

Extremism in Pakistan: Root Causes and Solutions

Outline

I. Introduction

Thesis Statement:

True, extremism is holding strong grounds in Pakistan as the extremist tendencies have highly entrenched in the social fabric of Pakistan because of increasing intolerance, inequitable division of resources, incompatible education system and unbridled inflation. However, by taking stringent remedial measures such as strengthening the role of NACTA, implementing SNE and promoting cooperative societies, extremism in Pakistan can be nipped in the bud.

II. Explaining the term extremism and its contemporary status in Pakistan

1. The recent wave of extremism
2. The case of Priyantha Kumara of Sri Lanka

III. Factors indicating the root causes of augmenting extremism in Pakistan

1. Increasing intolerance in Pakistan
 - i- Religious intolerance
 - ii- Ethnic intolerance

2. Incompatible education system to meet the dynamics of Pakistani society

i- Lacking the subject of ethics as compulsory

ii- Rote learning does not produce

ethical citizens later on

3. Unbridled inflation in Pakistan

i- Unbearable price hike

ii- The rise in protests against inflation germinate extremist tendencies

4. Burgeoning poverty involves extremism

i- People become violent due to hunger

ii- The suffering of children

5. Inequitable division of resources amongst the provinces

i- The unaddressed concerns of Balochistan

ii- The unending skirmishes between Sindh and Punjab over water resources

6. Exploitation by the elites triggers extremist mindsets

i- sufferings of the lower classes

ii- Subsidized industrialists

IV. How to nip extremism in the bud: way forward

1. Strengthening the role of NACTA to halt extremism

2. Need of special legislation on mob violence to prevent extremist ideologies mindsets

3. Banning organizations with extremist ideologies

4. Implementation of SNC in true letter and spirit

5. Promoting cooperative societies for the proper socialization of people

6.

V. Conclusion

From increasing intolerance to an incompatible education system, from unbridled inflation to the burgeoning poverty, from uncontrolled extremist organizations to the inequitable division of resources, Pakistan is witnessing one of its worst winters in the form of extremism. Whereas, the phenomenon is not new as Pakistan has been fighting against it for a long time. However, the Islamization of late general Zia-ul-Haq fanned the flames of extremist ideologies to a larger extent. In the wake of such checkered history, contemporary Pakistan is bearing the brunt of its past. However, the failure of current authorities has further compounded the challenge. When probed, it invokes a number of questions for

the national think tanks whether Pakistan would dive deep into the unending spirals of extremism. Would Pakistan succeed to protect its forthcoming generations? Why have the strongholds of extremism not been stamped out yet? True, extremism is holding strong grounds in Pakistan as the extremist tendencies have highly entrenched in the social fabric of Pakistan because of increasing intolerance, inequitable division of resources, incompatible education system and unbridled inflation. However, by taking stringent remedial measures such as strengthening the role of NACTA, implementing SME and promoting cooperative societies, extremism in Pakistan can be nipped in the bud.

Before moving forward, it is pertinent to put light on the concept of extremism. It can be stated as "the spontaneous emotions regarding a particular phenomenon which transgress the normal and acceptable way to deal with someone or something," according to The Project Syndicate. Similarly, extremist tendencies vary person to person and society to society. In the like manner, Pakistan is encountering it since its inception. It is because of the foundation stone of Pakistan on the Islamic Ideology. Since then, the extremist tendencies prevail in one or another form. Moreover, the recent wave of extremism has ruined the social fabric of Pakistan in the ongoing decade. People are becoming

more and more intolerable. Consequently, it takes the shape of "mob violence" nowadays. The murder of Priyantha Kumara of Sri Lanka is case in point. He was brutally killed in Sialkot by mob in 2022. The only reason behind it was the extremist approach of the muslims of the company in which he was working as a manager. People misunderstood his intention of tearing posters engraved with Islamic scriptures and the name of Holy Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). Resultantly, it ended up in blasphemy and extremist orientation. In this way, the contemporary status of extremism in Pakistan is quite vulnerable to its society and people.

With regard to the germination

of extremist tendencies in Pakistan, the following factors will be discussed about its root causes.

When probed, the first and foremost root cause behind extremism is increasing intolerance in Pakistan. People are becoming intolerable day by day. They do not bear any sort of counter perspective either that could be in opposition to their religious belief or ethnic grounds. Ascribable to the extremist thoughts, religious intolerance is holding grounds in Pakistan. A lot of religious scholars have debates on their ideologies and opinions that end up in religious intolerance at grass-root levels. Thought that way, ethnic intolerance is no exception. It has become

a natural and indispensable trait of multi-ethnic society of Pakistan. People belong to different ethnicities and feel proud. Resultantly, the concept of "xenocentrism" evolves. It dissects the society of Pakistan into many segregated parts which affects the progress and the development of the state. When rifts are not to be cured, they are being dissected. Therefore, increasing intolerance in Pakistan paves the way to the rise of extremism.

Seen that way, an other factor, as a root cause, can be an incompatible education system to meet the dynamics of Pakistani society. The society of Pakistan is evolving so ~~do~~ the needs. In the recent times,

education system of Pakistan does not meet the requirements of the contemporary times. Hence, it results in the creation of new challenges like that of extremism. However, the education system of Pakistan lacks the capability to overcome the potential of extremist mindsets. It lacks the study of the subject of ethics as a compulsory one. Owing to its absence, students have become unable to perceive tolerance or the ways to counter extremist thoughts. In the light of it, rote learning further compounds the problem and ends up in futile learning with no fruitful results. Thus, an incompatible education system furthers the intensity of extremism in Pakistan.

To put light on the fact of extremism, unbridled inflation in Pakistan further compounds the situation. It has become a solid ground for increasing waves of extremism in Pakistan. The fluctuations in price hike mentally instabilize people to cope with their socio-economic sustenance, The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). In the result, it impacts the tolerance of people and invigorates extremist approaches in their minds. Pertaining to this situation, the rise of protests have become so common because of the inflation. Consequently, people end up in vandalism which is again another form of extremism. Hence, unbridled inflation paves the way to the rise in extremism in Pakistan.

When sifted carefully, the burgeoning poverty can be another root-cause behind extremism in Pakistan. It influences people in many different ways. Researches reveal that when a man becomes ~~a~~ hungry there are more chances of him to become violent. This state can make people extremist in nature. Lamentably, in some situations, a lot of people kill their children because of food-insecurity. This is again another form of extremism. Thus, a rapid rise in poverty also involves extremist tendencies in Pakistan.

The way things are configured, an inequitable division of resources amongst the provinces is also an

other reason multiplies the influence of extremism in Pakistan. It possesses potential to breed the sense of inequality and inequity amongst people especially when they live in a multi-ethnic society.

In Pakistan, people complain about the unequal resource distribution. For instance, the unaddressed concerns of Balochistan are case in point.

According to the people of Balochistan, they are being neglected for a long time as compared to the rest of the provinces. Their concerns are not being addressed and listened.

In result, extremist factors evolve which interrupts the progress and harmony of the state. Ascribable to this situation, same is the case with Sindh and Punjab over the distribution

of water resources. The inefficiency of Indus River System Authority (IRSA) incurs the situation. Resultantly, it erupts hatred amongst the people of both provinces and concludes in extremist bifurcations. Therefore, an inequitable division of resources amongst the provinces paves the way to extremism in Pakistan.

Not away from the spotlight, an other factor ballooning the wavelengths of extremism in Pakistan can be the exploitation by the elites. It is not a ~~fact~~ that ~~the~~ subservient classes are being ~~exploited~~ by ~~the~~ superior class. Same is the case with Pakistan. Perpetual ~~exploitation~~ on political, social and economic grounds by the influential class of Pakistan triggers

extremist tendencies amongst the suppressed ones. Similarly, most of the subsidies are being given to the industrialist and elite capture. The men of meager resources survive haphazardly. Therefore, it also involves extremism in one or another form. Can Pakistan save itself from its detrimental impacts? Is Pakistan ready to halt the grounds of extremism?

Fortunately, this situation despite being serious is not beyond repair. First, would need to strengthen the role of National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA). It was founded in 2009 to cope with terrorism and extremism. However, it has become ineffective in its working. There is a dire need to

activate NACTA to get maximum out of it for the betterment of the state as well as its progress. With regard to its effective working, committees should be formed on district level under the supervision of Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) or Police Department to keep an eagle's eye on the emerging extremist tendencies within the district that should be eradicated promptly. In this way, extremism can be coped with effectively.

Seen that way, the canons have divulged to the need of special legislation on mob violence to prevent extremist minds. It has emerged to a greater extent. In the recent years, Pakistan has

witnessed more than 325 incidents pertaining to mob violence throughout the country, according to The Journal of Criminology. There is a dire need to legislate stringent punitive measures against such sort of emerging factions in the form of mob violence which, eventually, ends up in extremism.

Perhaps the better course of action would be banning the organizations with extremist ideologies. Such organizations have built their sanctuaries in Pakistan in recent years. Pakistan has already banned some of the notorious extremist organizations like Pakistan's Pashtun Tahajuz Movement (PTM) and Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). Likewise, there

are also several other religious and ethnic organizations operating in Pakistan with extremist ideologies which should be banned to prevent extremism within the state.

In line with it, the implementation of Single National Curriculum (SNC) in its true letter and spirit can assist the country to get rid of extremist tendencies. It is due to its very nature that it provides grounds for inclusive education encompassing religious as well as scientific education. It is same for the English schools and for the Madrasah education. By implementing SNC in true sense, the state will be able to cope with extremism, practically.

To draw attention to an other way forward, promoting cooperative societies for the proper socialization of people ~~is~~ can help in eradicating the strongholds of extremism from Pakistan. Institutions like cooperative societies play vital role in the effective socialization of the citizens which make them responsible and progressive for the greater good of the state. Such societies like Youthful Cooperative Wings (YCW) and Citizens Sports Clubs (CSC) should be established to prevent extremism and promote youthful activities. In this way, extremism can be nipped in the bud.

In a nutshell, extremist approach has highly entrenched in the veins of

Pakistani society. It has been manifested in the recent past of the state, which is in the form of hiking intolerance, inequality, poverty, inflation and the emergence of some extremist organizations. However, if the suggested way forwards can be implemented in letter and spirit, the menace of extremism can be stamped out. All in all, it is also the responsibility of the citizens to play their effective role in avoiding such sort of behaviors consisting of extremist approaches. Indeed, change will not be immediate, but with ^{the} legal safeguards and community engagement this destructive custom can be rooted out some day. Any further delay at local and national level will miss the fast-closing door to redeem a survivable future for Pakistan.