

## **Extremism in Pakistan: Issues and Challenges**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study is designed to examine the challenges of extremism; the most sensitive issue to the national security of Pakistan, This issue effect not only on the foreign relations but also on the domestic harmony, leading to unrest and terrorism in the state. Different events and aftermath of 9/11 brought with it the issue of violent extremism, which is continuing and posing security threats to many states of Middle East, South Asia, Africa and now Europe. Pakistan is one of these affectees. Primary and secondary sources are used to strengthen the logics. This violent extremism is practiced by many actors due to motivation of their own ideologies. Many strategies and policy options are available to Pakistan in order to counter terrorism and extremism. Ways are sort out to create the new ways for countering extremism. For their proper handling a thorough approach from legislation to some intelligence-sharing and exchange of successful best practices is needed.

**Keywords:** *Extremism, Human Needs Theory, Militant, Terrorism, Terrorist*

### **Introduction**

Terrorism and extremism are the most sensitive issues to the national security of Pakistan, which must be handled and dealt with through proper policy making and its implementation. These issues affect not only the foreign relations but also the domestic harmony, leading to unrest and terrorism in the state. For their proper handling a thorough approach from legislation to some intelligence-sharing and exchange of successful best practices is needed, as these issues reflect a difficult and different nature of threat to the national security (Malik, 2008), (Aziz, 2015), (Sayyid, 2011).

Pakistan is at crossroads due to sufferings from this violent extremism, which has seriously threatened its socio-political peace. Only peace can bring harmony in society, whereas violence, fear and destruction lead to insecurity, stress and weakening of different institutions. The phenomenon of extremism leading to terrorism is not new, it dates back from the known history of mankind and recent past has witnessed it more persistently and commonly; like Alexander the great,

Romans, Europeans and Hitler massacred people in millions on one pretext to another. Many states like Iraq, Pakistan, Syria and many in Middle East and few in Europe are experiencing the worst times in this regard. Pakistan is at the forefront of war against terrorism and its society is experiencing its devastating results in the shape of daily terrorist attacks, unrest, violence and bloodshed. Hence, this extremism leading to terrorism is the biggest threat to Pakistan's socio-economic and political development (Sabir, 2007).

Extremism has led to terrorism, which has become transnational as well as, trans-regional phenomenon, embodying many complex dimensions and includes complicated networks; therefore comprehensive and smart solutions are required to curb them. For the past few years both at national and international levels, efforts have been made to subdue terrorism through force, yet no permanent solution has yet been achieved. There have been flawed research on the phenomenon and de-radicalization programs have been implemented half-heartedly which have not been successful, whereas, extremists and terrorists are becoming more and more influential with increasing circle of influence threatening everybody irrespective of religious, ethnic, racial, political or regional affiliation whatsoever. It must be noted that at international level, counter terrorism efforts are politically motivated and interest based, as soon as the politics change or interest subdues, the operations are abandoned abruptly and a vacuum is created in the particular conflict zone, which is usually filled by anarchic forces with increased might and vigor. It is important for the states to comprehend that the stability and prosperity of each is mutually dependent upon others, as it is connected phenomenon particularly for those states which are either immediate or extended neighbors or are in the same region. Therefore, justifying military interventions for the sake of combating extremism leading to terrorism have created new problems which have further resulted into more anarchic situations. Further certain neglected areas in Pakistan, especially FATA and Balochistan, due to many factors including but not limited to their geography and non-fulfillment of basic economic, political and other social needs of people, have acted as safe heavens for the extremist ideology holders, who have created Taliban in Afghanistan and their franchise in the shape of TTP<sup>1</sup>, which have since their inception challenged the very existence of Pakistan in the name of religion. It must also be remembered that the growth and birth of extremism in this area can be traced back before the creation of Pakistan and has been inspired by the religion, which created new Hindu and Muslim identities in the shape of 'Two Nation Theory', which usually resulted into brutality and violence between the two and ultimate result of which was the divide of united India into two different states. Since then the misinterpretation of religion and extremist views have played a vital role in spreading violence and terrorism especially in Pakistan. The unsettled issues like Kashmir and water; have paved way for the spread of these ideologies and instigating common people in the name of religious beliefs and holy war concept, even at the behest of government led organizations and the inculcation of

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<sup>1</sup> Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was formed under the leadership of Bait-ullah Mehsood in 2007. It is a pro-Afghan Taliban group with clear cut objectives to destabilize Pakistan and enforce Shria laws.

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such ideologies have been among the other causes of creating extremism leading to violent terrorism here. Further sectarian divide has also led to establishment of private army like militant organizations of different extremist religious parties. In December 2014 an attack on APS led the government and Army Chief to unveil a new counter terrorism strategy commonly known as, National Action Plan (NAP). This has not worked effectively as since then there have been more than 34 additional significant incidents till October 2016, taking more than 657 lives (Aziz, 2009).

### **Theoretical View of Extremism**

There are numerous views related to extremism which came from various discipline of social sciences. The intellectuals proceed with their debates on the subject to further knowing the phenomenon of extremism in Pakistan and other countries. There are very less empirical evidences in literature which may enhance the validity of theoretical framework but instead of all these literature related to extremism gave us better understanding and writers arranged the issue in vary systematic way through which we can seek the knowledge about escalating issue. Some of the views regarding theoretical framework are mentioned as follows:

### **Globalization in Perspective of Neo-Marxist**

Here we came to know that the process of globalization which lead towards the mixture of happiness and sorrow at the end for all the people who are living around world. Globalization act on one hand to provide better opportunities to the people of world while on the other hand it keeps the worldly people to deprive and drain from the resources. Hence this process of globalization not only provides the raising expectations among people but also becomes the cause of not fulfilling the expectations of people. This form of system brings inequality of wealth among people and makes distinction between poor and rich which may become the cause of deterioration of state.

### **The Theory of Social Movement**

The theory of social movement presented in the context of psychological model where it found the growth of extremism in the aggressive and frustrated situation of society. We found the basic concept from these situations where frustrated attitude of people lead them in aggression and aggression compel them to do violent activities in individuals or group of society.

### **The Model of Relative Deprivation**

The relative deprivation model proved as a most interesting theoretical framework to understand the growth of extremist activities in state. Many scholars used this model in explaining the concept of terrorism in which Davies who was the first writer to utilize this model in perspective of extremism and later Gurr was more expanded the area of study over extremism. This model highlights the few causes of escalating terrorism in society due to the structural problem of state which fueled the extremist elements in society.

### **The Theory of Rational Choice**

While discuss on another theory which is the rational choice theory related with the field of economics. This theory presented the concept that individual or group

of individuals always take action while getting the advantage and benefit after analyzing over cost effects. According to this theory extremism spreads in society as extremist think over maximization of benefits over their action and they walk on negative path while in lust of achieving maximum advantage.

In short, internationally it has been shown through different studies that the extremism grows in those states which show following attributes:-

- 1) All those societies which have low rate of education and employment opportunities.
- 2) Those states which comprise of conservative societies, not ready to accept openness and liberal interpretations especially of religious beliefs.
- 3) Those states which have internally weak systems and social cohesion.
- 4) Their national narrative is based on exclusive ideology.
- 5) Where corruption prevails at every level, especially among political, military and religious elite.
- 6) No or very weak social security system and security for population.
- 7) No rule of law or law only to be meant for poor and providing exceptions to rich and powerful.

### **Causes of Extremism in Pakistan**

“Less Secure a Man is, the more likely he is to have extreme prejudice”

(Clint Eastwood)

We can also say that the growth of extremist sentiments across Pakistan is not linked with only one factor from religion to economic degradation and from fading the cultural ties to weakening of state institutions and tax evasion to corruption; all have played their role in this regard. Jogs down following emerging trends in Pakistan:-

- i. State sovereignty is weakening.
- ii. Deep state concept is taking strength.
- iii. Parliament is losing its legitimacy.
- iv. There is no or weakening rule of law.
- v. Local mafias are getting strength especially in big cities like Karachi, Faisalabad etc.

### **Extremist and criminal syndicates are converging**

Causes of extremism are multi-faceted making it intricate phenomenon to handle. The causes range from being regional to global, political to ideological, feeling of deprivation to cultural inclinations, socio-economic deprivation to intervention by external forces. As far as region is concerned, poverty, exploitation, natural calamities, desire to get more power, inter-state tensions, non-resolution of major

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regional disputes, insecurity faced by smaller states and ulterior motives of super powers are the core factors in this regard. Conventional fault lines, both trans-(national and regional) and ethno-sectarian, usually lead to attracting extremist sentiments and support from outside and within the society.

Now a days, most modern extremist and terrorist organizations get support at both micro and macro level from deprived, isolated, fragile and irritated minorities within the state as well as, they get support from those who are well connected in terms of arms, communication speed and global reach, which make them more dangerous, and these small groups are gaining powers and prominence day by day (Charles, 2016).

It must be noted that terrorism is caused by the presence of extremist ideology. We can say that extremism can be defined as opposition to established values. These may include, but not limited to:-

1. Illiteracy
2. Economic instability and unemployment
3. Intolerance
4. Marginalized identities, minorities and youth
5. Weak law enforcement mechanism and absence of speedy justice
6. Poverty
7. Lack of basic health facilities
8. Different educational systems within state
9. Class differences
10. Sectarianism and role of hard liner religious scholars

### **Events Leading to Growth of Extremism in Pakistan**

Further, many events have contributed to the growth of extremism in Pakistan over the years. The first and foremost was the extinction of Caliphate after World War I, which resulted into the declaration of sub-continent as 'Dar-ul-Harab' and Khilafat movement started, which made more than 60,000 people to migrate from India to a Dar-ul-Islam or land of peace. This huge migration created radical and extremist thoughts among the masses in sub-continent. One can also observe that Punjab is right now epicenter of extremist and radical organizations, established in its remote areas and even having training centers and hide out camps in few major cities. In 1920's too, it was a group of Muslim activists who decided to protect Muslims of Kashmir from Dogra ruler, who was Hindu. Hence, Majlis-e-Ahrar Islam, a jihadist organization was created by a group of religio-nationalist Muslims and rest is the history. This later on resulted into ethnic and religious component of the population making a strong lobby to fight for Kashmir cause. This discourse directly effects the Kashmir policy of Pakistan now, as Punjab contributes more than half in the armed forces of Pakistan and unless this perception is changed, the tensions with India cannot be decreased (Kux, 2001).

It is also important to note here that Pakistan-India first war was also fought on Kashmir issue in 1948 and at that juncture of time; Pakistan had very less trained armed forces at that border to encounter Indian military, so the tribesmen from FATA came forward and formed jihadi groups to protect Kashmir. These groups got support from people as well as government, as it was the need of time and jihad was declared as an Islamic duty. Most recently the Kashmiri Jihad is led by Mutahida Jihad Council (MJC) formed in 1994 under the leadership of Syed Salahuddin who is leader of Hizbul-Mujahedeen working in Indian occupied Kashmir. Almost fifteen radical organizations are part of MJC; including Harkat-ul-Ansar, Al-Jihad, Al-Barq, Al-Badr, Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen, Tehreek-ul-Mujahedeen, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Hizbul-Mujahedeen and some others. Few of them are declared as terrorists by the UN as well as, USA. These organizations have support from within Pakistan as they in past were adopting Pakistan's stance on Kashmir, later on many of these began to occupy territory in Swat in 2009-10 and started getting autonomy and challenging the writ of government of Pakistan, which has led to different operations in Swat over the past decade to restore government's writ. These Jihadees also have close ties with Punjabi Taliban and after the disintegration of Al-Qaida in Afghanistan; they have joined hands in FATA with already existing Haqqani Network and became well organized in North Waziristan, completely destroying state writ. Due to extreme pressure from inside as well as internationally Pakistan had to start operation Zarb-e-Azab to cleanse the area and restore government's writ (Askari, 2012).

During the support of Afghan Taliban by the Pakistani Strategic Planners in 1990s in the hope of keeping India away from Afghanistan, radicalism was strengthened, as Pakistan allowed those elements to use its tribal territory as safe heavens. Its side effect was that the tribal people got radicalized and extremist elements got strong hold there and created their very own, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in 2007, which started working against US operations in Afghanistan and also against Pakistani military operations in FATA. They started suicide bombing over civilian and military. They being Deobandi version of Islam and having strong Pashtoon ties have close links with Jamita Ulema-e-Islam.

### **Types and Factors of Extremism**

These aspects lead to following types of extremism:-

- a) Religious Extremism<sup>2</sup>
- b) Ethno-Nationalist Extremism<sup>3</sup>

Whereas, they affect adversely into the peace, tranquility, tourism industry, economic activity, sports, recreational activities, education and almost all the

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<sup>2</sup> The foundations of religious extremism in Pakistan can be traced back from 1970's when two major events took place i.e. Iranian Revolution and Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, which lead to the introduction of Mullaim, weaponisation and violence in Pakistan.

<sup>3</sup> Please note that ethno-nationalist ideologies do not promote terrorism or extremism, it is when the state does not properly tackle them then they react. Minorities are always insecure, it is the majority which has to scarily.

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individual as well as, social aspects of the state, whether they be domestic or international relations. The state faces many challenges from this issue of extremism and policy making and a response to the factors and causes that favour the violent extremism, is a hard nut to crack, as these factors may be divided into;

Push Factors; and

Pull Factors (USAID Policy, p-5).

Table 1:

<b>PUSH FACTORS</b>	<b>PULL FACTORS</b>
They refer to environmental grievances and socioeconomic differences that drive an individual to violent extremism. Such as;	They refer to psychological benefits or attraction of violent extremism that fills an individual's needs. Such as;
Poverty	Monetary incentives
Unemployment	Sense of protection and safety
Clan marginalization	Sense of belonging
Sectarianism	Revenge for injustice
Government oppression	Personal empowerment
Lack of opportunity	Religious rewards (victory or paradise)

### Key Drivers of Extremism

It is important understand here the key drivers of extremism, which lead to conflicts especially in FATA and KP. The violent extremism hampers the development in number of ways, therefore there is nexus between violent extremism and development challenges, poverty, weak rule of law, sociopolitical exclusion, poor governance, disillusionment with democracy, economic undergrowth security issues, economic inequality, lack of economic opportunities, trust deficit and coordination challenges are some of the key drivers for extremism (Javed, 2013). These can be summarized as under, if we want to explain the rise of extremism in Pakistan as a whole. They include following:-

- i. Economic Drivers
- ii. Political Drivers
- iii. Security and Geostrategic Drivers
- iv. Social Drivers
- v. Systemic Flaws
- vi. Education

- vii. Weak State
- viii. Erosion of Community Living-Challenges of Rapid Urbanization
- ix. Communication
- x. Hard Core Response Fixated Mindset
- xi. Balochistan Factor

### **Economic Drivers**

The economic deprivation spreading over decades lead to extreme poverty, which creates extreme sense of neglect and provides the extremists a golden opportunity to criticize the state and government and the marginalized population considers that the government has failed in providing them equal opportunities and they have been treated with bias (Cohan, 2012).

### **Security and Geostrategic Drivers**

Pakistan had to support Afghan Jihad in late 70's due to the existing geostrategic and security situation at that time, which resulted into the increase of jihadis and radicals in the country and their support reached to maximum. They penetrated into the grass root level of Pakistani society and gathered in the country from all across the globe. Kashmir issue and anti-Hindu extremist ideology gave them increased influence and support from within state machinery and masses. This leads to sectarian violence too.

### **Social Drivers**

Weak social cohesion especially in tribal areas, Balochistan and KP provide ample ground for the radicals and extremist organizations to get full support from the people living there and feeling deprived of non-fulfillment of their basic human needs. There has not been any serious work on strengthening the mechanism of social cohesion in those areas. The military operations taking place there have caused IDP's issue, which helps the extremists to convince those people to support them, as they vouch for their homes, jobs and food. When tribal elders and society displaces, this provides ground for the extremists to penetrate and spread their ideologies.

### **Systemic Flaws**

Since 2001, Pakistan remained a front-line state in the war against terrorism. Till 2014, Pakistan did not have its national security strategy. In 2014, the first National Internal Security Policy was formulated, which till date largely remains a piece of paper. It was also a time-bound policy, which will expire in 2018.

The December 16th, 2014 attack against children and teachers in Army Public School, wherein 141 people including teachers and 132 school children lost lives, shook the government to action.

### **Education**

The ideological dimension of extremist propaganda is taken lightly and attempts to mitigate and nullify are at best superficial or apologetic. State has become hostage to elements who are apologetic, defensive, complicit, or at best slightly vocal



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against such ideologies. Sectarianism is entrenched in our minds and lifestyles. Extreme polarization has permeated our society on religious and now on parochial lines.

### **Weak State**

Use of force has to be the monopoly of state. In Pakistan, geographical areas and institutional roles have been ceded by state to non-state actors. FATA and intractable large terrains of Balochistan remain beyond control and writ of state. A weak state has given rise to play and role by other actors including non-democratic forces and extremist elements. State as the protector and the provider has failed its people.

### **Erosion of Community Living-Challenges of Rapid Urbanization**

Organizations like Face book are devising strategies for on-line connectivity of neighborhoods. Objective is connected neighborhoods are safer neighborhoods. In Pakistan, haphazard urbanization, securitization and imported communications facilities are behind reduced person to person contact. Geographically contiguous populations in dense urban centers have lost connectivity, which accentuates chances of infiltration, perpetuated existence and consequent threats of extremist and terrorist elements.

### **Balochistan Factor**

Balochistan is poor; illiteracy is at rise with lowest per capita income as compared to other areas of Pakistan, despite its richness in natural resources. Its share in employment and development is very meager and other provinces' role with Balochistan is taken with great suspicion as exploiters, by the Baloch people. In short, Balochis have following major grievances:-

1. Despite abundant natural resources, its people are most deprived in terms of per capita income and standard of living.
2. Natural gas is mostly generated from this province, but it only gets a small percentage from gas distribution and revenues.
3. They perceive Gwadar port and its economic significance through suspicion as job opportunities will be only for highly qualified people, which is lacking in their case.
4. Oil is explored and extracted from their territory and its royalty issue with central government creates further unrest among people.
5. Irrigation system is not good in Balochistan, therefore it faces water shortage resulting in dry lands and droughts.
6. As major projects are underway within Balochistan, especially small dams and canals are being built, they apprehend that their mineral resources will be exported to Punjab.

7. They also think that all the army operations take place in their areas, resulting into internal displacement and mass killing with a large number of missing persons.

### **Religious Extremism in the Case of Pakistan**

While studying the various models of extremism and terrorism the case of Pakistan not fitted into one model in fact each represent the phenomenon of extremism in country and the causes of spread of extremism in society. In this country if we see the theory of relative deprivation is highly acceptable because of unstable economic and social condition but on the other hand cost and benefit situation is also uneven around the country.

### **Extremism in Islam**

Before talking about extremism in Islam, it is important to note here that when Western modernity invaded declining Islamic world, a debate about challenges faced by Islam erupted and provided different explanations giving rise to three perspectives i.e. (a) conservative activists emphasizing on revitalization of religion including Ulema like Rashid Rida, Hassan al Banna, Ulema of Deoband and Ahl-e-Hadees; (b) secularists emphasizing on diminishing backward traditions, such as Mustafa Kamal Atatürk; and (c) reformists seeking innovation and dynamism in religious thought, like Shibli Nomani and Iqbal (Zaman, 2016)

Syed Qutub, Al-Qaida and ISIS frequently refer to Ibn-e-Tammiyah for their extremist ideas. Even though Ibn-e-Tammiyah opened door for Jihad against Muslim regimes, yet he never incited civil disobedience against domestic Muslim regime. Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab used Ibn-e-Tammiyah's argument against Ottoman Empire and inspired a rebellion based on extremist's ideology. In his opinion Ottoman were not fit to rule as they had deviated from true Islam and were practicing Bidd'a (Innovations) in Islam, which was considered illegal and haram. Ibn-e-Wahab was also the first extremist to build a state on puritan Islam in Arabia (Bhutto, 2008).

The civil disobedience of Ibn-e-Wahab turned into Hegelian dialectic under Syed Qutub. He divided laws into two parts; Sharia and Jahilia. Anyother law than Allah's law was legacy of Jahilia (the age before holy Prophet PBUH) which is anti-thesis to Islam. No other law can exist in Islamic society. If anyother law besides Sharia is enforced in Islamic society, Muslims should use violence to restore Sharia. Islamic extremism has now expanded from religion and political sphere to every sphere of life under the teachings of Syed Qutub, who is spiritual father of Al-Qaida.

### **Role Played by Religion for Extremism in Pakistan**

There has always been a close link between religious extremism and Pakistan's identity as an Islamic state. The religious history and ideology has become the gerund norm ever since and religious dogma has become language of social response to all circumstances. Therefore, when we study extremism in Pakistan the central focus of our study is religion. Many of the scholars work on the subject of extremism where religion is focal point of their study and when they addressing the topic in country they discuss extremism in context of religion (Ahmed, 2007).

### **Alternative Chronology of Religious Extremism**

It is argued that the evolutionary process of country where decision making procedure took at state level and also the events which were happening in the international arena became the course of attention while studying the subject of extremism. There are also numerous factors are involving from history. Amil Khan who is the earliest writer discussed that origin of extremism is as old as common man started to emerge in their countries. While the immediate origin of state and the withdrawal of leadership in earlier times lead them towards ideological confusion and those people who were in search of better opportunity in political system which could have been ignored otherwise (Abdul, 2015).

### **Numerous Types of Extremism**

Extremism is of various types having multi-dimensional and multi-faceted phenomenon which discussed the various definition of extremism. A very renowned scholar Moonis Ahmar distributed the extremism into various types in Pakistan (Abbas, 2005).

Extremism can be divided into five types which manifests itself in Pakistan:-

1. Extremism over class.
2. Extremism over ethnicity.
3. Extremism over sectarianism.
4. Extremism over gender.
5. Extremism over religion.

### **Conclusion**

In short, there is not a single cause of extremism. Rather than a broad policy that seeks to criminalize the extremist opinions; a better approach would be to focus on those marginalized individuals, groups and identities which can easily fall prey to the extremism and to restrict it. We will have to widen the range of options and opinions that can be freely expressed rather than restricting them. Pakistan will have to take a pragmatic approach and will have to take serious steps towards the political, social, religious, economic and psychological forces and factors that underpin extremism. We need to answer the questions that, there is an agreed understanding of the drivers which lead to violent extremism in Pakistan.

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