

Dynamics of Religious Extremism in Pakistan

Abstract

The core objective of this article is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the history of religious extremism in Pakistan. This study not only enhanced the knowledge of the history of religious extremism in Pakistan but also adds to the theoretical understanding of religious extremism through theoretical framework of 'Social constructivism'. It provides deep insight into the religious and sectarian extremism in Pakistan through investigating the factors, which contributed for its growth and perpetual rise.

Key Words: Extremism, Social Constructivism, Sectarianism, Afghan Jihad, War on Terror

Domestic policies regarding general conditions of economy, security play very important role in foreign policy making. Various theoretical frameworks can be used in international Relations with reference to the issues, interests and policies of states. 'Social constructivism' illustrates the impact of normative structures on world politics scenario. In current scholarship, this view is presented as sociology theory. Extremism is a big challenge for security of Pakistan and through social constructivism theory; we can better understand the nature of this phenomenon with reference to Pakistan.

Basic Assumptions of 'Social Constructivism'

Constructivism is about human consciousness and its role in life at global scenario. Social constructivism demonstrates the ways in which social science could facilitate the world politics to understand the importance of norms and identity. Constructivism highlights the ways through which ideas can define and transform the organization of the world politics. In social constructivism, learning is viewed as a social process as it cannot be acquired through the passive development of the behaviour which is shaped by the external forces nor it is confined to individual internal learning only.

Constructivists indicate that the important issues neglected by the other theories can be well explained through norms and state identities. Social Constructivism not only treats the ideas as structural factors but it also deals with the human consciousness. According to the theory, the dynamic relationship between material forces and ideas emerge from the interpretation of material reality by the social actors. Additionally, the theory also highlights the significance of the context and culture for explaining the different events that occurred in the society and it also helps to generate knowledge on the basis of this understanding.¹

Extremism and Theory of Social Constructivism

Due to extremism many problems have been arising in Pakistan. To resolve those problems 'social constructivism' is very helpful as it emphasizes on rights and norms. Constructivism gave importance to the human rights, norms, perceptions and their impact on the world politics and states. Extremism has destroyed the image of Pakistan both at national and international level. The strategic importance of Pakistan has increased after the US war on terror and it also starts a new debate on extremism and fundamentalism in the country.

At present, extremism is affecting our social system. Social constructivism helps to analyze extremism in Pakistan. The religious, social and political extremism in Pakistan are posing a serious threat to its internal security and stability. In Pakistan, extremism can be defined in a number of ways as the extremist groups have their own identities, values, perceptions. Social constructivism can help to uncover the important issues which can eventually help to overcome the intensity of extremism.

Social Constructivism and Religious Extremism in Post 9/11 Scenario

As per social constructivism, ideas play important role in shaping the identities, actions and their interests. Ideas shape the self-image of the actors as well as the image of others. The images of actors are shaped by the ideas. Therefore the interactions between actors are also affected by the ideas and positive representation of other actors show the way to friendly relations. Conversely, a negative image compounded by menace perception leads to unfriendly or defective ties.

For getting support for his rule President Zia-ul-Haq supported Sunni Fiqqah and did not bother about Shia fiqqah. This very controversial step of him had much impact on the latter socio-political development. In reaction to his step of compulsory zakat collection by the state, the Shia community showed very strong reaction. Due to these ordinances, Shia felt fear from the dominance of the Sunni community. Shia community perceived it as a negative image and threat. In order to counter these threats and to endorse their own interests Shiites have made their own organizations like Tahreek-i-Nafaz-i-FiqahJaafria. Sunni community, by taking support by Zia and post Iranian Revolution formed Sunni organization Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan. In reaction to this very militant organization Shia Community formed Siph-e-Mohammad. These extremist groups have their own different ideas, identities, values, perceptions and misperceptions in Pakistan. Since 1977 till date Pakistan has been suffering because of extremism. Sunni and Shia are the two major sects in Pakistan. They both have different interests, beliefs, identities, interests and perceptions. Shia and Sunni have their own madrassas and organizations and both want to strengthen their position reduce the dominance of other. Furthermore, Sunni and Shia Ulema are playing crucial role in widening this gap. Consequently, these negative images of both sects are further worsening the situation which is leading to fractured and unfriendly relations between both of these communities. Moreover, negative images, differences of interests and identities lead to misperception which is resulting in sectarianism in

the country. As ideas also affect the interactions between actors, Shia and Sunni clashes are affecting Pakistan's stability and image not only at national but also at international level. Shia Sunni misperceptions are also enhancing sectarianism and extremism in the country. Pakistan endured extreme sectarian clashes between the mid-1980s and the early 2000s.² Since 2007 there has been a sharp resurgence of sectarian violence in Pakistan.³ Many innocent people were killed in Shia-Sunni target killing in Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar and other areas in Pakistan. Differences in the norms and values of different sects play vital role in encouraging extremism in the country. Hence, with the help of social constructivism we can better understand the impacts and importance of norms and values of the different sects in Pakistan.

Political Extremism and Social Constructivism

Political leadership is also responsible for bringing extremism in Pakistan. According to social constructivism, states are created socially and they can be transformed and developed in new ways. It is also restated that state policies are affected by domestic values and identities.⁴ There are many factors behind extremism in Pakistan. The policies of political parties in Pakistan are also a cause of political and promoting immoderation in the society. Mostly Political leaders are from feudal background and their rigid behaviour also contributes to extremism in Pakistan. In Pakistan political leaders and their selfish attitude is promoting intolerance and dissatisfaction among citizens, as states are made by humans and there is a need to moderate our society. Social constructivism helps us to develop our political tradition on modern and democratic ways and to change the extreme behaviour of the political leaders. In Pakistan, our domestic structure and values are also encouraging intolerance in the society. Furthermore, political radicalism is also endorsing extremism in Pakistani society. In Pakistan both democratic and military government have failed to address the domestic issues. This failure has led the people of Pakistan to experience a sense of deprivation which is proved harmful for the stability of the country.

Political extremism leads people of Pakistan towards controversial ways to adopt because there is a trust deficit between the people and the politicians. According to social constructivism changing in the social interactions can produce important behavioural changes.⁵ Social interactions between the political leaders and general public are producing behavioural changes in the society. Pakistani public lack trust in our politicians because the elected leaders have broken their promises again and again. Pakistani governments have failed to address even the basic issues of common citizens and all these factors are encouraging people to adopt a radical behaviour. The general public feels deprived of their basic rights and in order to obtain the necessities of life they try to explore new ways. As political leaders and people are interacting within a social system and this is the main reason that they are influencing each other within a system. Political extremism is a reality, which we have perceived from our social environment. Values and characters of our political leaderships are enhancing political extremism in Pakistan. As the world is socially constructed (world is defined by history, politics, economics, institutions and so on) and our political history is full of such events in which civil and military governments could not fulfill their

promises. The politicians did not address the basic issue of citizens and general public has lost their trust on them. The general public believes that they have no government privileges such as food. The general public believes that they have no governmental privileges such as food and health facilities. This sense of administrative deficiency and marginalization sometimes stimulates people to adopt vehement means to get rid of their feelings of dispossession. Consequently, our domestic environment and the character of our politicians are affecting Pakistan's policies and this sense of dispossession causes extremism in Pakistan.

Application of Social Constructivism and Social Extremism

Social Constructivists stresses on human rights, norms, perceptions and their impact on states.⁶ In Pakistan both the civilian and military governments have ruled periodically. The Pakistani masses have constantly been deceived in the name of democracy as civilian and military governments had failed to address the issues of a common citizen. Our domestic structures have great impacts on the lives of the individuals, groups and the greater share of the state resources is enjoyed by the richer segment of society while the poor people are deprived of their basic rights. The gap between the have and have not or in other sense upper and lower class is getting wider day by day and it has created a gap between two distinctive classes in Pakistan. Furthermore, for a common citizen it is hard to get justice. Due to all these reasons the unprivileged class hated the privileged one and took all extremist steps to remove this difference which further led to increase in lawlessness in the country. Our domestic environment is making the ground more fertile for extremism. It is a fact that poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and violation of women rights are causing extremism in Pakistani society. People want their basic rights and when they deprived from their fundamental rights than they joined different radical groups and organizations.

Constructivism states that the identities and interests of actors are socially constructed⁷ and the social factors are shaping and affecting the behaviour of general public. The poor social and economic conditions, joblessness and lack of freedom of expression are some of the causes behind growing number of extremist organizations and groups in Pakistan. Social constructivism helps us to understand these facts that are promoting social extremism in Pakistan.

Hence, Religious, political and social extremism in Pakistan has set off one dimensional debates about radicalism. Our political history, social values and identities, misperceptions of different sects are boosting extremism in the country. Over all, extremism in Pakistan indicates that its nature and factors fall within the realm of social constructivism. Therefore, the study focuses on extremism in Pakistan and its consequences through the prism of Social constructivism.

II

Historicizing Religious extremism in Pakistan

Religious and sectarian extremism in Pakistan started right from the outset when in November 1947, Majlis-e-Ahrar-e-Hind, one of the religious parties,

declared its restoration as a Pakistani chapter. Majlis-e-Ahrar-e-Hind was against the partition of India and after independence started its activities in Punjab. Since then it has been a story of ignorance and frustration. Quaid-d-Azam realised the dangers for the society in use of religion in politics. In his first address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on 11th August 1947, he declared that religious faith and sectarian beliefs would play no part in politics in Pakistan. He clearly said "...now you are free....you are free to go to your temples...you are free to go your mosques or whatever your religious place may be....it is personal affair of everyone....it has nothing to do with the business of state". The problem has become more alarming when major political parties in the field have ignored the issue of extremism and have adopted a policy of side tracking the problem.

Pakistan is an Islamic republic with a total population of over 183 million⁸ out of which almost 96.4 percent population is Muslim. Within Muslims there is several sectarian divisions. The two major sects are Shia and Sunni. The Sunni population subdivided into many schools of Islamic jurisprudence mainly, Hanfi, maliki, Shafi and Hanbali. The majority of Sunnis in Pakistan follow the Hanfi School of thought, which is further sub-division into Deobandis and Barelvis. Ahl-e-Hadith and Wahabis are two other major sub-sects of Sunnis. The Shia population is approximately 25 percent, whereas sunni population is estimated to be 70-75 percent of Pakistan's population.⁹ The first anti-Ahmedi agitation of 1953 was instrumental in securing a political living space for otherwise obscure religious and political leaders. Especially, religious party's leaders intentionally select an issue on which nobody could oppose them and in 1974 Bhutto played very important role in the declaration of Ahmedis as non-Muslims constitutionally. A very strong consensus on Ahmedi issue exists in the country. In 1977 the same religious parties, whom Z. A. Bhutto supported earlier, played key role in toppling the Bhutto from power.

Extremism during Zia-ul-Haq Regime

Zia-ul-Haq after coming in politics announced that the Islamic values would be implemented in all aspects of country and also promised to conduct free and fair elections. He imposed martial law on July 5, 1977 throughout the country and he suspended the 1973's constitution of Pakistan by taking support from the anti-Bhutto elements and the situation started after general elections of 1977. In his first address to the nation, Zia-ul-haq stated that Islamic laws will be enforced in the country and he will bring all the social, political, economic and legal institutions of the country in accordance with the Islamic values, principles and traditions.¹⁰ After the takeover, General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq stated that he had taken action only in order to hold new elections for the national and provincial assemblies within ninety days. The whole nation was expecting that the upcoming election would be free and fair but General Zia cancelled the elections and provided an excuse that he had found irregularities in the previous government of Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and now it was his main responsibility to carry out an accountability programme. Consequently a number of white papers were released on Bhutto's government fraud in the general elections of 1977. The attacks on the Bhutto administration increased as time passed and culminated in the trial and the hanging in April 1979 of Bhutto for complicity in the murder of a political

opponent. Furthermore, Zia-ul-Haq had banned all the political activities in the country and several newspapers were ceased. Zia had promised that free and fair elections would be conducted later in 1979. Later on, in September 1979 the local bodies' election were held on the non-party basis and the electable identified themselves as Awam Dost (friends of the people). Zia also announced that the national and provincial assembly elections will be held on November 17th and 20th, 1979 respectively but he postponed the elections again.¹¹

There was a nationwide perception that the elected, Awam Dost made Zia upset and conscious about the emergence of Awam Dost because of their sympathies for PPP. In February 1981, the other political parties and the PPP united to form the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). The demand of this movement was to lift up martial law and hold free and fair elections under the 1973 constitution which was suspended earlier in 1977. The hanging of Bhutto by Zia-ul-Haq put tremendous pressure on him to restore the democratic process. Instead of restoration of the democratic government General Zia-ul-Haq tried to legitimize himself through his policy of Islamization. He had pressurized the opposition and hold elections on non-party basis. On the other end, the invasion of the Soviets in Afghanistan was a golden chance for General Zia-ul-Haq to extend his tenure in the name of Jihad against Soviet Union in Afghanistan.¹² There are few main factors behind the rise of extremism during Zia's regime. These three ingredients of extremism are as follow:

General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq had taken the following steps in his regime while implementing the Islamic rules and regulations throughout the country. In 1979, Zia-ul-Haq had introduced Hadood ordinance, Shariat Courts, Zakat and Usher ordinance. Zia had confirmed the formation of the majlis-e-Shoora on 24 December 1981 in order to promote the effective contact between people and the government. In Zia's regime educational policies were also modified. Islamic studies were organized according to the Sunni fiqqah. This attempt made the Shia community unhappy and they demanded that they wanted education according to their own fiqqah. So there was a lack of trust and confidence between the Sunni and Shia due to which elements of sectarianism were further triggered.¹³ Zia did not want to face national elections because he had a risk from the mobilization of people against him and perceived that it was difficult for him to be elected in fair elections. Zia has taken initiative of the Islamization process by conducting a referendum for his endorsement. The referendum was held on 19th December 1984. The government staffs were strictly instructed to cast their vote in affirmative but the turn out in the election was quite low. So referendum was another cause which promoted hatred between the government and public because it was seen that referendum for the promotion of Islamic principles was just used as a political tool by General Zia-ul-Haq for just strengthening his position.¹⁴ When General Zia enforced shariah in Pakistan and raised the slogan of Nizam-e-Mustafa. This act was considered as the imposition of the Sunni Hanafifiqqah in the whole country. As in Pakistan the majority of the population belongs to the Sunni sect but General Zia did not bother about the Shia and others sects in the country.

Additionally, by making the zakat collection compulsory through state apparatus, the Shia community raised their reservations and tried to protect their own beliefs through establishing Tahreeq-i-Nafaz-i-Fiqqah-e-Jafaria. Shia fiqqah has different explanation on Zakat issue. In a reaction to Zakat and Usher ordinance Shia community protested against the government in Islamabad on July 1980 and according to official record more than 50,000 Shias from all over the country gathered in Islamabad.¹⁵ Due to these ordinances Shia community has felt fear from the dominance of the Sunnis community. In order to counter these threats Shias had made their own organization like Sipha-e-Muhammad to counter the dominance of Sunnis and to protect and promote their own interests. Similarly Sunnis also countered the organization of Shia's community and formed their own Sunni organization namely Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan. Thus both Sunni and Shia communities were engaged in protection of their own fiqqahs by suppressing the dominance of each other.¹⁶

Iranian Revolution and Its Impact on Pakistan

Iranian revolution in 1979 had varying effects on countries like Pakistan which have a sizeable Shia Population. For the first time in the history of Islam the Shia Ulema took the realm of power in Iran. The revolutionary government in Iran was generous in extending the material and moral collaboration to the radical elements of Shia sect in Pakistan. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia and its allies were frightened by the Iranian revolution and they also provided assistance to the influential parties of their respective creed in Pakistan.¹⁷

Soviet Invasion in Afghanistan Its Impact on Pakistan

The Russian invasion in Afghanistan (1979) evoked a strong response from the USA and Gulf States. Pakistan's decision to support USA basically emerged from her security needs. However, the inability on the part of Pakistan to amicably handle various offshoots of the issue exposed it to a situation of multidirectional threats to her security. A large number of refugees, drugs and lethal weapons found their way into Pakistan.¹⁸ Religious parties gained unprecedented influence in national affairs during this period. Huge funds were channeled through Pakistan and given to the religious parties, which lodged, motivated and trained the Mujahedeen to fight against communist infidels. Hence American sponsored Jihad launched in Afghanistan against Russia with the direct support of Pakistan i.e as a frontline state. The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, however, did not see the religious parties recede. Their cooperation with the Secret agencies of the country during Afghan Jihad had catapulted them to a position of powerful pressure group.

Afghan-Soviet War and Costs for Pakistan

Due to suppressive reforms by Communist regime, after Saur Revolution in 1978 in Kabul many Afghan refugees migrated to Pakistan. Mostly Afghan migrated after the Soviet invasion (1979) in Afghanistan and Pakistan provides shelter for millions of Afghan people. The Afghan people lived in camps and in the rural areas of NWFP and Baluchistan. These two provinces have cultural,

linguistic and religious ties with Afghanistan. The Afghan refugees belong to different tribes and systems which further resulted clashes within groups and leads to bloodshed.¹⁹ Additionally, the migration of massive Afghan people affected the Pakistan's economy and threatens to social conditions of the society. Moreover, Pakistani government provided shelter and food to Afghan refugees and it was burden on Pakistan's economy. The refugees were willing to work on low wages and it created unemployment problems for the local population which threaten the prosperity and security of Pakistan.²⁰ Furthermore, because of Pakistan's support for Afghan mujahidin Soviet Union initiated a hostile campaign against Pakistan. The Soviet stated that Pakistan had established many bases and centers that trained terrorist groups for armed riots within Afghanistan. In response Soviet exploited the ethno-linguistic and regional differences between Pakistani provinces especially in Baluchistan and NWFP. To create instability in Pakistan, Soviet Union further supported Baluchistan against government of Pakistan and threatens Pakistan through national elements of Baluchistan to establish an independent Baluchistan.²¹ It was the time when Indian Soviet nexus strengthen and they exploited Pakistan's position in Baluchistan.

Factors for the Rise of Extremism in Pakistan

There are various factors that pushed Pakistan towards extremism.

i. Establishment of Madrassa Culture

The madrassa are well organized institutions. They provide free religious education, boarding and lodging and are essentially schools for the poor. In Pakistan, government policies in early eighties produced a new fast-expanding breed of madrasas, which has contributed to the sectarian divide. At the time of independence Pakistan had its share of around 250 madaris which rose to 2862 in 1988 and their number has increased to well over 11000 in 2005.²² Most madaris follow either Deobandi (64 per cent) or Barelvi (24 per cent) fiqqah (Islamic jurisprudence), but the Ahl-e-Hadith (6 per cent) and Ahl-e-Tashih (less than two per cent) branches are also represented. In 1987 total enrolment in these madaris was estimated at 371904 with about 13330 foreign students.²³ The estimated number of students studying in the madaris both male and female in 2005 was 1.5 million.²⁴ Students at more than 10,000 seminaries are being trained in theory, for service in the religious sector.

After memorizing the Quran by heart (often without understanding it), these students hold the office of mullahs in the area mosques. These graduates find it hard to get employment and turn to various religious organizations that are often acting as front for more dubious activities. Some of these institutions go further and impart military training. Mostly pupils who are studying in these madrassas are between the ages of five to eighteen and they belong to poor families and rural area. Few maddrassas got financial aid from government Zakat fund. Whereas the rest are being run by their organizations either using foreign funds directly provided to them by foreign countries/organization or through donations. In Pakistan, the rise of sectarianism conflicts is closely related to madrassas boom. Madrassa culture is posing internal security threat to Pakistan as almost all sects have their own madrassas which resulted in sectarianism. Similarly, different

religious groups are promoting extremist through about religion which is further promoting religious intolerance in the country. Moreover, few extremist groups are using madrassas to train the Jihadi groups and they are preaching the concept of Jihad as an individual act rather than the state affair.

The major source of finance in Madrassas was Zakat in Zia's time period but it was misuse by Madrassas. Zakat was the major source of financing of the madrassas. General Zia-ul-Haq did not take notice about the misuse of Zakat. Government has also given land to few madrassas. On the other end Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Kuwait have been identified as sponsors of. After independence, for the first time these three political parties were participated in the general election of 1971. Their success in the general election showed that the slogan of liberalism and secularism was dying. Moreover, in order to get more political importance they exploited strategic position. This lust of power inspired other religious groups to come into politics and the political scene of the country witnessed a mushroom growth of politico-religious parties. The discussion on the profiles of religious militant organization in Pakistan and their active splinter groups would also help in better understanding of the problem of religious extremism in Pakistan.

By 1980s madrassas flourished in Pakistan due to the heavy funding from Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries. With the passage of time Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamiat-ul-Ulama-e-Islam (JUI), who were the two leading religious parties of Pakistan at the time, took control of madrassas in Pakistan. The Wahabi/ Salafi school of Islam that is dominant in Saudi Arabia, had started to be facilitated by the madrassas in Pakistan. In those days the two major Sunni schools within Pakistan, Sufi and Barelvi, were on retreat. Hence, violent Shia-Sunni Clashes had been on the rise due to the rise of two distinctive schools of Islamic thought within Pakistan since mid-80s.

ii. Establishment of Sectarian Organizations Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (Lej)

Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) was founded at Jhang, as a sub organization of JUI in 1984 by late MaulanaHaq Nawaz Jhangvi as a local anti-Shia religious and political leader. They follow Deobandi and Wahabi philosophy. After Iran revolution Shia community in Pakistan was encouraged and this organization was formed to counter Shia domination. The Saudi Arab also donated heavily to Sunni madrassas to support them.²⁵

SSP had emerged as a obsessive politico religious force opposed to Tehrek-e-Jafria Pakistan (TJP). According to its manifesto, the main purpose of the party was to protect the honour of the friends of Holy Prophet (PBUH). The main objective of the SSP is to establish Pakistan as a Sunni state. The founder of this organization MaulanaHaq Nawaz Jhangviwasgunned down in 1990. MaulanaEsrar-ul-HaqQasmi replaced him but he was also shot down after about a year. MaulanaAzam Tariq the next head of the SSP, he participated in the election of October 2002 and won a seat in National Assembly. Maulana Tariq was also gunned down in 2004. The main theme of SSP stance has been condemnation of Shia sect, criticism of Imam Khomeini and Iranian Shia Revolution. Emergence of

SSP also explains bloody Shia and Sunni clashes in Jhang in 1990 and 1991. Another splinter group of SSP named Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LEJ) is responsible for the worst kind of sectarian violence in Punjab against Shia community. The LEJ was formed in 1996 and it shares the political objectives and operation modes of SSP, in fact it is hard to distinguish between SSP and LEJ. The SSP modes of attack are generally the murder of important Shia members and Lej usually targeted the professionals of Shia community (for instance doctors, teachers, major leaders and scholars).

iii. Establishment of Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqah-e-Jarafia (TNFJ) and Tehrik-e-Jafria Pakistan (TJP)

Iranian revolution encouraged the Shia community to form their own organization in Pakistan. Tehrik-e-Nafaz-e-Fiqah-e-jafaria (TNFJ) was formed in 1979. Mufti Jafer Hussain founded TNFJ, being the first and exclusive Shia organization in Pakistan. It was the time when many Muslims, especially Shias, the world over were inspired by the success of Islamic revolution in Iran. The Shias in Pakistan felt that the government was attempting to deny their rights of Azadari and demanded that laws based on Fiqah-e-Jafria only should be applicable to them. The outbreak of Shia Sunni clashes in Jhang in the wake of murder of Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi in 1990 gave a fillip to further militancy in TNFJ.²⁶ The TNFJ gave rise to further Shia organization Such as Tehrik-e-Jaffria Pakistan (TJP) and Sippah-e-Muhammad Pakistan (SMP). TJP was headed by Allama Arif Hussain Al-Hussaini after the death of its founder in 1982. He was gunned down in August 1988 and was replaced by Allama Sajid Naqvi. This Shia political party was renamed as TJP in March 1993. The goal of this political party is to protect and raise the voice of Shia community in the parliament. TJP has a strong student wing called Imamia Student Organization (ISO) existing in almost all important education institutions of the country as a counter-balance to Sunni organization.²⁷

iv. Tehrik-e-Fiqah Jafria (TFJ) and Sipah-e-Muhammad Pakistan (SMP)

Tehrik-e-Jafria (TFJ) led by Syed Agha Hamid Ali Mousavi was relatively moderate group. However, after Shia Sunni clashes in 1988, TFJ also founded a militant group named 'Mukhtar Force' with the objectives protecting Shia worship places and providing guards to mourning processions. The group has also floated Mukhtar student's organization. Sippah Muhammad Pakistan (SMP) led by Maulana Abbas was formed in 1993. It is a splinter group of Tehrik Jaffria Pakistan. The militant Sunni organization (SSP), which has become a byword for its violent brand of anti-Shia fanaticism, lost more than a dozen workers within just one week of its inception. The SMP leader Ghulam Naqvi was arrested in 1996 and he was alleged for 30 murders and other violent activities in country and controlled the groups from prison. The operational activities of SMP were slower down when Ghulam Naqvi was in prison. Thoker Niaz Baig, a Shia dominated area in Lahore, has been a stronghold of SMP. SMP is known as the combative branch of Shia community. At present, SMP acknowledged to have almost 3,000 equipped members and many of them are also the member of TJP as both organization has identical members. The main objective of SMP is to form a Shia

government in Pakistan which can protect them from Sunni dominance and ruling.²⁸

v. Emergence of Sunni group Jundallah

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (Lej) further strengthen its position by emergence of a Sunni militant group known for targeting rival Muslims which emerged as a dangerous new player in Pakistan. Jundallah in an Islamist militant group associated with the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The group was commanded by the Emir of TTP Hakimullah Mehsud until his death on November 1, 2013. In 2003, Jundallah was formed and it is believed to have about 1000 members. Jundallah is Sunni Salafi group and it also has links with Saudi Arabia which is center of Salafism.²⁹ Jundallah is led by Albolmalek Rigi, a Sunni Fundamentalist. Jundallah has linked to Al-Qaeda and Taliban and it is also involved in drug trafficking.

Dick Cheney travelled to Pakistan in February 2007 and met with President Musharraf. The secret campaign by Jundallah against Iran was on the agenda at that time. Cheney in an interview to give legitimacy to Jundallah group referred them as “guerrillas” although Cheney’s tried to present them as legitimate fighters but it is a fact that Jundallah is a sectarian radical group. It is made by Sunni extremist who hate Shia community and its purpose is to stimulate conflicts among the two sects of Islam. Saudi Arab is supporting this group because it belongs to Sunni Salafi sect. Moreover, Iran blamed that through this group the U.S and Britain are creating ethnic problems and instability in Iran. The London Telegraph reported on 25th February 2007 that U.S is secretly funding militant ethnic separatist group in Iran to pile pressure on the Islamic government to give up its nuclear program. According to ABC News, Pakistani and U.S intelligence officials, since 2005 Jundallah group is secretly encouraged by U.S and it is responsible for a series of deadly guerrilla raids in Iran through Baluchistan.

vi. Sectarianism in Pakistan During 1990s

The intensity of the Shia-Sunni clashes enhanced in Pakistan during the 1990s due to many factors. As a result of these conflicts between the two sects many competent people from both sides got injured or died, including ambassadors, senior state functionaries, and important religious leaders of each sect. According to an official estimate; during 1990 to 1997 almost 422 people were killed in 395 sectarian incidents in Punjab. Many innocent citizens were killed in target killings. Sectarian violence has become serious concern and threat for the security and stability of Pakistan. Thus it has now become a national concern with serious implication for the security of the state and society. Pakistan was Islamized gradually during Zia-ul-Haq’s regime but when it reached at its peak in the 1980s the country faced severe extremism in this process of Islamization.³⁰ The highest number of brutal killings and murders were observed during 1997 and 1998 in Pakistan. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which is a Sipha-e-Sahaba’s fragmented group, openly declared war against the Shia community. Consequently, the Shia extremist group Sipha-e-Muhammad, Struck back against the Lashkar-i-Jhangvi. Thus sectarian violation was on peak during 1990’s in Pakistan.³¹

Rise of Taliban

Taliban set up a strict self-styled Islamic state in Afghanistan throughout 1996 to 2001. Initially Taliban were viewed as a force that could bring peace in Afghanistan. With the passage of time, Pakistan had foreseen that supporting the Taliban in forming their government would serve its long-term economic and strategic interests. The success of Taliban was positive signal to thousands of pupils who were studying in the madrassas of Pakistan. Once again Pakistan and Afghanistan became the hub for the activities of Islamic fundamentalists. After forming an alliance Taliban and Al-Qaeda had started threatening pro-west regimes in the Muslim world. Although religious and political parties of Pakistan had little obligation toward their belief systems with the Taliban but later on it became disastrous for our country. Religious extremism has swept across Pakistan particularly in FATA.³² After Zia's regime, lots of people believed that Benazir Bhutto would play her role to root out extremism from Pakistan and she would be a positive addition in the political arena of the country.

Unfortunately the military and civilian governments could not cope with extremism in Pakistan. In political activities both religious parties SSP and TJP were allowed to participate without any check and balance. Furthermore, different government used these groups for their political purposes. The major political parties PPP and PMLN also did alliance with these groups. During second term Benazir Bhutto made an alliance with religious zealots such as JamiyatUlma-e-Islam (JUI) of MaulanaFazal-ur-Rehman which further provided an opportunity to SSP to pursue sectarian violence in Pakistan. Moreover, as PPP needed SSP support to stable their government in all over Pakistan and therefore they gave the Ministry of Fisheries in Punjab to Sheikh Hakim Ali whose was renowned leader of SSP. The Federal minister of PPP (Naseerullah Babar) has announced on October 22, 1995 that PPP government planned to ban funding for all those madrassas who are supporting sectarianism in the country. The extremists also gained stronghold when Nawaz Sharif came to power and Nawaz Sharif seriously tried to concentrate on this issue during his government (1997-1999). The Anti-terrorism Act Bill of 1997 was accepted by the parliament which emphasized to combating terrorism and sectarianism in country. Later on, under the anti-terrorism ordinance of July, 1999, this law was amended.³³

The 11 years of Civilian rule in Pakistan has ended with the General Musharraf's military coup in 1999. The 9/11 has brought a U-turn in the foreign policy of Pakistan towards Afghanistan. There was no other option for Pakistan except to join US WOT against extremist Al-Qaida and Taliban in Afghanistan. Once again the general public was hopeful that they would eliminate the extremist elements if the wave of liberalization would flourish in Pakistan but unfortunately it could not happen. According to US State Department's report, General Musharraf remained an influential ally to get rid of terrorism and extremism. The government had remained uneven in coping with these religious organizations.

Hence, the government crackdown has been termed as uneven owing to the fact that the government has treated different religious groups differently.

Pakistan before 9/11 Era

According to social, economic, political indicators and primarily because of terrorism, Pakistan's status was a fragile state in the eyes of America in pre 9/11 era. Since the Afghan-Soviet war, Pakistan was supporting the Taliban government but after American withdrawal, Pakistan's support to Taliban had been criticized internationally. On the other hand, India was constantly blaming Pakistan for the growing activities of Jihadis in Kashmir and it was taken as terrorism by India. Kargil war (1999) between Pakistan and India was stopped with the interference of U.S and again they considered that Pakistan was responsible for the Kargil war. The U.S strongly disliked the acquiring of nuclear weapons by Pakistan in 1998. Furthermore, lack of democracy in Pakistan also became a serious alarm for U.S as General Musharraf disposed the democratic rule of Nawaz Sharif in 1998.³⁴

The Incident of 9/11

The incidence of September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States at World Trade Centre towers in New York and Pentagon in Washington results in significant changes in the world politics. This phenomenon led to a major policy shift in international affairs that influenced the security policies of third world countries in South Asia and put it impact on global security.

Immediately after the deadly 9/11 terrorist attacks the U.S administration blamed Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaida for their active involvement in these attacks. Afghanistan was under the Taliban rule where Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida was freely operating. This made Afghanistan the first target of US aggression. President George W. Bush addressed the American nation after the tragedy and made clear that US would make no distinction between those who planned these attacks and those who harbored them.³⁵ Any US action against Afghanistan in order to destroy Al-Qaeda's network required a war against the Taliban which could not be successful without the active support of Pakistan. This was the reason the US by force compelled Pakistan to stand with the US in war against terrorism. Specially, due to the geo-strategic location of Pakistan and expected of Osama Bin Laden and Taliban chief Mullah Omer in remote area of Pak-Afghan border the US wanted to make Pakistan as her front line state after the 9/11³⁶ Furthermore, U.S also perceived that as Pakistani intelligence agencies and Al-Qaeda had already links with each other since the Afghanistan-Soviet war of 1980's, so it was thought that Pakistan could provide some authentic information about the Taliban-Afghan nexus. On the other hand, it was speculated by Washington that Musharraf was reluctant to introduce reforms due to his desire of friendly relations with Pakistan's Islamist political parties which have strong political base in Pakistan.

Thus, the incident of 9/11 moulded the U.S policy towards Pakistan when Pakistan announced her support for the US led war against the Taliban and al-Qaida.³⁷ The U.S administration presented a list of demands to Pakistan's government so that an effective role of Pakistan could be ensured in the war including; strict control on all Al-Qaeda operatives which were coming to Afghanistan from Pakistan along with elimination of all sorts of logistical support to Osama Bin Ladin, to give landings rights to U.S aircrafts, to give access to Pakistani Naval and air bases and border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan, to turn over all intelligence and immigration information, to cut down all the shipments of fuel and supplies to Taliban and stop volunteers from going into Afghanistan to join the Taliban in the name of Jihad and Pakistan had to support US and had to cut all diplomatic relation from Taliban regime. General Musharraf conveyed to the US administration that his government required a thorough analysis of the each demand so that he had something to convince his own nation.³⁸

Pakistan Joined War on Terror with USA

Keeping in view the immediate impact of Taliban and the Al-Qaeda activities on Pakistan, the government considered itself in a grave problem to take part in a war against them and also tried its level best to settle the issue through dialogue which remained futile. After 9/11 Pakistan had two options given by the Bush Administration, you are either with U.S or against U.S President Musharraf decided to go with US on WOT. Voices were raised against this decision in public, print media, electronic media and political leadership. Pakistan coalition with US against Taliban created a lot of security problems for Pakistan because Taliban were supported by tribal areas and the people of these areas stood against the government of Pakistan. This situation led to the emergence of terrorist activities in Pakistan. Since then Pakistan has been facing suicide bombings even more than Afghanistan which is the hub of terrorism. Pakistan has taken initiatives for countering terrorism; operation Rah-e-Rast and operation Rah-e-Nijat are the most important steps against terrorism. But still religious extremism and terrorism remain severe security threats for the stability of Pakistan. The attacks on sensitive areas like GHQ and PNS Mehran Base question the stability of Pakistan. so, with this background it can safely be concluded that religious extremism leads to terrorism and it can only be removed if the ideology of religious extremism is removed.

Religious Extremism during President Musharraf Regime

Though Musharraf had become an active partner with the US in WOT after 9/11 but in Pakistan he tried to sustain pleasant relations with the religious groups. As the mainstream Pakistani politicians had isolated Musharraf, therefore he required the support of religious groups. Moreover, Pakistan was supporting the US in their war in Afghanistan therefore, thousands of volunteers from madrassa were sent to Afghanistan to fight alongside the Taliban. The US led aggression resulted in apparent defeat of the Al-Qaeda and Taliban but their militant group tried to access Pakistan through FATA. On the other hand, in Pakistan, cities like Karachi have turned into safe havens for the Pushtun people who migrated from

Afghanistan. Now they are using Pakistan to re-strengthen themselves. Top Al-Qaeda leader Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, was arrested from Rawalpindi in March 2003 which shows how the terrorist groups are using Pakistani land for their extremist causes. There was an ease-off from Pakistan and NATO in 2001-2002 after the premature victory against Al-Qaeda and Taliban. At that time against occupied forces the Al-Qaeda and Taliban acquired some chances to review and reform their resistance policies. The Taliban's agenda for instance, ban on cinemas, music and videos, prohibited co-education, burqa culture for women was implemented by MMA. The issue of backwardness, poverty, illiteracy and unemployment were not addressed by MMA because they were not competent to concentrate on these issues. The poor class suffered whereas the richer class was left with their assets.

The alliance between mullah and military was at its peak during the Musharraf era which served two objectives of Musharraf. The first task was to bring the religious parties into mainstream politics and the second was to justify his rule to alarm the world of the increasing religious extremism in Pakistan. After 9/11, Pakistan condition was antagonistic and tense. The emergence of religious extremism in Pakistan promoted terrorism. The government actions against militant groups got limited success and resulted in terrorist activities in the country. There was a sense of insecurity among the people and there is no short solution to this problem. The militant extremists targeted the children, women, students, hotel, and mosques.³⁹ The sectarian violence was also emerging leading to the occurrence of sectarian conflicts. In 2003 attack on Shia procession in Quetta resulted in the killing of a number of people. Similarly, in May 2004, 23 innocent people were killed in bomb explosion in Shia mosque in Karachi. Shia community became insecure in the country due to their massive killing. This affected the human security and created the bad image of Pakistan at the world stage and the foreigners hesitated to come into Pakistan.⁴⁰ The role of women in spreading the extremist ideology was also of great concern. For example, in 2006 an active radio service was launched in Swat by MaulanaFazlullah who was the leader of the organization TNSM having an aim to enforce Sharia in the country. He was the pro-Taliban and anti-America so; through his radio service he preached religious teaching to the people in the valley.

Besides, he also tried to convince people for jihad through his teachings. Women donated their jewelry to him for his movement. But later on they regretted their decision because he was not a true scholar or intellectual and practiced the religion in the wrong way. Moreover, under his leadership he banned the women education.⁴¹ There were also problems in curriculum in education sector in Pakistan. The world of a Pakistani school child was largely unchanged even after 9/11. General Musharraf's educational curriculum was far from being informative. It was actually a slightly modified copy of the system under Nawaz Sharif which, in turn, was identical to that under Benazir Bhutto who had inherited it from General Zia-ul-Haq. Fearful of taking on powerful religious forces, every incumbent government had refused to take a position on the curriculum and thus quietly allowed young minds to be molded by fanatics.

Terrorist Activities in Islamabad

i. Lal Masjid Incident

The tragic incident of Lal Masjid on July 2007 showed two aspects. First, the religious group associated with Lal Masjid had a link with Taliban and Al-Qaeda. This group had alleged relations with the banned militant groups and their activities were considered as an act of extremism. In March April 2007, the illegal activities of this group were exposed through media. For example, forceful kidnapping of a prostitute, criticism for the video and DVD shops (in Barakahu area of Rawalpindi) and demand from the government to implement the laws under Sharia were important activities of this group. Later on a policeman was abducted by this group and made his release conditional with the release students of Lal-Masjid who were in the hands of government.⁴² After this when the Lal-Masjid administration occupied the public children library then the government decided to launch the operation to end this occupation. All their demands from the government were much influenced from the Taliban ideologies. All these things were the cause for launching an operation on the mosque. This incident was a reflection of General Musharraf's anti-terrorism policies. Lal-Masjid leadership asked support from the Taliban. At the time of operation, the Taliban announced that if the government takes any step against Lal-Masjid then they would take serious counterinsurgency.⁴³ This gave opportunity to the Taliban to enter Islamabad and pose a serious threat to the capital.

The President Musharraf's government had announced the support for Fazlullah's Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-Muhammadi (TNSM). This proved the relation of Lal-Masjid administration and the Taliban in Pakistan and posed a threat to security forces of Pakistan. After the Lal-Masjid operation extremism further increased in the country and after this incident almost 15 suicide bomb blasts occurred between July 14 to July 31 and the number of clashes happened between the militants and security forces in 2007 and mostly in the capital city. This shows that the Lal-Masjid incident was an important cause which has increased suicide attacks in the country.⁴⁴

ii. Assassination of Benazir Bhutto

In 2007 former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was assassinated during her election campaign. It was a national tragedy for Pakistan. In this year Musharraf imposed emergency, suspended the constitution and had taken all powers in his hands. His action was severely criticized all over the country because Musharraf did all this to maintain his own power. All those people were arrested who opposed Musharraf and ban on the media created this situation of hustle and bustle. The Government justified her act by claiming that it was necessary to declare the emergency for the safety of citizens who faced the threat to their security. The government also argued that this step was necessary to counter the threat of extremism and terrorism which was a menace. The political instability in Islamabad provided further opportunity to the militants to enter into city. It also gave the impression that Pakistan's military had failed to control the extremists. At the time of political instability, the main threat was the security of nuclear assets. The security of nuclear weapons becomes a crucial issue for the country.⁴⁵

All the policies showed that in 2007 Pakistan faced many serious challenges. The government and military proved themselves unable to control the extremism in the country. Moreover, MMA's government in NWFP (2002) could not address the issues of illiteracy, poverty and backwardness. Consequently, the religious parties were defeated badly in the elections of 2008. Awami National Party (ANP) in NWFP bagged thirty one seats while the religious party MMA hardly won 9 seats. Nationally, religious parties won only 3 seats out of 258 contested. On the other hand, 2008 elections brought new hopes for Pakistani people and they had voted for democratic and progressive Pakistan. But unfortunately, new democratic government of PPP also could not tackle the problem of growing extremism in society. Hence, 2008 elections brought in power new faces with old policies and democratic government of PPP dashed the expectations of common citizens. For instance, Musharraf was blamed for his involvement and support in Aafia Siddiqi case and the US WOT. The new democratic government of PPP also followed his policies. All these factors further promoted extremism in the country. The existing circumstances demanded serious efforts to eradicate this curse.⁴⁶

iii. Attack on International Islamic University Islamabad

The attack on International Islamic University (October, 2009) can be another example of extremism and terrorism that prevailed in the country. This incident got serious criticism by people from all over the world generally and from Pakistan particularly, this indicated that after 8 years from 9/11 Pakistan was still struggling to counter the extremism and terrorism. Unfortunately our security policies are defective and we have lack of consensus on the question of how to deal with extremism which hinders the way for effective measures against extremism.

Revival of Sectarian Violence

At present, sectarian violence is arguably the most dangerous fallout for Pakistan of the U.S-led war against terrorism in neighboring Afghanistan. A sharp resurgence in sectarian violence is linked to the rise of the Pakistani Taliban in the mid-2000s as this organization has close ties with militant sectarian organization such as Lashkr-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). Between the mid of 1980s and early 2000 Pakistan witnessed soaring sectarian conflicts. Sectarian violence was curtailed momentarily in 2001-2002 when President Musharraf banned militant groups of Sunni and Shia community. Furthermore, decades old sectarian tensions in Kurram tribal region were exploited in 2006 when Taliban fighters seek asylum in the North-West tribal area of Pakistan. Kurram was under the control of local Shia groups and Taliban wanted access Afghanistan through this route. In Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) areas Taliban sustained their campaign against Shia community. It led to the reconsolidation in North-western Pakistan of Shia extremist groups seeking to defend their community. In Pakistan, there is a sharp revival in sectarian conflicts since 2007. According to South Asia Terrorism Portal; from 2007 to 2011 nearly 631 unpleasant incidents of sectarian clashes occurred and over 1,649 citizens were killed. The incidents of sectarian violence were decreased in 2011 but in the starting months of 2012 (from January to Many, 2012) approximately 177 people were died in 51 incidents. In keeping with

historical trends, mostly sectarian violence has taken place between the Shia and Sunni communities (Shia accounted for 70 percent of all sectarian death between 1985 and 2005)⁴⁷. That said, intra-sectarian violence between Deobandi and Barelvi Sunnis is also on the rise: hundreds of Barelvi (Sufi) worshippers were killed in more than 70 suicide attacks at shrines between 2005 and 2010. Moreover, two prominent Barelvi leaders were targeted by Deobandi militants in 2009: in June, Mufti Sarfraz Ahmed Naeemi, a senior Barelvi cleric who had repeatedly spoken against the Pakistan Taliban, was killed in a suicide bombing in Lahore; in September, Hamid Saeed Kazmi, then Pakistan's minister for religious affairs, was shot by two gunmen. In Karachi, Pakistan's largest city and commercial capital, clashes between extremist Sunni organizations are common one exchange of fire in the city's Godhra area in September 2011 left eight people dead.

In Baluchistan sectarian attacks are directed against the minority Hazara community, whose members are Shia. For the past few years there has been a dramatic increase in the targeting of Hazaras, starting with the killing of the chairman of the Hazara Democratic Party in Balochistan for sectarian reasons.⁴⁸ The trend of targeting Shia Hazaras has continued unabated in 2012 and 46 people have fallen victim to sectarian killings in the provincial capital of Quetta primarily in the months of April and May.⁴⁹ On June 28th a bomb attack near Quetta on a bus transporting Shia pilgrims killed 15 people. Historically, the Sunni Taliban are against Shia and Hazara community. The growing presence of Taliban militant (both Pakistani and Afghan Taliban) is also related with the violence of LeJ against Hazara community. Taliban's association with LeJ also strengthen sectarian conflicts in the province. Unlike in other parts of Pakistan, sectarian killings in Baluchistan rarely target prominent individuals such as doctors, lawyers or leaders of religious-political organizations. As such, the sectarian violence in Baluchistan and Hazara has an ethnic dimension. Killing and slaughtering human beings in the name of God is the order of the day.

Different Cases of Religious Extremism in Pakistan

i. Killings of Hazara Community in Baluchistan

The recent killings of the Hazara community in Quetta speak of the gravity of the situation, while the successive governments have failed to even touch this subject fearing a criticism from the religious orthodoxy. The streams of blood are flowing in our neighborhoods and we continue to remain numb and mute; waking up every day to the news of another episode of bloodshed using religion as a weapon. In the north of the country the semi-autonomous Gilgit-Baltistan region is also plagued by soaring sectarian violence-nine people died in 21 sectarian incidents in 2011. Sectarian clashes flared there on February 28th 2012 after Jundullah militants forced 18 Shia residents of Gilgit-Baltistan returning from pilgrimage in Iran off their bus and shot them to death. The attack sparked riots in which 22 people were killed, forcing authorities to enforce a three week curfew. Weeks later, on April 2nd 2012, 14 more people were killed when a grenade attack against an AhleSunnatWalJammatt (ASWJ) protest rally in Chilas sparked sectarian clashes, including the murder of ten Shia bus passengers. The authorities once again responded by imposing a curfew, closing schools and

offices, Jamming mobiles phones, and barring entry to the two main mosques in the area. Gilgit-Baltistan is notable for the fact that sectarian violence is continuing to spread in the region despite strong and prompt responses from local law enforcers, government officials and religious leaders. In this situation, there is a dire need to highlight the true meaning of Islam and sunnah rather than killing each other on a sectarian basis. We should think that our Holy Prophet (PBUH) did not promote religious extremism and Islam is a peaceful religion.

What needs to be understood is that there can be causes worth dying for, but there cannot be any worth killing for. How many more people will they kill to establish a religious system based on sectarianism? For in the end, with each killing, another soul will be born in every house.⁵⁰

ii. BadamiBagh Incident (March, 2013)

Attack on the inhabitants of a Christian colony in the BadamiBagh area of Lahore by the extremist was another tragic event in the history of Pakistan. Although most of the residents had fled before the ransacking of the property, but there were heart-breaking scenes witnessed of women and children screaming in fear as they ran from the mob. We must remember that we are the followers of Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and we are the protectors of the life and property of the minorities. The emergence of Pakistan as an independent state on the map of the world was conceived as a country where every citizen would live in harmony, while practicing their individual faiths without interfering in the beliefs of others. Everyone would have equal status and opportunities whether he or she is a Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Hindu etc. Unfortunately, it appears that we have lost this very vision for the country. The Quaid-e-Azam vision of Pakistan was in line with the true spirit of Islamic injunctions. But it has now been ignored in favour of misdirected ignorant orthodoxy that is pushing the nation towards complete inhalation. Self-interest infested interpretation of religion has tormented religion beyond recognition, thus turning it into a saleable commodity.

The Holy Quran says: "Had God willed, they had not been idolatrous. We have not set thee as a keeper over them, nor art thou responsible for them" (6:107) and "Do not revile those unto whom they pray beside God, lest they wrongfully revile God Through ignorance" (6:108). Islam does not preach coercion of believers of other faiths, as the Holy Quran Says: "There is no compulsion in religion" (2:256) and "(So) for you is your religion and for me is my religion." (109:6). According to Abu Dawood 3:170, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: "Beware! If anyone dared oppress a member of minority community or usurped his right or tortured him more than his endurance or took something away forcibly without his consent, I would fight (against such Muslims) on his behalf on the Day of Judgment." At another point the Prophet (PBUH) maintained: "Whoever killed a member of a minority community, he would not smell the fragrance of paradise, though the fragrance of paradise would cover the distance of 40 years (of travelling)" (Ibne Rushed, Badiya-tul-Mujtahid, 2:299).

Pakistan's founders were not fanatics, but poets and intellectuals. We are now living in a country where killing human beings and destroying their life and property by using religion as a weapon has almost become a norm. Look at the

plight of Islam today, where there is a focus only on trivial issues, while the real issues like the need for education and learning, as laid down in the Quran and the Hadith, seem to be forgotten. It is important to understand that someone's faith is not anything physical that can be eliminated by bullets or silenced by threats. What needs to be understood is that there can be causes worth dying for, but there cannot be any worth killing for. Let there be an end to this deafening madness; for else, we are destined to be doomed.⁵¹

iii. Incident of All-Saints Church in Peshawar

On September 22, 2013 two suicide bombers blew themselves up among 600 Christian worshippers outside the historic All-Saints Church in Peshawar, Pakistan. Therefore, eighty-five innocent Pakistani citizens were killed. A Pakistani Taliban wing accepted the responsibility for the bombing of the church. A spokesman of Taliban's Jandullah group Ahmed Marwat said that target killing of non-Muslims will continue until and unless the US will end the drone attacks in Pakistan. They have declared that they will continue attacks against non-Muslims wherever they will find an opportunity. For regional peace and prosperity Prime Minister of Pakistan (Nawaz Sharif) was seeking to encourage talks with the Taliban and this horrible incident had occurred.⁵² Many Pakistani citizens had condemned this attack while some are raising question whether peace talk with those groups and people who are killing innocent citizens is possible or not? It is the deadliest ever attack against Christians in Pakistan. International human rights organization have listed Pakistan amongst the most precarious states in the world for minorities.

The Quran clearly speaks about the dignity of all human beings and it gives value to the equality of all human beings. Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) stressed out equality of all human beings irrespective of language, colour, and race of ethnic background. Islam stressed on justice and equality in society. We cannot achieve these standards without inter-faith tolerance. Islam recognized the freedom of religion and respect for all religions. It is clearly instructed that no one can impose one's religious faith and beliefs upon others. Holy Prophet (PBUH) has set lots of examples in which he cooperated with people of other beliefs in the political arena as well. In the Pakistani society, we all should adopt the teaching of Quran and Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) for all non-Muslims including Christians. The government must provide the security for religious places of all religions. Moreover, the government should negotiate with those who want to recognize peace, talk and use force against those who are not willing for negotiation.

At the end, there is a constant and notable increase in religious extremism and intolerance in our society. Sectarian violence and religious extremism have become a permanent threat to the national security of Pakistan. This situation has been experienced by many countries such as Ireland and Iran and only few of them have been quite successful in bringing the desired level improvement in the situation. The frustrated and ill minded people always backed sectarian violence and religious extremism. In Afghanistan war (1979) Pakistan had played very critical role and risked its own stability. Unluckily, Pakistani political leadership couldn't cope with the after effects of the Afghan war on Pakistani society. Many external and internal factors contributed in recent upsurge of religious extremism

and sectarianism in Pakistan. It is indisputable that sectarianism and religious extremism are causing a major threat to Pakistan's security. Unfortunately, these devastating threats have always affected the whole Pakistani nation. In US war on terror (WOT) Pakistan became its front ally and WOT also affected our country. Pakistan's internal weakness and poor policies provided an opportunity to external powers to use Pakistan for their purposes. Like in Aafia Siddiqi's case Musharraf was alleged and same occurred with civilian government of PPP in Raymond Davis case, who was an American national. Even Musharraf's policies about WOT was adopted by PPP's elected government.

All these incidents gave further upsurge to sectarianism and religious extremism in Pakistan. West policies against Muslim in all over the world such as drone attacks, NATO forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine etc. disputes also played important role in public grievances and triggered militancy growth among Muslim. Now it's the Pakistan's government's responsibility and the need of time to sincerely address this issue and maximize efforts to eradicate this curse. Strict law for all the organization and religious institutes should be implemented by the Pakistani government and if any group indulge in endorsing or blurring wrong Islamic concepts should be dealt with strictly by the government of Pakistan. Through education the government can create awareness among public to cope with extremism and sectarianism. The extremist organizations generally target those people who are uneducated and the technique of brainwashing can be applied on illiterate people easily. The government can use education as important tool to Ward off any presence of evil minded people from the country. To reduce sectarianism and religious extremism in Pakistan, different peace projects should be initiated between the people of different sects. For peace process, AMAN KI ASHA was an attempt to reduce tension between India and Pakistan and for internal peace government of Pakistan also can start peace projects to overcome religious extremism and sectarianism through different TV shows, debates programs and seminars etc. Through such techniques misperceptions regarding diverse concepts of Islam and about other religions can be reduced. Externally, Pakistani government should adopt a balance and courageous foreign policy and Instead of relying on the West and IMF for our economic progress we should utilize our own resources and manpower.

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