

Countering Violent Extremism in Pakistan: Case Study of Sectarian Divide

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Abstract : Pakistan is considered as a state confronting different internal and external challenges. Extremism is one of the most vital internal challenges faced by Pakistani society. The state's contradictory policies, political instability, socio-economic injustice, absence of the rule of law are the major reasons behind the proliferation of violence and extremism in society. The fall of the Shah of Iran, the Iranian revolution, the 1979 Afghan war of 1979, the emergence of Al-Qaeda, Talibanisation, war against terrorism, and involvement of Saudia and Iran have further aggravated the culture of violence and extremism in Pakistan. The absence of a narrative of peaceful coexistence and harmony has created a vacuum for youth in Pakistani society. In the contemporary era, civil society and the government of Pakistan has initiated different steps to introduce a narrative to counter violent extremism. These narratives have helped a lot in creating community resilience to promote peace and harmony among Pakistani society in general and to bridge the gap between the Sunni Shia divide in particular. This paper will highlight those factors in detail that threw the society into extremism and violence, particularly with reference to Sunni Shia divide in Pakistan. This paper explores the impact of sectarian violence in Pakistan and highlights the different initiatives and their impacts on Pakistani society at large. A quantitative method has been adopted to explore the results. Empirical study used in the paper was based on the survey conducted by distributing questionnaires among 300 people from both community Sunni and Shia in Pakistan. Some interviews of the religious scholars of both communities are also conducted for this research. The recent developments on the government level and society levels have created community resilience. The results of the survey show that Pakistani society in the contemporary era is more peaceful and tolerant as compared to the past. The research concludes that the counter-narrative approach is positively affecting the peaceful environment in Pakistan.

Keywords : extremism, Pakistan, Shia, Sunni, violence

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