PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN PAKISTAN: A REVIEW PAPER

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Abstract:

Domestic terrorism has long been a global issue; many governments have only recently begun to adopt systemic strategies to address religious extremism's core causes. It is necessary to study front-line countries such as Pakistan in order to understand how to successfully address the problem. Despite its conflict with anti-government insurgents such as the Pakistani Taliban, Pakistan has struggled for more than a decade to settle theoretical parts of these issues. Because the vast majority of illicit operations in Pakistan are carried out by organisations that promote and justify Islam, extremist driving must be eradicated from Pakistan and other countries. Researchers are aware of theological elements. Religious fundamentalist groups have always targeted and harassed ethnic minorities. Unless the state intervenes, the tendency will continue, with the state giving only Sunni living space while restricting minorities' religious ideas and freedom of expression. Pakistan's most significant national security challenge is extremism.

Introduction:

Human life is regarded as the most valuable tangible thing in the material world. In Islamic society, the death of an innocent person is either considered as the annihilation of all humanity or as a way to save one's own life[1](Quran [5]: 32). Extremism, fundamentalism, and terrorist ideologies have captivated the world for the past two decades, posing a threat to society (Ghumro, Qureshi, & Mahesar, 2017). Even though deviating from a standard or specification is an "extreme" aggregate phrase, it is insufficient to explain a security problem (Baqai, 2011). In this definition, extremism is acting in a way that is motivated by a specific political or religious objective or by such two-pronged acts. When these thoughts and beliefs take shape and are put into action through a variety of schemes and patterns, they create a climate of fear and terrorism, influencing and refusing to tolerate differences in acceptance. Individuals or organisations who support violence in order to advance other people's beliefs, philosophies, or moral convictions are known as state radicals. Foreign actors, such as the United States and its European allies, regard Pakistani madrasas as sources of radicalism (Khalid, 2014). Although madrasa is an Arabic word that means "school," there is no definite definition of the term (Bashir & Haq, 2019; Z. U. Abiden Malik et al., 2021).

Anti-Taliban Militants Are Defeated:

Many countries are now implementing comprehensive measures to address the origins of religious extremism, despite the fact that domestic terrorism has been a worldwide danger for a long time. Understanding how to respond successfully to this challenge requires studying front-line countries like Pakistan. Pakistan has started a battle against anti-Taliban militants, despite the fact that the ideological character of such threats has been a source of contention for more than a decade (Malik, et al., 2019). Given that religious groups are to blame for all forms of extremism in Pakistan, the country must transparently address extremism's drivers. Extremism-affected countries have altered their approaches to combating terrorism and violent religious extremism, as evidenced by the 2015 **National Action Plan (NAP) (National Action Plan)**. This links important political agendas together and contributes a methodical force plan alongside

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[1]Translation: n that account We ordained for the sons of Israel that whoever kills a self unless it be in punishment for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole mankind (Quran [al-Māʾidah 5]: 32).

a soft power approach (Zain Ul Abiden Malik, Uzzaman, et al., 2021; Yaseen & Muzaffar, 2018). Despite the fact that the effort has gained some political legitimacy, the administration has failed to advance its peacekeeping and counter-terrorism agendas. Nonetheless, Pakistani civil society has taken measures to fill the void in this area. In addition, he had some success working with a variety of civil society organisations to tackle the religious side of the violence that surrounded him (Kfir, 2014).

The spread of violent religious extremism throughout history:

The government's attempts to reform religious schools (madrasas) are linked to the growth of violent religious extremism in the past. **Farmer Chief Marshal law administrator** General Ayub Khan proposed several reforms for Islamic schools (madrasas) in the 1950s and 1960s, but all political bodies mainly overruled them. **Farmer Chief Marshal law administrator** General Zia al-Deni Haq's Madarsa National Committee advocated these reforms to enhance the resource and economic situation. Despite the fact that thousands of new Islamic schools have opened across the country, academics have rejected these recommendations (Hanif, Ali, Shaheen, & Hanif, 2019; S. N. U. H. Hashmi, Hashmi, Khan, & Malik, 2021). The administration of Benazir Bhutto is concerned about the madrassa sector's neutral expansion. As a result, the PPP administration banned the registration of new madrassas in 1994. Registration of madrassas with the government was required by law at the time under the Act 1860. In the years thereafter, hundreds of unlicensed Islamic schools have sprung up during the 1999 re-registration, numerous Islamic schools protested government intrusion. At the turn of the century, President General Musharraf implemented a number of reform measures, including the Voluntary Registration and Control Regulations of 2002 and a five-year, $113 million program to integrate secular courses into the Islamic school curriculum (Looney, 2003). Such behaviour earned a bad reputation and resulted in a loss of money and support. At the same time, madrassas were mainly paralysed by government spheres of control or influence (Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism and the Military, 2002). In 2005, the government amended the Act on Registration of Associations, requiring all Islamic schools to register with the government on an annual basis, subject to financial audits, in order to reduce militancy (Khushi, 2018; Z. U. Abiden Malik et al., 2021). The government did its utmost to work constructively with the National Madrasa Oversight Board (ITMD) on implementing the measure, but existing contradictions hampered the talks, and many madrassas were hostile to the new norms and regulations. A few years later, the ITMD and the Interior Ministry signed a memorandum of understanding to collaborate on critical problems such as curriculum reform and registration (Sajjad, 2015). . Following the agreement, the government recorded a total of 8,656 schools, bringing the total number of registered Islamic schools to 14,656, little below the estimated number of around 35,000 schools (Dawn, 2011).

Conservatives fight religious fanaticism with violence:

Conservatives oppose violent religious extremism for various reasons, including physical security, religious validity, and conventional and customary obedience (Z. U. A. Malik, Zhilong, & Ashraf, 2019; Z U. A. Malik, Zhilong, & Rafay, 2019). As a result, a more active role is required to use more social capital to convert religious conservatives into a position that can only be achieved by a long and meticulous process of creating trust and stable mutual connections. This technique is critical not just at the mutual level but also at the government level. Most madrasa leaders are concerned that the government would exploit the national action plan to legitimise the decision, and that their madrasas will be persecuted for historical reasons (Javaid,

n.d.; Shah, 2014). Rather than listening to and understanding the concerns of these stakeholders in Islamic schools, government authorities have frequently attempted to impose stringent reforms, including outright bans in some locations. Extremism is a serious problem that has a number of adverse effects on the countries involved. This is unproductive, as it will stymie long-term solutions and exacerbate existing problems (Rehman, Saud, & Rehman, 2017).

A new education policy has been approved in Pakistan:

Pakistan enacted a new education policy in 2009, which included a rule prohibiting controversial materials targeting any religion or minority group from being used in classrooms (Gregory, 2012; Nicole, 2014; Piazza, 2011). In November 2013, the government issued an order to the relevant authorities to take severe action against persons who disseminate sectarianism on social media or through mobile phones (Tribune, 2013). Social media is monitored in order to identify potentially sectarian-inciting statements and to take action against individuals who spread them. Through October, the effective monitoring of the progress of the National Plan of Action stated that 9,400 musketeers had been arrested for propagating sectarian hatred. In Punjab, there were approximately 6,504 incidents reported against religious leaders, 1,647 in Sindh, 1,286 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and 47 in Balochistan(A. U. Khan, Malik, & Fatima, 2020; Yaseen & Muzaffar, 2018; Zahid, 2015). According to a recent study conducted by the Ministry of Interior and Narcotics, there have been 2,337 hate speech cases reported, 2,195 arrests made, and 73 shops closed. Similarly, for loudspeaker usage, 9,164 cases were filed, 9,340 people were arrested, and 2,452 pieces of equipment were seized. Furthermore, these regulations resulted in the arrest of JUI-F leader Mufti Kifayat Ullah for "inflammatory rhetoric" (M. K. Khan & Wei, 2016; Zain UL Abiden Malik & Zhilong, 2019; Zain, 2015) and the beginning of international hate speech campaigns in 45 Punjab and KPK districts (Dawn, 2015).

Pakistan's Importance in the Fight against Extremism:

Before implementing the National Plan of Action, Pakistan's criminal justice system was having significant difficulties in resolving issues related to dealing with violent incidents. Operation Karachi apprehended almost 5,000 accused terrorists and suspects, the majority of whom will face four counter-terrorism courts (S. N. U. Hashmi et al., 2021; Imtiaz, 2014). Witnesses and prosecutors are frequently threatened while dealing with a huge number of cases, making it impossible to prosecute those cases. The Pakistan Protection Act of 2014 aims to address this problem by strengthening witness protection, judicial personnel, and other judicial personnel (Asad, 2014; Javaid, 2007; Khalid, 2014; Zain Ul Abiden Malik, Akhter, et al., 2021). While the pressing concerns persisted after the National Action Plan was implemented, there had been no meaningful progress (Mahmood Ahmad Muzafar, 2015; Zeeshan, 2015). Religious fanaticism and Pakistan's status as an Islamic state were inextricably linked. Since then, religious history and philosophy have been mainstream, and religious dogmas have become the language of society in dealing with various situations (Hanif et al., 2019). As a result, when a person who studys extremism in Pakistan, he concentrates on religion. Most academics study extremism in the context of politics, and when they discuss the issue in their home countries, they do so in the context of religion (Ahmad, 2007; Puri, 2017).

Pakistan's Modern Extremist and Political Extremism Prospects:

Because most modern extremist and terrorist groups receive micro and macro-level support from deprived, isolated, vulnerable, and angry minorities within the state, as well as from those with

good weapons relations, the speed of communication and global influence, which makes them even more dangerous, these small groups are gaining increasing strength and prominence (Botticher, 2017; Celso, 2018). Due to a lack of trust between the people and officials, political extremism is dragging the Pakistani people down a dividing path (Montero, 2007). The public's connection with political leaders is affecting how people behave in society. Because our elected leaders have frequently betrayed their promises, the Pakistani people have lost faith in them. Even basic concerns faced by ordinary individuals have not been addressed by the Pakistani government, which advocates for a radical approach. The general population believes that their fundamental rights have been taken away from them, and they are looking for alternative ways to meet their demands. People and public officials interact with a social system, which is why they impact one another. Political extremism is a reality that we have acknowledged as a result of our social environment. The beliefs and personalities of our political leaders are fostering political extremism in Pakistan. Politicians have failed to address the root causes of people's problems, and the general public has lost faith in them. The general populace believes they are not entitled to any government benefits, such as food. The feeling of institutional inefficiency and marginalisation can sometimes lead to significant efforts to distance oneself from the feeling of disenfranchisement. As a result, Pakistan's policy is influenced by our domestic environment and the personalities of our politicians, and Pakistan's sense of deprivation is fueling extremism (Jaspal, 2007).

Terrorism and extremism are Pakistan's most complicated national security issues:

Terrorism and extremism are Pakistan's most challenging national security concerns, which must be addressed through effective policy design and implementation. Such concerns impact not just international politics but also internal stability, resulting in social unrest and terrorism. Because these issues pose a diverse and complex national security danger, the legislation necessitates the exchange of knowledge and best practices for managing them effectively (Z U.A. Malik, Zhilong, & Fatima, 2020; Mazhar & S.Goraya, 2019). The public's connection with political leaders is changing the way people behave in society. In this regard, the Pakistani public has lost faith in our elected leaders since they have consistently betrayed their promises. Pakistan stands at a fork in the road due to violent extremism, which poses a severe threat to the country's socio-political stability. Only peace can create social concord, but violence, fear, and devastation can lead to insecurity, pressure, and the weakening of various institutions (Hafeez, 2008; Siddique, 2010; Z .U A. Malik & Zhilong, 2018).

Support for the Taliban in Afghanistan and other types of extremism:

When Pakistani strategic strategists supported the Afghan Taliban in the 1990s in order to keep India out of Afghanistan, extremism grew because Pakistan permitted them to utilise their tribal region as a safe haven (Z U. A. Malik, Zhilong, & Ashraf, 2019). As a result, tribal people have grown radicalised, and militants have acquired significant power. In 2007, they founded their own organisation, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which began resisting US operations in Afghanistan as well as Pakistani military operations in FATA (Iqbal, 2010; Sultana, 2015). They started bombing civilians and troops with suicide bombers. **We are the Deobandi version of Islam, with close links to the Pashtun Jamita Ulema-Islam**(Joshi, 2019). Extremism is a multi-dimensional, multi-faceted phenomenon that has many diverse definitions. In this regard, the eminent scholar Moonis Ahmar has classified Pakistani extremism into various categories.

Class extremism, racial extremism, sectarian extremism, gender extremism, and religious extremism are all types of extremism in Pakistan (Ali & Li, 2016; Hassan, 2014).

Pakistan's government is confronted with numerous challenges:

The Pakistani government is having a difficult time dealing with the **religion** of violent extremist organisations. Perhaps most importantly, the government has no legal authority to control those in danger of radicalisation appropriately. Several Pakistani sources raised the issue, including one whom the Interior Ministry recognised. "Religious scholars, teachers, educational institutions, and the media are crucial partners in national news generation and dissemination," according to the ministry, collaborating constructively with Pakistan's civil society (Johnston, Mcdonnell, Burbridge, & Patton, 2016; Yousaf, 2019).

Pakistan was ranked third in the Institute for Economics and Peace's Global Terrorism Index:

Pakistan was recently ranked third in the Institute for Economics and Peace's Global Terrorism Index, and the country's terrorist incidents have included religious minorities (Mansoor, 2014). The Talibanization of Pakistan has posed a significant threat to the region's ethnic minorities. While the majority of Pakistanis suffer from terrorist attacks, religious minorities, particularly Ahmadis, Shias, Christians, and Hazaras, are targeted by militant and religious groups(Ispahani, 2013). The banned militant group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LEJ) is involved in Shia attacks, while Jedullah Hazara is involved in Shia brutal treatment. The banned militant group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LEJ) is involved in Shia attacks, while **Jedullah** Hazara is involved in Shia brutal treatment. TTP is Pakistan's most infamous militant organisation, responsible for violence against Christians in all of Pakistan's major towns. Many minority groups, particularly Hindus, flee to safer lands. Between January 2013 and June 2014, 3,753 Pakistanis, mostly Hindus, surrendered their passports and were granted long-term visas to visit India (Mansoor, 2014) . Gregory (2012) mentioned numerous well-known anti-Christian acts, such as the assault on a Christian church in Murree in 2002, the murder of seven Christian employees at a relief agency in Karachi in 2002, and the execution of two teenage girls in 2004. Massie was killed in Lahore, Samuel Masih was assassinated for blasphemy in 2004, a Christian social worker and his driver were killed in Peshawar in 2005, and a crowd attacked a Christian stonemason in 2006. In 2009, a Christian kid was gang-raped by 30 individuals for refusing to convert to Islam, and one mob burned down more than 40 houses in Gojra, among other events. Such incidents led to the conclusion that Christian persecution is not limited to a particular region or community (Gregory, 2012).

Violence against minorities is inextricably linked to their settlement. In Sindh, where the Hindu minority is rooted, the prevalence of Christian tyranny is lower than in Punjab. As a result, Punjab is more conservative than Sindh (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2019). Anjali Kamari, who was kidnapped at the age of 12 and forced into swaps and marriages, is a noteworthy example of such occurrences. Kumari's parents in Sukkur say that Kumari is a 12-year-old child who was unable to marry or change to another faith (Memon, 2014).

Conclusion:

Despite the fact that terrorist violence has decreased in Pakistan in recent years, violent extremist religious groups have become a cornerstone of Pakistani culture. More security measures are

required to tackle this threat. This will necessitate significant societal, religious, and political transformations. Though some argue that Pakistan's most violent extremists' attempts to minimise their religious identity are insufficient to overcome the conflict's religious aspects, others disagree. While conservative religious groups frequently stand in the way of reform, there are some encouraging signs of progress. During the 1947 liberation movement, minorities, particularly Christians, played a critical role in Pakistan's growth. While Hindus residing in the border regions elected to live and participate in Pakistan's growth, Christian educational institutions in Karachi and Lahore represented Pakistan and inspired the country's freedom and inventiveness. To take these dramatic actions, Pakistan must take actual steps against these forces, including political, financial, religious, economic, and psychological influences, as well as extremist beliefs.

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