

European Journal of
Philosophy, Culture and Religious Studies
(EJPCR)



**Increasing Extremism and Religious Intolerance
in Pakistan**

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Abstract

The religious beliefs of the creators of Pakistan and their ideology of an Islamic nation were completely different to how this country is right now. This study is designed to help understand the concept of extremism and religious intolerance one of the most sensitive issues to the security of Pakistan. Unfortunately this extremism has destroyed

the global image of not only Pakistan but all the Muslims around the world. This paper tells about the genesis and the origin of extremism, different effects of extremism and in the end it also gives measures to improve the current situation of the country.

Keywords: *Extremism, Sect, Terrorism, Religious Intolerance, Blasphemy.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Extremism is defined as the quality or state of being extreme or the advocacy of extreme measures or views. This term is mainly used in accordance with political or religious views to refer to an ideology that is way far outside the main attitudes of society. It can also be used for economical context. Another title of fanaticism can be given to extremism. According to oxford dictionary, extremist is a person whose opinions, especially about religion or politics are extreme and who may do things that are violent or illegal for what they believe. According to J.M Berger (writer of the book Extremism), an expert on extremist movements and terrorism, extremism arises from a perception of “us versus them”, intensified by the conviction that the success of “us” is inseparable from hostile acts against “them”. He states that extremism differs from ordinary hatred and unpleasantness, which run the mill of racism, due to its sweeping rationalization of an insistence on violence (J.M.Berger, 2018). Scientists, political authorities and potential extremists define phenomena of extremism in different ways. In political values, extremism is written in terms of terrorism, racism, xenophobia, interethnic and inter-religious hatred, political radicalism and religious fundamentalism. These are essentially those activities that are not morally, ideologically or politically in accordance with norms of the state; that are fully intolerant towards others and that rejects the existing social order. But this explanation is not fully understandable and may be considered philosophically, sociologically, psychologically and especially politically incorrect (Sotlar, 2004). We can say that there is no proper way to define extremism but you can easily recognize it whenever you see it. Religious intolerance has been a major cause of extremism within the Pakistan, as the sect system has always been a cause of disruption. A bigot is intolerant of other ideas, races or religions. It is most likely for a bigot or religious intolerant person to form compliance against the other sect or religion by indulging the people within its surroundings and the group formed then proceed to the level of extremism and starts expressing its hatred for the other sects or religions. Its bases are on the belief that one specific religion is supreme and complete and that all other are false, distorted and non-existential (Khan, 2017).

There are two types of violence in Pakistan: inter-faith and sectarian. The former attacks against the members of non-Muslim community such as Hindus, Christians, Parsis, Ahmadis, Sikhs, Buddhists. Inter-faith violence includes vigilant attacks by an individual or a mob in the wake of false accusations against members of non-Muslim minorities of their blaspheming against Islam. Sectarian violence, on the other hand, unfolds between members of different Islamic sect. (Yusuf, 2012). One of the worst faces of extremism in Pakistan is sectarian violence (Khan, 2017). In Pakistan among 212.2 million people 96.3% are Muslims (85-90% Sunni, 10 to 15% Shea and 0.2% Ahmadis) Hindus are present in a minority of 1.6%, Christian 1,6% and Sikhs, Buddhists, Baha’is and Zoroastrians are <1.0% (Mohammad, 2022). The education system is also biased in Pakistan. Madrassas and public schools show strong discrimination on the basis of religion (Hussain A. S., 2011). Refutation is a part of religious education and it has been blamed for the unprecedented increase in sectarian violence in Pakistan (Rahman, 2007). Pakistan is in great danger due to the increasing amount of violence imposed by its own people to its own people. The purpose of this article is to show the progression and main causes of religious intolerance and the impact of extremism on Pakistan.

1.1 History of Extremism in Pakistan

Pakistan is a state having Muslims in majority and is officially recognized as Islamic republic of Pakistan. The constitution of Pakistan focuses on providing protection to all the minorities and securing their religious rights. The government of Pakistan is bound to follow all the teachings of Islam while passing any new law.

The idea of the founder Quaid-e-azam behind making Pakistan was to make a state where there should be no difference between minorities and majorities and where there is no racial or sect preferences. On 11th August 1947, while addressing to first constitutional assembly, Quaid-e-azam clearly said that Pakistan is a sovereign legislative body that provides independence to every person. He said, “You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed — that has nothing to do with the business of the State.” However in two years after that, the legislative assembly transformed the objective resolution on 7th March 1949 by promising a draft on Islamic constitution. It was mainly due to the power of spiritual groups, who put all their efforts into announcing Pakistan as an Islamic country. (Karamat, 2019).

Pakistan has been experiencing ethnic conflicts ever since 1948 when the Bengali language movement started. After the separation of Eastern Pakistan in 1970, in the West Pakistan, where Islam was stated to be more important than ethnicity, after Pakistan’s first ever general elections the constitution created in 1973 declared Pakistan as Islamic republic state and Islam as the state religion. After that despite being an Islamic republic state in the powerful decades after the formation of Pakistan, there was a clear difference between state policies and religious values as well as between public and private Islam. (Misra, 2003). This was the root cause of violence against non-Muslims in the years ahead.

In the period from 1977 to 2018 there were changing trends within the religious extremism in Pakistan. This time-frame can be divided into four phases of 1970-1990, 1990-2001, 2001-2011 and 2011-2018. (Shah, 2020). During the first phase there was Islamization of the country by General Ziaul Haq, the military dictator of that time, Afghanistan war and Iranian revolution. In 1949 Tehrik-e-Khatma Nabovat was formed which had its preferences on religious accounts. They wanted to perish Qadyani sect from key positions of Pakistan. In 1953 they started activities against foreign minister Zaffarullah Khan who was a Qadyani but their demands were refused by Prime Minister Khawaja Nizamuddin after which they perished. In 1970s they started their activities again but the government and Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto took no special action against them. (Hussain B. H., 2010). This rebirth of Tehrik-e-Khatma Nabovat was one of the main causes of extremism and sectarian violence. The effect of this extremism can be seen in the constitution of Pakistan.

Iranian revolution in 1979 where Pakistan along with many other Islamic countries felt that Shia sect is mobilizing and in this case General Ziaul Haq tried to implement the best Islamic culture in Pakistan which initially was thought to be beneficial for the country but later on turned into one of the biggest boosters for the extremism and violence in Pakistan. Due to the conflicts with non-Muslims throughout General Ziaul Haq’s era, the inter-faith violence had a major boost. Russian Invasion of Afghan in 1979 also caused an era of religious extremism in Pakistan (Javaid, 2011). In Soviet-Afghan war Pakistan played a major role. Soviet Union was defeated by Mujahedeen that were fully trained by US and Pakistani military forces. One of the biggest mistakes was that

the Mujahedeen were left armed and they ended up being divided into different groups most famous among them were Al-Qaida, Taliban etc. they were often referred to as “the misguided warriors of Islam”. These groups were powerful enough to destroy US military forces and Pakistan was considered as a safe haven for these groups. United States and its allies started pressurizing Pakistan to take actions against these groups as a result Pakistani military forces advanced against these groups in some parts of the country and succeeded against them such as Swat, Bajaur Agency. Other than that US drone attacks were made on regular basis on these militants. As a result Pakistani citizens suffered a lot, as these attacks were made on religious places or normal places crammed up with common Pakistani citizens (Hussain B. H., 2010). According to a report, more than 35000 Pakistanis have lost their lives in these attacks (Martin, 2012).

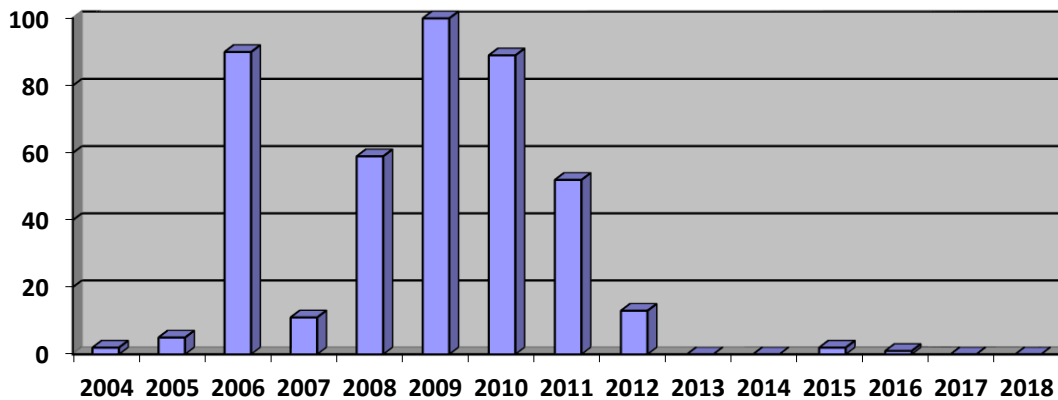


Figure 1: Number of Pakistani Citizens Killed by US Drones

Source: Bureau of Investigation Journal

There were more than 400 drone attacks done by United States on Pakistan between 2004 to 2008 causing many innocent people to suffer from death or major injuries. All these incidents were the main cause of the upcoming religious problems in Pakistan. Between the coming phases there was an extreme layer or terror due to several attacks by terrorists. After 9/11 attack in New York city on 11 September situations became worst in Pakistan .The seeds of extremism were sown in the 1970s, but Pakistan started reaping them after the 9/11 attacks in 2001. The violence was romanticized by terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Our youth got attracted with this romanticism. After 9/11 the western agenda of hatred which was seen as a demeaning towards Islam caused many progressive Muslims who could have stopped Taliban’s momentum to step back causing a huge chaos in many countries among which Pakistan suffered the most (Abbas H. , 2014).

In 2022, General Pervaiz Musharraf banned two militant groups Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad and took steps against religious intolerance but the things got out of hand when in March 2007 when President Musharraf suspended Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry, triggering a wave of protests across the country. After this in December 2007, Benazir Bhutto was assassinated at a political rally in Rawalpindi causing a huge disturbance among political parties and their followers. Then in January 2011, in order to reform blasphemy law in Pakistan two killing of two prominent supporters, Punjab Governor Salman Taseer in January, and Minorities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti in March. Then after many other controversial cases in February 2017, when the

Islamic state group took responsibility of a suicide bomb in Sindh which killed nearly 90 people, Pakistan finally closed the doors for Afghanistan (Pakistan profile timeline, BBC). After that till now it is claimed that Pakistan is making progress in building peace among different sects and religions with in the country but still these efforts are far too less to show any noticeable change.

1.2 Blasphemy Law and Religious Intolerance

Blasphemy law is one of the steps that were thought to be for the goodness of mankind but ended up being making a way to cruelty. Blasphemy word is originated from Greek language meaning to insult any religion in any possible way. Merriam-Webster takes blasphemy as the “the act of insulting or showing hate or lack of respect for God or the act of claiming the attributes of a deity.” Blasphemy is one of the marked examples of religious intolerance. Religious extremism here refers to the use of religiously motivated violence, hate speech, incitement to violence and support for individuals and organizations involved in such activities. (Kazmi, 2022.)

In Pakistan the extremism and its effects can be seen even before the separation from Hindustan. In 1860’s British rulers implemented the blasphemy law in subcontinent showing the presence of extremism in this area way before the formation of Pakistan. First person to get punished by this law was Ghazi Alam Din Shaheed in 1927 (Hussain B. H., 2010). In Pakistan blasphemy law has been heavily misused. There are a large number of cases of false accusations against this law. If a sect or a group of people having same religion has any problem with the people of another religion they falsely accuse that group of disrespecting their religion and as Pakistan is a land of very fierce and emotional, people when it comes to the religion, they start demanding punishment for these people or in case if that group is not punished by Law they take hold of the situation by themselves. Numbers of people that have been punished by this law in Pakistan can be seen in the table below.

Table 01: Blasphemy Cases: 1947 – 2021				
Year	Cases	Accused	Injured	Killed
1947	0	0	0	0
1948	1	0	0	1
1949	0	0	0	0
1950	2	0	0	2
1951	0	0	0	0
1952	0	0	0	0
1953	1	0	0	0
1954	0	0	0	0
1955	0	0	0	0
1956	0	0	0	0
1957	0	0	0	0
1958	0	0	0	0
1959	1	1	0	0
1960	0	0	0	0
1961	0	0	0	0
1962	2	2	0	0
1963	1	0	0	0
1964	0	0	0	0
1965	0	0	0	0
1966	0	0	0	0
1967	0	0	0	0
1968	0	0	0	0
1969	0	0	0	0
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1972	0	0	0	0
1973	0	0	0	0
1974	0	0	0	0
1975	0	0	0	0
1976	1	0	0	0
1977	0	0	0	0
1978	1	0	0	0
1979	1	1	0	0
1980	0	0	0	0
1981	0	0	0	0
1982	0	0	0	0
1983	0	0	0	0
1984	0	0	0	0
1985	0	0	0	0
1986	0	0	0	0
1987	2	2	0	0
1988	6	10	0	0
1989	1	1	0	0
1990	0	0	0	0
1991	3	2	0	0
1992	6	1	0	4
1993	5	3	0	1
1994	4	1	0	1
1995	7	1	1	4
1996	5	2	0	0
1997	5	0	1	1
1998	5	2	0	1
1999	3	1	0	2
2000	7	3	0	1
2001	1	0	0	1
2002	5	2	0	3
2003	8	4	0	4
2004	4	7	0	0
2005	8	8	0	2
2006	10	15	0	2
2007	10	19	0	1
2008	9	7	0	3
2009	11	17	0	10
2010	15	9	0	2
2011	60	89	10	11
2012	38	187	3	3
2013	28	40	0	0
2014	47	243	10	10
2015	33	47	0	2
2016	39	70	0	1
2017	53	66	0	5
2018	34	91	0	2
2019	30	86	0	1
2020	138	227	1	3
2021	50	39	4	5
Total	701	1306	30	89

Figure 2: Blasphemy Cases in Pakistan

Source: Centre of Research and Security Studies

1.3 Reason Behind Extremism And Religious Intolerance

Extremism can be of many different types. Moonis Ahmed explained various types of extremism in Pakistan (Abbas H. , 2005). Main types can include extremism over class, ethnicity, gender, religion, sectarianism. There are various reasons behind the growth of extremism. One of them is

according to Clint Eastwood is instability in any field of life. He said “Less secure a man is, the more likely he is to have extreme prejudice”.

The main emerging trends in Pakistan that are basic cause of extremism are:

- i. Weakening of state sovereignty.
- ii. Deep state concept is taking strength.
- iii. Parliament is losing its legitimacy.
- iv. No proper implementation of law.
- v. Local mafias are getting strength especially in big cities like Karachi,
- vi. Faisalabad etc. (Yaseen, 2018)

Some key drivers for extremism includes 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. (Javed, 2013). If all the reasons are summarized up for the growth of extremism in Pakistan, they will be:

- 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. (Yaseen, 2018)
- xi. Lack of Knowledge about Other Religious Groups.
- xii. Impact of the School Curriculum.
- xiii. Hate Literature against Religious Groups.
- xiv. Impact of Family Background and Peer Pressure
- xv. External Power Influence.
- xvi. Ignorance and negative use of history. (Khan, 2017).

Religious exclusivism also contributes to religious extremism (J.A. Onimhawa., 2003). These are only the reasons that are most commonly seen. There are many other reasons than these all of which can not be explained here but one thing to be noted is that extremism can be linked with any problem. It is mainly due to the perspective in which a person takes different conditions of life and how they process social variations. Its all about respecting and trying to accept others opinion and to be open to the new changes coming ahead. In case of religion Islam there are no basis in Islam

that lead to a person to hate anyother person. Although there is a huge role of madrassas in the growth of hatred between differen sects and religions (Javaid, 2011) but the religion Islam is all about love, peace and equality. There is no superior and inferior sects in Islam. These are all man made differences and are because of lack of the knowledge about religion Islam. A few persons that are trying to bring havoc for their own benefits try to modify the meanings of Islamic teachings and they implement it into other persons mind blinding them from the facts of their own religion. These negative people are the one to blame and not the religion they belong to.

1.4 Effects of Religious Extremism in Pakistan

Pakistan nowaadays is suffering from one of the most serious economical crisis since 1947. Inflation, poverty, lack of education, lack of food and water resources and with the current situations of flood in Pakistan it is really difficult to cope with the downfall. The prices for the essentials are increasing on daily basis where as the average income of a common man in Pakistan according to ceic data base is:

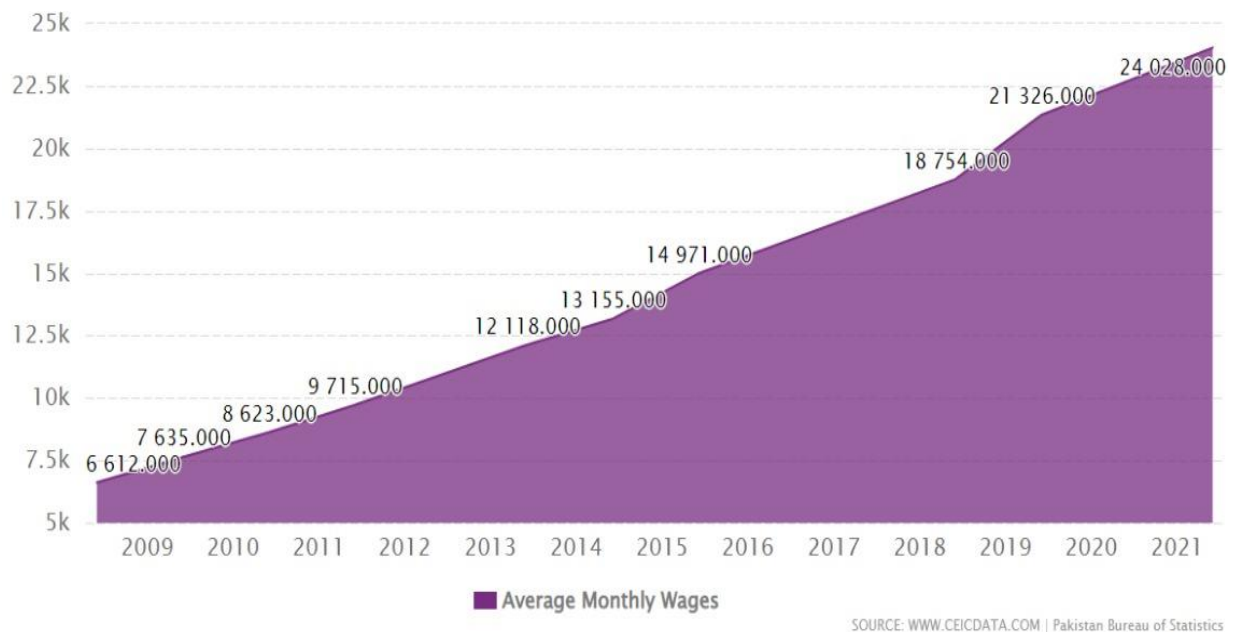


Figure 3: Effect of Religious Extremism in Pakistan

The income of a common man in Pakistan lies in between 24000 to 80000 pkr. This income for a normal person is way less than its spending. The inflation rate in Pakistan last month surged up to 31.5% its highest level since 1974 according to latest released figures by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics on 1st March 2023. (Hussain A. , 2023). Despite of these all situations a large amount of sum has to be given to the security forces of Pakistan due to increased rate of attacks in Pakistan. The cause of this destruction in Pakistan is unequal distribution of money and resources. Job system in Pakistan mainly relies on references causing many well educated persons suffer from poverty and inflation.

Role of extremism and religious intolerance can be seen in many issues like:

1. Illiteracy
2. Economic crises and inflation.
3. Increase rate of crimes

4. Marginalized identities, minorities and youth
5. Weak law enforcement system and absence of speedy justice
6. Unemployment
7. Lack of basic health facilities
8. Different educational systems within state
9. Class differences
10. Sectarianism
11. Generalized terror and fear in public
12. Slavery
13. Increase in suicide rates
14. Decrease in tourist arrival.

Effects of extremism may include all of these but are not limited to the above. These all are affecting the economy of Pakistan badly. (Karamat, 2019).

One of the most noticeable effects that I would like to elaborate below is terrorism.

1.5 Terrorism

Terrorism comes from terror meaning great fear. According to Oxford Language, the unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians is terrorism. Different scholars define the term terrorism differently. According to Bruce Hoffman terrorism is the use of threat of violence to coerce or intimidate the government or its citizens in pursuit of political or social aim.

Terrorism is mainly a program to bring fear to the people. As discussed earlier terrorists are mainly the men that were trained to fight against Soviet Union in Afghanistan. These men ended up making different groups in different countries one of them is Pakistan where they started training young men against the citizens of the countries. Their main goals were to show their power to the world and to dominate or rule by spreading terror. They train the young people in the name of Islam but their teachings are not even close to the Islamic preaching.

In Pakistan various terrorist attacks had occurred in the past causing imposing a great fear in the country. Pakistan is broadly facing internal and external terrorism. Pakistan is facing many different challenges and implications of extremism some of these are:

1. Domestic terrorism (growing due to nationalism, sectarian violence, suicidal attacks, attacks on schools, pipelines, banks etc is domestic terrorism).
2. International or state sponsored terrorism (sponsored by state agents against state policy, includes drone attacks, attacks on high values such as Prime Minister, President, Sri Lankan cricket team in Pakistan).
3. Ethnic Terrorism (is considered inactive at this time but was a most common issue in 80s and 90s in Karachi).
4. Separatist Terrorism (was observed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, still observed in Balochistan like Gorilla wars. It is due to conflicts between separatists and government. The tribal militants have carried out many acts of terrorism there).
5. Nationalist Threat (it is observed among different provinces and nations since 1960s and is due to making developments only in one province in the country causing others to be frustrated with it).

6. Religious and sectarian terrorism (was seen in Gojra in 2009 in the form of communal violence. It is due to hatred between different sects and religions with in the country).
7. Jihadi Terrorism (most extremely in 1970s was seen in Afghanistan. The 9/11 incident was also due to jihadi terrorism).
8. Islamic Militancy (Indigenous and foreign mercenaries have started using religion as a tool. The barbarian acts of these mercenaries in Swat and adjoining areas are in diametric contrast to Islam, Pushtonism and Nationalism. They follow money line and serve their foreign masters. People with this mindset have their own point of view and want to implement it first in Pakistan and then elsewhere. This is a distorted, tribalistic, ritualistic and dark version of Islam with no light of tolerance, peaceful co-existence, human rights and finer things of life).
9. Pakistani Taliban (agencies like FATA is considered as a hub for these Taliban. Al-Qaeda is one of the Pakistani Taliban group).

It must be noted that terrorism is caused by the presence of extremist ideology. By south area terrorism portal the incidents of terrorism in Pakistan since March 6th 2000 to 2023 in a chart view is given as:

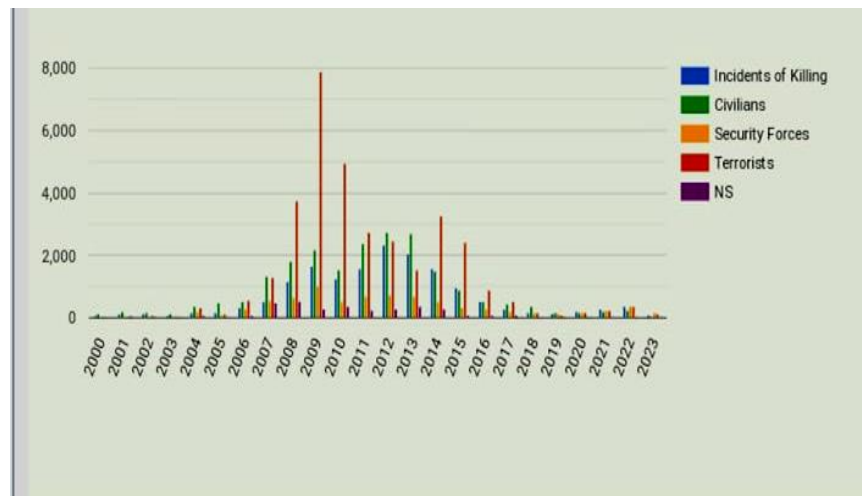


Figure 4: Incidents of Terrorism from 2000 to 2023 in Chart

Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal

This is the data collected from the broadcasting and newspapers in Pakistan. 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. This policy expired in 2018 but no proper implementation on this policy was seen (Yaseen, 2018). This action of policy making was done due to the attack against teachers and students in Army Public School in December 16, 2014. This attack killed 141 people including teachers and 132 innocent students were brutally killed. These terrorist attacks were on their peak in 2008 to 2014. After that a slight decline was observed but in 2022 the amount of terrorist attacks were more than 363 that was above three hundred after many years showing the failure of management against these attacks.

The total amount of attacks in Pakistan is shown in the form of table. During all these years there wasn't any proper regulation against these attacks. Operations were done after 2014 but those were still not enough to destroy the root of terrorism and remove it from Pakistan. Terrorism has thus been one of the main threats to the previous governments and will continue to be for the future governments.

Year	Incidents of Killing	Civilians	Security Forces	Terrorists/Insurgents/Extremists	Not Specified	Total
2000*	65	137	8	20	1	166
2001	110	190	31	26	48	295
2002	103	148	20	65	24	257
2003	55	137	23	29	8	197
2004	168	347	208	302	68	925
2005	166	465	79	124	18	686
2006	317	541	301	568	56	1466
2007	531	1311	548	1271	464	3594
2008	1149	1796	647	3724	516	6683
2009	1665	2154	1012	7884	267	11317
2010	1246	1537	512	4945	348	7342
2011	1573	2371	674	2752	253	6050
2012	2347	2743	734	2444	267	6188
2013	2034	2713	665	1541	375	5294
2014	1569	1471	508	3268	263	5510
2015	950	866	339	2407	73	3685
2016	526	541	291	897	68	1797
2017	294	439	216	533	81	1269
2018	164	363	158	162	10	693
2019	136	142	137	86	0	365
2020	193	169	178	159	0	506
2021	267	214	226	223	0	663
2022	365	229	379	363	0	971
2023	90	27	180	115	0	322
Total**	16083	21051	8074	33908	3208	66241

Figure 5: Incidents of Terrorism

Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal

All the previous governments were unable to eradicate the evil of extremism causing all these problems from Pakistan. Previous Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry said many people think that the remedial steps taken by us are inadequate while the truth is that neither the government nor the state is completely ready to fight against extremism (Jamal, 2021).

2.0 CONCLUSION

From the above discussion one can conclude that it is an essential need for the prosperity of this country to remove the terror that is among the people and its main cause Extremism. It can only be done by educating the youth about it. Along with the Islamic studies in school level, the basics and the beliefs of different sects and religions should also be introduced to the students. Making the youth more open minded would help reduce the inter-sectarian violence. Teachers should teach them how to be respectful about other cultures or towards the minorities living in Pakistan. They should learn the true teachings of Islam. As for the current situations, they can be settled down only if there is proper law enforcement in Pakistan and only if the judgments are not on the basis of sect, province or religion. Equal opportunities should be given to everyone. Removal of extremism can not only be done by the government it will be possible when the citizens of Pakistan would be more active against religious intolerance. Massive reformation in the government structure, education system and economic system would be needed to regain the confidence of the globe and to make any developmental progress. There should be advancement in the society, all the extremist religious speeches should be banned, all the madrassas should be under strict check

and balance, any madrassa promoting hate for any human should be banned, more importance should be given to the implementation of Islam in daily life, and the public figure with the ideology of extremism should not be allowed to be an inspiration for others. The current problems should be seen with an open approach to find all the possible ways to solve them.

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