

Topic: Rampant Religious Extremism in the World as Manifestation of Human Nature

① Introduction

Thesis Statement

Religious extremism reflects the nature of individuals. They either feel they are superior to others or have faced discrimination most of their lives. This superiority complex and victimization generates strong fundamental ideation towards their cause. Both of these extremes on the basis of religion is a global threat. Responsible steps to tackle all challenges can cushion support to mankind.

②- Global Religious fanaticism is a reflection of Human Nature.

③- Uncontrolled Religious extremism as Human Nature

④ (a) Ideation of Extremist groups

(b) Behavioral changes and its influence on social domains.

(c) Affiliation to a certain Extremist group; shaping Extremist's Perspective

(d) Fundamentalists approach fueling religious sentiments and explicit emotional exploitation of younger population

(e) Religious extremism coupled with socio-political agendas

(f) Reduction of fear, moral obligation to God (i.e., cause) and greater futuristic rewards.

④. Impacts of Religious extremism Globally

(a) Fear and Terror in Society.

(b) Sense of creating peaceful community is threatened

- (c) Terrorists activities (Suicide Bombing, Blasts, kidnapping, murder etc) resulting deaths of innocent individuals
- (d) Socio-economic decline in a Country.
- (e) Global Challenges to counter extremist groups.
- (f) Military Confrontation between the state and the extremist groups disturb Global peace.
- (g) Violence create emergency crisis; thus results in law and order situation

⑤. Way Forward to tackle Religious Extremism

- (a). Promote Interfaith Harmony and create auspicious surrounding
- (b) Reduce all discriminatory policies and have holistic approaches toward to handle minorities of Communities the state.
- (c) Work on character building of the Society.
- (d) Have Check and Balance on Suspicious activities in any state institution.

⑥ Conclusion

An old Cherokee told his grandson, "My son there is a battle between two wolves inside us all. One is Evil. It is anger, jealousy, greed, resentment, inferiority, lies and ego. The other is Good. It is Joy, Peace, love, hope, humility, kindness, empathy and truth." The Boy thought about it and asked, "Grandfather, which wolf wins?" The old man quietly replied, "The one you feed." John Locke's philosophy "**Tabula Rasa**", mind as a Blank slate supports the old Cherokee's saying. If mind is a Blank slate it could be used to programmed it on Extremism. The 'Feeding' old man refers to, can be done on many levels; individual, social or state level. Religion is a sentimental affair. The individual connection to its religion is so strong as that it compels an individual to go beyond extremes, to even 'kill' or 'die' in process. Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction." Blaise Pascal. Uncontrolled Religious extremism is globally rising. The roots of Extremism is embedded in extremist groups. They have a specific purpose, aim, goal and ideology. The narratives that surrounds them shapes their realities and extremists are blinded in by their circumstances. They are happy prisoners of their Brains (Newberg, 2018) Religious extremism reflects the nature of Individuals. They either feel they are superior to others or has faced discrimination most of their lives. This superiority complex and victimization generates strong fundamental ideation towards their cause. Both of these extremes on the Basis of Religion is a Global threat. Responsible steps ~~can~~ to tackle all the challenges ~~can~~ cushion support to mankind.

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History of Extremism is as old as mankind. Every civilization has faced extremism one way or another. Aryan race believed they are Superior. The Myth they strive on. Till date religious extremist groups are flourishing. Klu Klox Klan where white supremacist group and their extremism was towards the Blacks race. Al-Qaeda is another religious extremist group in Afghanistan, include global actors, operating globally. Their stance is of victimization. Extremism is not innate or inherited rather over passage of time assimilated in individuals and requires alot of Brainwashing. Extremists groups target young audience whose brain can be molded after sequence of training. and The teaching, preaching, training and funding helps the religious extremists which serves their purpose against the state. Once hatred is normalised violence follows naturally.

In 2010, The US National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC) identified dozen of different Transnational actors world wide as Terrorist groups. Most of these terrorist extremist groups identifies themselves as resistive forces and protector of their religion. The belief in that they are fundamentally on the right side and those who are against them, are against their religion as well. for example: In 1979 when Soviet Union attacked invaded Afghanistan, Zia launched Jihad Movement for the liberation of Muslims living in Afghanistan. Muslims sentiments for Jihad in path of their religion was fully exploited. Proper training Camps were organized for the selection of young teenagers boys for the Jihad. The Romance of youngminds were so strong ②

that even kids of 14 years participated and show their devotion. Similarly, different religious outfits were created for those who participated in Kashmir resistance. It is said that in Pakistan religious extremism was sown in times of Zia's Islamization. Extremism begins from an idea. That idea is transformed into a narrative. Narratives create a social construction, which then shapes the belief system. The discrimination is that seed which is sown and that blooms in hatred. That hatred is the strong emotion drives extremism in a society. For example the Christian Identity Movements, The Sikh group of Babbar Khalsa, and Jewish militants belonging to Kach, place terror in the service of what they see as religious imperatives.

Extremists or the fundamentalists claim that religious extremism refers to a strong, even militant opposition to modernism. For the extremists the meaning is so apparent that they don't understand why not everyone understand it. Their brain function a certain way. They have their own interpretation of religious text and they perceive every other ideology as anti-religious. Their stance is greatly depicted in their behaviors. For example: In Islam for muslim men beard is sunnah of prophet (PBUH). But those who don't have beard are considered 'kafir' by the extremists. The stance is so extremist and hatred is so strong that they will even kill in rage. On larger scale this extremism can be seen as sectarian conflict, i.e. Shra-Sunni Conflict. One school of thought disagree with other. But for the extremists groups such as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) so huge that for creating Pakistan a Sunni state many Mosques are being blasted. Many civilians lost their lives.

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Affiliation of a certain extremist groups overall shapes the ideology. The core grounds may be common at times but not all will blast a mosque as in above example. Some groups function on global level and have a Global networking. For instance Al-Qaeda the terrorists group, active since 1970's. was involved in Global terrorism such as 9/11 incident. Their religious ideology revolves around the notion that US is against muslims and Islam. So, to punish US they attack on their trade center. Al-Qaeda is against westernization, US and their policies. They distinguish themselves from 'others'. For Al-Qaeda they believe in 'US versus them'.

However from the above discussion it can be deduced that Extremism is a learned behavior. It is learned from the surrounding. The place you live in and spend the youth of their lives. Poverty, lack of education, discrimination for young individuals are the driving force to find sanctuary in the religious institutes. where they are taught overall a new meaning and purpose of life. For them acceptance, a purpose and goal adds dedication to their aimless life. These exploits emotional sentiments of such individuals and brainwashes them to believe in the agenda of the group. The institution feed, educate, armed and owned the young blood and exploit their spirits. It's more easier for the organizations to convince them to wear a jacket and Blast. They are taught to believe in that they are going to die an honorable death and Cleaning the society from evil people, disbelievers

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and wrongdoers.

Although, it is known widely that extremism has no religion, gender, race or age. They are bound to a certain propagandas. It can be political, social or economical. All these extremist groups are involved in guerrilla warfare, separatists movement, suicide attacks, and Global terrorism. Also, extremists' religious ideologies are used as camouflage to carry out their crimes and get away with. The offence they commit is dissolved in the sentiments of masses. In Pakistan, many Pakistani extremists misuse the Blasphemy law and kill the innocents which do not commit any Blasphemy act. Such as a Bank guard kill the manager, the landlord from Jacobabad, Sindh kill the young man who did not pay his one month rent. The landlord shot him and declared as Blasphemy act.

Similarly, The Kashmir riots in 1989 also give fillip to sectarian hatred. It provided a pretext for the militant organization to develop contacts with Kashmir Jihad. The religiously based ~~text~~ sects tend to claim that they are the only group or sect preaching the rights and pure ideology. They impress upon their followers that they are the only group based on reality, truth and uprightness, the adherent, therefore must follow them blindly. Such distinction serve their social agendas.

One of the major aspect of Human Nature is that He is afraid of the unknown. The fear is the most exploited human emotion. When a young kid is taught that he will be God's favorite, remembered

as martyred and will open his eyes in heaven after death, He will ~~give~~ be ready to give arm and a leg to do it again and again. 'It' here is the sacrifice. Not just Islam concept of sacrifice and martyrdom is glorified in other religions as well - i.e Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism etc. When Ideology and belief system is so pure the exploitation is on peak. The obligation to God, peace of mind and futuristic rewards convince the individual to become a suicide bomber. On Global level it can be seen.

Japan's kamikaze attacks during WWII was a calculated political attack. Similarly, numerous suicide bombings in Iraq and Afghanistan has been recruited. Pakistan has also faced ~~see~~ series of suicide bombing attacks in Jummah (Friday) prayers.

Religious extremism has contributed in more fearful ~~and~~ society. The Terror generated stayed for long. Pakistan was declared Frontline state in war of Terror (WOT). From 2007 till 2010 was the time when terrorism was on peak. People feared to leave their homes and go for Friday prayers. Extremists activities never stopped though. A year after Afghan Taliban took power, estimates set the number of militant assaults in Pakistan at 51% higher than the previous year, with over 75% of those attacks occurring in KPK alone. 100 people died in Peshawar mosque Blast in 2023. (Caroline Daves, Jan 2023).

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Fear and Terror disturbs the peace of a community. People stop socializing and avoids going out in public places. Parents fears to let their children go to school. After Peshawar warsak school attack in 2014, Schools were shut-down for weeks. Even today, when a terrorist threats and Extremists activities are observed by the Military forces schools, institutes etc are shut-down for time being. Overall the peace vanishes. The sense of threat stays in air for long. In such environment the healthy growth of kid is hampered. People live in continuous fear.

Even though Religious Extremist groups work for their agendas and want to seek attention of Governmental or state level organization, in the process harm innocent individuals. They might not be the target but their presence ~~and~~ in the wrong place at the wrong time costs their lives. In 2022, death from terrorism fell by 9% to 6,701 deaths and is now 38% lower than at its peak in 2015. The fall in death mirrored attack. (Global Terrorism Index, 2023) Pakistan recorded the second largest increase in terrorism-related deaths worldwide in 2022, with ~~total~~^{toll} rising significantly to **643** deaths, a 120% rise from the **292** deaths the previous year. (IEP, 2023)

Religious extremism also results in decline in socio-economic domains. channel variables such as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Domestic Investment and government spending is greatly affected by the Extremists activities. The illegal force and violence by the non-state actors impact the confidence of domestic

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and foreign investments. A state with highest Religious extremists acts as a blockade for more liberal developmental policies and services. For example, when ultrasound machines were introduced it ~~was~~ also ~~place~~ faced back clash by religious extremists group and was considered a propaganda to murder the unborns. Still there is a resistance in tribal areas against family planning and abortion rights. Such unadaptive and rigid attitudes shifts, both human and financial resources abroad and affects the economic growth.

Religious Extremism is a global challenge. Al-Qaeda was based in Afghanistan but the network was in channel across the globe. It was financially backed by Arabs in middle-East. Even the leaders of the groups were Arabs. Participants from different- areas, belonging to different Madrassah's were collectively and actively working for the same cause. So, it was a challenge and took 20 years Global war to tackle Al-Qaeda and target Osama bin Laden. (2011). Till date it's a challenge to trace roots and hideouts of these terrorist groups and eliminate it from globe. It is also an economic challenge. Global war on terror costs \$8 trillion in 20 years. and 900,000 deaths. weapon, food, clothing, and, military assistance cost huge amount of resources. Most importantly space (land to fight from).

When military gets involved in confrontation ag. with Religious extremists group, civilians are used as human shield: **lal Masjid** incident of 2008 also known as the siege of lal Masjid was one

of many closest confrontation between military and Religious Extremist groups (Islamic militants). Many young students were brain washed and were killed during the siege. The report given by the Government of Pakistan 154 deaths and 50 militants were captured.

After the Lal Masjid siege, Pakistan has faced peak of terrorism in 2008 more than 3000 casualties. Everywhere there were check posts and emergency situation was experienced in the country. With Extremists group there is always within border wars which is more difficult to tackle. The offender lives among the civilians and to carry operation against them always hamper haults normal functioning of the state.

It is not a cup of cake to remove extremism from a society but it is possible to take some drastic steps in order to address extremists ideologies. One such goal could be achieved only if interfaith harmony is promoted. All the institutions, especially in schools, colleges and universities should make sure that religious discrimination, racial differences and gender-based disparities ~~doesn't~~ is not taught or practiced. Every religion is respected. Student shall learn the importance of unity in diversity. Introduce healthy activities where students from different religious background interacts in a peaceful environment, accept and adapt to change. Also unlearn all the hate and relearn empathy and kindness.

secondly, it can be reduced by eliminating policies which are in regard to discrimination in hiring and management practices. Religious discrimination can

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strong emotions, engraved ideologies, religious norms, believes, and practices are bunch of traits; part of human nature. All these constitutes an individual personality. They are taught how to behave a certain way. All these learning are taught in a controlled manner. ^{such that} As Freudian super ego over rule instinctual desires of the id and the critical Super-ego. When a person blooms in proper parenting, care and stick to moral values, His/Her personality resists any extremist's ideologies. Young Boys having younger minds and warmer blood are more prone to hyper egoistic emotions. So, it is always easy to detract them ^{Also, to} and blur the boundaries between religious values and extremism for them. Once gain their trust they are ready to blindly follow you. And the purity of intension is the canvas on which Extremists leaders paint with hatred, rage and violence. All they see is blood and injustice. The victimization card is sold and the costs is of more lives (innocent lives). It is a social and moral responsibility of every individual to protect our youth from such sick, evil extremist preachers. Handle them with care and love. Also, to create a healthy and supportive environment. As younger generation is the real asset of the country. Investing in them will do wonders in future.