been expressed by security experts and centrist politicians that such incidents are pushing young Muslims closer to the ultra-conservatives and contribute to their radicalization.

6 India against Islamic State

- Recently Islamic state have captured vast amount of territory in our border country Afghanistan and now they are trying to gain foothold in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. The danger of Islamic state is virtually knocking at our borders. Indians need to act quicker.
- The biggest need of the hour is to get united to overcome this radical threat. For this very purpose we the patriotic organizations from different parts of India have come together and decided to form **‘India against Islamic state’ (IA-IS) a mass movement to create awareness about terrorism**. The main aim of this movement is to bring awareness among the common masses of the danger of Jihadi terrorism and to form a close line of patriots to help the government at different levels.

7 IS strategy for India:

Following are the possible strategy of IS

- The ISIS can become the fulcrum of terrorism against India, thereby focusing the combined energy of different groups under its umbrella.

- It can be supported by **Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)**, thereby providing it a well-established intelligence and logistic network, in a symbiotic relationship.
- The **social media campaign** by the ISIS is ideally placed to exploit alienated members of the society. This has already been witnessed to a lesser degree, in which a small number of people have volunteered to fight for the terrorist group in Iraq. This can potentially achieve sharper focus if it is brought to bear on Indian targets, especially in the immediate aftermath of communally surcharged incidents.
- While India may be amongst the most challenging targets for a radical organisation like the ISIS, given the strong roots of liberalism, democracy and secularism in the country, from the perspective of the ISIS, this is a prize which could well tip the balance in its favour, not only in the region but also beyond. This could imply that the resources and energy likely to be employed against India will make the terrorist group amongst the most serious challenge faced by the country so far.
- The ISIS has foreseen the possibility of the US and its allies standing alongside India. However, past experience suggests limited cooperation by the US against terrorist threats specifically aimed at the country. It is more likely that it will be India's fight for its safety and security on the basis of its resilience and capacity.
- An e-book allegedly released by Islamic State (ISIS) across online jihadist platforms has made a direct reference to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, describing him as "a right-wing Hindu nationalist who worships weapons and is preparing his people for a future war against Muslims".

8 Setback to IS from India

- Islamic State suffered a setback far from the battlefields of Iraq and Syria September, as more than 1,000 Muslim leaders in India issued a fatwa condemning the terror group as "**un-Islamic and inhuman.**" This welcome salvo against jihadism is also a reminder of the threat of radicalization in populous South Asia.
- Organizers say the edict's signatories include clerics, scholars and other authorities from hundreds of mosques, schools and civic organizations across India, with endorsements now being sought from leaders in 50 other countries. "It's a strong message that we, as a large and influential community of Muslims, reject this kind of torture, killings, violence," one Mumbai-based organizer told the Journal.
- **Sheik Ahmed al-Tayeb, grand imam of Cairo's Al-Azhar University**, Sunni Islam's premier educational institution, has condemned the "corrupt interpretations" of scripture used by Islamic State and other "extremist violent groups." The more this case is made in mosques and madrasas in India and beyond, the better.

9 How regional players and west can play role in combating IS

1. Exploit the Islamic State's weaknesses: The West and its allies should take advantage of the internal challenges facing the jihadist group in order to weaken it from within.
2. Move beyond air strikes: Military engagement against the Islamic State must not be limited to the air. It should also encompass ground operations by Syrian and Iraqi military groups that coordinate with the international coalition.
3. Support the moderate opposition in Syria: The West and its allies must strengthen the operational and governance capacities of the Free Syrian Army's Southern Front, the only moderate opposition coalition that is fighting both the Islamic State and the regime in Syria.
4. Establish an Iraqi national guard: A multi-sectarian, multiethnic force would help restore the Sunni community's trust in state institutions and widen local engagement in the fight against the Islamic State.
5. Push Turkey to play a bigger role: Turkey should allow the international coalition's aircraft to use Turkish bases, which would better enable them to reach targets inside Syria.
6. Find a solution to the Syrian conflict: The West and its allies should begin negotiations about a political settlement for Syria because the Islamic State cannot be eradicated without one.
7. Social media control: Facebook and twitter should become more proactive in terms of controlling the online activities of the ISIS network.
8. Global offensive on ISIS: USA and Russia should lead the global offensive against the ISIS network along with other powerful countries.

10 Suggestions for India to deal with IS threat

- It is necessary for India to effect changes in its internal security architecture and further empower its intelligence and investigation agencies for enhanced preparedness, some diplomatic measures are also needed to counter terrorism in the whole continent.
- **Establishing a relationship with international bodies like NATO, as a terror-combating measure, may open up more possibilities for combating terrorism.**
- A large part of the preparatory work in the fight against IS is done by research analysts and intelligence agents, well before kinetic measures are applied. This must receive the necessary impetus through cross platform recruitment of specialists dealing with social media, big data analysis, terrorism finance and technical intelligence, to name a few.
- The government realizes the threat of radical ideology and its adverse impact. However, it must also understand the limited ability of the state to fight the contagion. This can best be done by social groups, NGOs and student bodies, which can reach out easily to the population at large, as compared to state institutions.
- It is important to counter the jihadist ideology and not support it indirectly through standalone security crackdowns etc.
- Recent trend suggest that a sizeable number of South Indians getting attracted to ISIS, the government should reach out to prominent Muslim leaders of Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala to counter the influence of the dreaded terrorist group over community youth. They could persuade youth not to fall prey to extremist ideology and eventually join terrorist groups like ISIS.
- A comprehensive strategy of early prevention, targeted repression and intervention (DE radicalisation), which involves government and non-governmental actors. Muslim Politicians should be roped in to appeal to youth against radical propaganda, especially those coming through social media and other internet platforms.

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