

Sectarian Conflicts: A dominant threat to Pakistan's Internal Security

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Abstract

The major threat Pakistan today faces is militant extremism. Militant extremism has serious repercussions particularly for Pakistani society and state and generally for global security. Religious militancy at present poses a potential threat to security of Pakistan. Militant groups both local (Taliban) and foreign (Al-Qaeda) have spread to the settled areas of Pakistan. Different sectarian groups have now become a part of their network. These groups with their mutual understanding have been initiating various acts of religious terrorism. These militants have created fear amongst people through initiating indiscriminate suicide attacks leading to the killings of innocent individuals. The political, economic and social conditions of Pakistan have further fueled religious extremism in Pakistani society. The aim of the study is to delineate the emergence of sectarianism more forcefully during General Zia-Ul-Haq's era and increase in the rate of sectarian violence after 9/11 incidents throughout Pakistan; suggest various strategies to counter the menace of sectarianism.

Key Words: Militant extremism, Sectarian groups, indiscriminate suicide attacks, Taliban

Introduction

Pakistan was created on the name of religion and religion played significant role to create unity among the Muslims of Sub-Continent. Muslims of Sub-Continent wanted to get a separate home land where they would be able to spend their lives according to Islamic teachings. Soon after the creation of Pakistan various racial, linguistic, and regional realities started to emerge more forcefully on the political scene of Pakistan. Ideology remained unable to unite different segments of the society. Various sects of society started to assert themselves on the basis of different issues and the issue of sectarianism emerged as a significant issue. The attitude of religious clergy towards the non-Muslim minority created a lot of doubts in the hearts of non-Muslim minority regarding their security in a Muslim state. Pakistan emerged on the basis of Islam but no observer could deny the fact that under the

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veneer of religious unity there was a bewildering heterogeneity of customs, regional cultures, language and ethnicity. It was hoped that the bond of religion would supersede other bonds (for example, regional, linguistic, and cultural) among Pakistanis.

Definition of sectarianism

Before going into detail it is deemed necessary to define the term sectarianism;

The word sectarian means "of or concerning a sect; bigoted or narrow minded in following the doctrine of one's sect". According to Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus the term sect means "a body of people subscribing to religious doctrine different from those of an established church from which they have separated" (<http://ipripak.org/journal/winter2010/Article3.pdf>). The word sectarianism is derived from sect, which means body of people subscribing to views divergent from those of others within the same religion. (Miss Shaista Vine & Tabinda Razi, Sectarianism in Pakistan, in Current Affairs Digest Book 92, April 2002 P.57) Sectarianism means affiliation to a particular sect or group, especially in a very narrow minded way. In sociological studies "sect is perceived as the religious study which simply means a group which split from the mainstream religion on the basis of a doctrine" <http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol4-issue4/D0441926.pdf>.

Sectarian conflict may refer to general philosophical, political or armed conflict between different schools of thought such as between Sunni and Shia Muslims <http://ipripak.org/journal/winter2010/Article3.pdf> .

Sectarian conflict in simple words can be defined as any violent conflict between different sects of the same religion such as conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims. The phenomenon of sectarianism has potential to create conflicting situation in a multiple society like Pakistan because people from different sects remain stick with their specific beliefs and do not show any flexibility in their attitude with others. Sectarian strife is not only there among the Muslims of Pakistan but it can also be found in Christianity with Catholic verses Protestants, Zionism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Sectarian conflict is not a new phenomenon in state of Pakistan especially in the province of Punjab, which is considered as a breeding ground of antagonism between Shia and Sunni sects for decades. During 1990s the sectarian conflict in Sahiwal, Jhang Sargodha, Lahore, Multan, Vehari and Shorkot created grave concerns for the law enforcement agencies. Jhang had witnessed severe waves of sectarian conflict. Islamist militancy with the help of local sectarian forces of Southern Punjab may be able to make serious inroads. The Pakistani Taleban have become successful to form an alliance with these sectarian groups and had

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launched terrorist attacks in different parts of Punjab during 2009-10. Madrassas in Southern Punjab have been involved to train fighters for militant groups. Different militant groups like Lashkae-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad have a strong presence in Southern Punjab. (Lieven, 2012:291) The menace of sectarian conflicts is not limited to Punjab only it can be observed throughout the Pakistan. For instance, the province of Baluchistan was a peaceful province where people of different sects used to live with each other peacefully. But the peace of province was disturbed because of War in Afghanistan and Iranian Revolution and province has become a place where different sects feel themselves highly insecure. Quetta is the capital city of Balochistan and this city has largest Shia population (Hazara community) The Shia community of Quetta has been a victim of bomb blasts, suicide attacks and terrorist act as the result of sectarian conflicts. Similarly in Karachi and Khyber Pakhtun Khwa frequent waves of sectarian conflicts can be observed. There are certain parts of Pakistan where the Shias can be found in majority, like in the tribal agency of Kurram where they constitute 80% of total population. In Gilgit in the Northern areas, they constitute 60% of the population. Most of sectarian violence is noticed in different areas of KPK. Sectarian feelings emerge in a society when a group of people belonging to a specific sect start to pursue a parochial approach against another sect. The feelings of intolerance, prejudice and bigotry among different sects compel them to go against one another and disturb the existing law and order situation. Under these negative feelings various sects pursue rejectionist approach and this approach can prove highly harmful to peace and harmony of a state. <http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol4-issue4/D0441926.pdf>

Reasons of sectarian conflicts in Pakistan

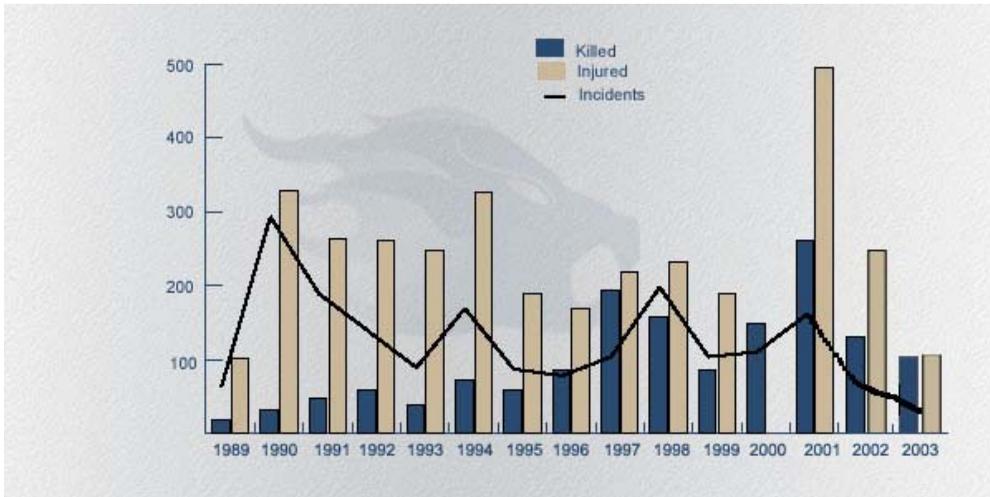
Sectarian conflicting situation in Pakistan is one of the major factors to create instability in Pakistani society. Sectarian conflicts have created violence at a larger scale in Pakistan. Sectarian conflicts have disturbed political, religious and security order of the society of Pakistan. The menace of sectarianism has caused thousands of deaths of people of Pakistan. The nature of Shia-Sunni conflict was different under the British colonial masters than it had been under the earlier Muslim empires. The conflict under the British colonial masters declined to communities level, involving the general public and theologians alike in sectarian violence. <http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/studies/PDF-FILES/Moonis%20Ahmar-1.pdf> Under British rulers Sectarian conflicts were rare in those areas, which now constitute present day Pakistan. The phenomenon of sectarianism emerged more forcefully in the decade of 1980s during the era of Zia-Ul-Haq as a result of the introduction of Islamisation policies by Zia regime. The Iranian revolution can also be perceived one of the

important factors in strengthening the phenomenon of sectarianism in Pakistan. During various periods of history in Pakistan religion has been used negatively by the ruling elite either civilian or military to gain popularity and legitimacy and to suppress political opponents. Military governments in Pakistan adopted a policy to Co-opt and patronage of religious parties and this policy of military regimes have brought Pakistan to a point where religious extremism have secured potential to pose a major threat to the foundations of the state and society. Military governments intentionally or unintentionally avoided to empower liberal and democratic forces. This strategy of military governments provided an opportunity to religious parties to play their role at national level politics. General Zia-Ul- Haq had a long association with the Jamaat-i-Islami. In the first cabinet of General Zia the most powerful positions were filled by the members of Jamaat-i-Islami (**Hussain, 2010:53**). The interest of General Zia's government was to build close association with religious parties to implement successfully the islamization process in Pakistan. Military regime intentionally supported to the Sunni sect of the society. This policy of General Zia' government created a widened gulf between Sunni and Shia sects of Pakistani society. Different Religious parties during 2002 elections formed an alliance under the title of MMA (Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal). MMA became successful to form its government in Khyber Pakhtun Khwa and became part of ruling coalition in Balochistan but remained unable to formulate policies to promote peace and religious harmony in the society. (Hussain,2010:61) The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) and the Jamaat-e-Islami acquired powerful roles in Musharraf's political structure. Musharraf's government faced the crisis of legitimacy which forced the military government to rely on alliances of convenience with the religious right, based on the politics of patronage. [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-sia/pakistan/095 the state of sectarianism in pakistan.ashx](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-sia/pakistan/095_the_state_of_sectarianism_in_pakistan.ashx)

Different techniques of sectarian conflicts can be observed during various periods of history in Pakistan. For example killing and murder of leaders of other sects was a popular technique during 185 to 1995 and the technique of targeted attacks became an important tool in the hands of militant organizations to create terror in the society. Mosques and religious gatherings became main target of such attacks. Since 9/11, Sectarian elements converted themselves into extremist elements of society and this extremism has been posing a major threat to the stability of Pakistan and suicide bombing has become as a prominent pattern of sectarian violence <http://ipripak.org/pa/ipr23.pdf>. These extremist elements not only have been creating problems in Khyber Pakhtun Khwa, Tribal Areas but also in a number of cities in Punjab and Karachi and Quetta as well. In recent times shias in Quetta are major victim of sectarianism.

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The following figure shows the emergence of sectarian incidents during 1989 to 2003 in various parts of Pakistan.



<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/sect-killing.html>

Islamists elements over the years have become successful to acquire extra-constitutional power and this power has become an important source of instability in Pakistan. Religion can never be used by ruling elite in strengthening the process of national integration. Since the inception of Pakistan rulers particularly military rulers have exploited religion for their own purpose. By fanning religious differences most of the rulers have diverted the people's attention from vital economic and political issues. Various rulers of Pakistan pushed religious groups into sectarian violence for securing their personal interests. Minor differences among different sects became a dominant security threat for the society of Pakistan by those policies which were introduced by the government of General Zia-Ul-Haq in 1977. The religious policies of Zia's regime widened already existing gulf between Shia-Sunni Sects. Zia shrewdly exploited the religion of Islam for evoking an emotional response to gain support for his regime. Different Islamic measures which were introduced by General Zia such as zakat, ushr, and hudood punishments accentuated sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shias. Shias started agitation in 1980 against Zakat which led to violence and bloodshed. (Kukreja,2003:169) The organized gangs of sectarian thug by Sunni and Shia sects were involved in sectarian violence and serial killings. Sunnis are in majority in the society of Pakistan while the Shias represent about 20 percent of the population. The Shias of Pakistan have never been so much

enthusiastic about the Islamisation process. The Tehriq-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqah Jafria (TNFJ)(later on renamed Tehrik-e-Jafria Pakistan),was established by the Shias in 1979 to protect the separate Shia identity and in the reaction of this assertion by the Shias, Sunnis started to establish different Sunni sectarian organizations such as, The Wahhabi Jamaat Ulema-e-Ahl-e-Hadith ,Anjuman-e-Sipha-e-Shahba Pakistan, Sipha-e-Muhammad Pakistan and Lashkar-e- Jahangvi. These sectarian organzitaions expressed an anti-Shia stance . No doubt Minor differences were there among Sunni and Shia sects and remained dormant most of the times but the policies of General Zia's government to give preference to Sunnis than Shias converted minor implicit conflicts into major explicit conflicts. This attitude created an atmosphere of unrest and polarization in country in 1980s.

Religious extremism emerged more forcefully during General Zia-UI-Haq's era. General Zia for suppressing his opponent forces brought clergy close to corridors of power by setting up zakat and salat (prayer) committees and sponsoring Ulama conventions and financing them. As a result of Islamist policies of General Zia madrassas and mosques grew in number and influence. The madrassas are perceived an important instrument in sectarian conflicts. In 1947 there were 137 madrassas in Pakistan , in 1960 madrassas were 401, in 1971 the total number of madrassas was 893, in1988 the number of madrassas was increased to 3,000 and in 2003 Pakistan had 10,430 madrassas. Poor people find it difficult to have an easy access to public schools. According to 2002-2003 surveys most of the students of madrassas came from economically deprived backgrounds [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/095 the state of sectarianism in pakistan.ashx](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/095_the_state_of_sectarianism_in_pakistan.ashx) .

According to the official statistics the number of registered religious institutions in the Khyber Pakhtun Khwa (previously NWFP),was above 1,000 in 1999. Many Afghan students were enrolled in different madrassas in Khyber Pakhtun Khwa(Kukreja,2003:174). In Pakistan there are large numbers of madrassas which provide free education, shelter and food to its students. In the presence of immense poverty people feel it more comfortable to send their children to madeassas. It is assumed that there may be 40,000 registered and unregistered madrassas in Pakistan.(Javaid,2010:55) It is worth mentioning here that most of the madrassas (Islamic Schools) are managed by Deobandis.There is a general perception that Taliban movement began with students who used to attend madrassas in Pakistan. Though the supporters of madrassa system hold a different point of view, they argue that most of the religious schools have been helping to raise literacy rate in Pakistan. The general perception especially in west is that these madrassas have jihadi literature and preach jihad to produce holy warriors. The world political

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scenario changed with the September 9/11 incidents in USA and Pakistan became a front line state against war on terror. This decision of Pakistan's government opened a door for extremist elements of society to operate negatively and destabilize Pakistan. The then government of General Pervaiz Musharraf decided to curb militant sectarianism in Pakistan. Various strategies were initiated by the Musharraf government to contain extremism such as: to register Deeni Madrassas, to regulate their funds, to revise their curriculum, and to ban extremist sectarian parties. The banned groups included: Jaish-e-Muhammad, Sipah-e-Sahaba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Tehreek-e-Nifaz-E-Shariat-e-Muhammadi, Tehrik-e-Fiqah Jafariya, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, Sipah-e-Muhammad and Harkat-UI-Mujahidin. The act of banning the sectarian and jihadi groups did not prove so much effective in curbing the menace of sectarianism. Because the outlawed organizations started working under change labels. Sipah -e-Sahaba as Millat-e-Islamia Pakistan, Tehreek-e-Jafrai Pakistan as the islami Tehrek-e-Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Taiba became Jamat Ud Dawa, and Jaish-e-Muhammad as Khuddam-e-Islami <http://www.southasiananalysis.org/paper842>. Sunni –Shia clashes started to take place more frequently after 9/11. These clashes had posed a major threat to national security of Pakistan. Actually extremist elements of society were not happy with the initiatives which were taken by the then General Pervaiz Musharraf's government to curb the militant extremism. The Pakistani Taliban emerged on the scene more forcefully in the mid 2000s and this militant organization develop strong ties with already existing militant sectarian organizations such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and etc. These militant sectarian organizations had created serious threats to Pakistan's security through launching attacks in various forms such as suicide bombing, gun attacks another sects's funerals, religious procession and mosques. Targeted killings of members of rival sects has become a routine matter. Government remained unable to dismantle militant groups through formulating a comprehensive policy to stop these acts of terrorism. Most of the militant sectarian organizations are Deobandi and this sect has potential to influence the security situation of Pakistan. http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/949e7f9b2db9f947c95656e5b54e389e.pdf

The following table highlights various trends of sectarian conflicts in Pakistan. The number of sectarian incidents increased after 9/11. The government of General Pervaiz Musharraf had decided to support the efforts of America in War against terrorism. This policy of Musharraf's government was not appreciated by most of the sectarian organizations. Pervaiz Musharraf adopted coercive methods to curb the militant extremism at domestic level.

Sectarian Violence in Pakistan: 1989-2013

Year	Incidents	Killed	Injured
1989	67	18	102
1990	274	32	328
1991	180	47	263
1992	135	58	261
1993	90	39	247
1994	162	73	326
1995	88	59	189
1996	80	86	168
1997	103	193	219
1998	188	157	231
1999	103	86	189
2000	109	149	NA
2001	154	261	495
2002	63	121	257
2003	22	102	103
2004	19	187	619
2005	62	160	354
2006	38	201	349
2007	341	441	630
2008	97	306	505
2009	106	190	398
2010	57	509	1170
2011	30	203	297
2012	173	507	577
2013	124	514	888
Total	2865	4699	9165

Data till December 22, 2013

<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/sect-killing.htm>

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Both Shia and Sunni follow Ulemas of their specific sects and these so called Ulemas propagate very narrow minded creeds by which religious fanaticism has acquired militant overtones. Ulemas by using the term of Holy Warriors appreciate those people who distinguish themselves in acts of sectarian violence. Both Shia and Sunni sectarian organizations receive large amounts of money from states like, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and etc. The worst part of sectarian violence in Pakistan is periodic attacks by extremist Sunni and Shia groups on each other at the time of performance various religious rituals. In 1980s sense of hatred developed so strong on the part of both sects (Sunni-Shia) that they did not hesitate to declare each other as Kafar (Non Muslims). Pakistan has been facing Sectarian violence because of ill-conceived policies of various rulers. General Zia's government introduced Islamization process which created a gulf between Sunni-Shia Muslims. Rulers have marginalized the democratic forces. <http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/studies/PDF-FILES/Moonis%20Ahmar-1.pdf>

The political use of Islam by both civilian and military rulers has promoted an aggressive competition among different sectarian groups. Ulemas of different sects by using newspapers, pamphlets, audiotapes, handbills and party literature disseminate sectarian views widely. Extremist ulemas through their hate speeches are enhancing religious intolerance among people of different sects. On special occasions like Muharram rivalry between Sunni and Shia assume more aggressive posture. They attack on mosques, madrassas and imambargah. They proceed on the line of tit for tat. If Shia attack on mosque of Sunnis and kill them, on the same or next day Sunni settle the score, due to these militant trends sectarian riots broke out several times. Not only Many religious leaders but peaceful Muslims have been killed in these conflicts. Both Sunni-Shia have deep sense of hatred against each other and ready to kill each other. Shia-Sunni violence is fuelled by highly inflammatory speeches by extremist ulemas.

The following table highlights sectarian incidents in the year of 2013. There were 124 sectarian incidents in this year and as a result of these sectarian incidents 514 people were killed and 888 were injured. There is a general perception that with the increasing religious intolerance among different sects of the society the incidents of sectarian conflicts may increase. In sectarian incidents ordinary citizens such as lawyers, business men, doctors and teachers have become the main target of militant organizations.

Year 2013

Month	Incidents	Killed	Injured
January	15	124	176
February	26	141	227
March	8	9	2
April	4	4	0
May	2	4	14
June	6	48	88
July	3	68	182
August	14	28	42
September	7	11	12
October	5	6	1
November	24	51	127
December	10	20	17
TOTAL	124	514	888

*Data till December 22, 2013

<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/sect-killing.htm>

Role of External Factors

It is not out of context to describe some external forces through which the sectarian outfits gained so much prominence in Pakistan. The Iranian Revolution proved a major source to mobilize the Shia groups and Shia militancy in Pakistan. It is perceived that Shia groups get some financial assistance from Iranian sources to counter Sunni attacks and anti-Shia

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propaganda. While on the other hand Sunni sects receive funds from Saudi Arabia. Soviet invasion of Afghanistan played major role in the rise of the phenomenon of sectarianism in Pakistan. The government of General Zia decided to play an effective role in Afghanistan against Soviet Union. The students of madrassas were trained and sent to Afghanistan to participate in Jihad against Soviets. Sunni Mujahideen were recruited against Russian forces. <http://ipripak.org/pa/ipr23.pdf>

Jihad in Afghanistan provided the militant religious groups with deadly automatic weapons. It is worth mentioning here that prior to the Afghan war the casualty rate in sectarian clashes was low. Prior to Afghan War various militant groups used to attack on each other with brickbats, knives or outmoded rifles and pistols and now they use lalashnikovs, light machine-guns, rockets and sophisticated explosive devices for achieving their specific objectives. The monster of sectarianism has raised its head to destroy the social fabric of Pakistani society.(**Jalazai**, 1993:279). After withdrawal of Soviets these students came back in Pakistan and started to pose major threat to Pakistan's stability because they were well trained and well equipped militarily. Taliban who came to limelight in Afghanistan after Soviets withdrawal, it is believed their leadership came from Pakistan based madrassas. They were trained and equipped by ISI. The Taliban have also been involved in sectarian conflicts in Pakistan. Militant groups attacked on each other and took refuge in Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Muslim countries provide financial assistance to Sunni madrassas for promoting religious education. But these funds have not been used in an appropriate way by the so called ulemas. During the Soviet invasion, Saudi Arabia funded jihad which was launched by the government of General Zia. Saudi Arabia allowed Pakistan to buy Saudi oil on deferred payment. The government of Pakistan received the seed-money for its Zakat fund which mostly went to seminaries during 1908s.(Ahmed,2011:xii)

Strategies to Minimize the Menace of Sectarian Conflicts

No doubt Sectarian conflicts pose a grave threat to Pakistan's stability and security. Pakistan is more concerned about its internal security than any external aggression. There are certain strategies if adopted the trends of sectarian conflicts can be lessened if not eliminated.

- Since 1947 the name of the religion has been used negatively by both civilian and military governments in Pakistan. Religious political parties under the official patronage provide a security umbrella to various militant groups to initiate their activities. The leaders of militant groups motivate youth on religious passion. The concept of jihad and

consequent militarization of Islam actively supported by the establishment. This strategy of establishment have crippled the civil society in Pakistan. (Javaid,2010: 56) This is necessary to curb the menace of sectarianism that government machinery should be used to implement Islamic ideology in the true spirit and to suppress extremist forces in the best interests of state. Government must initiate a strategy to ban strictly various militant organizations and introduce reforms to improve the role of madrassas in society.

- Political injustice is one of the major reasons of militancy in Pakistan. When problems of the individuals will not be resolved by the government and they do not have easy access towards basic amenities of life, they easily will be available to carry out extremist and terrorist acts. A true democratic government can take into confidence various segments of the society regarding decision making process and to resolve their different problems. Politician through their effective role can prove very helpful to resolve sectarian issues through political means. Role of political parties and religious parties is also very important in curbing the menace of sectarianism. Political parties and religious groups must stop to support morally and physically to different militant groups which have been posing a major threat to the internal security of Pakistan since 1947 to date.
- Another significant strategy which government can initiate is to formulate stable, long term and productive economic policies which can provide people appropriate employment opportunities, education and health related facilities. With this policy government can minimize sectarian conflicts which pose a threat to stability of Pakistan. Madrassas are considered as basic unit to produce extremist in society which involve in sectarian conflicts in different parts of the country. Most of the students of these madrassas belong to poor families. Their parents send them in these madrassas to get free education, food and shelter. It is perceived that the Sunni population living in the district Jhang of Punjab initiated high intensity sectarian violence in 90s against the economically well off Shia feudal lords. They resisted violently against Shia's economic domination and created grave threat to the stability of Pakistan. With effective governmental policies the menace of poverty can be reduced and decent living standard can be provided to different sects of the society.
- There is dire need of strong, stable and determine role by the security forces and intelligence agencies to eliminate sectarian violence and

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maintain peace and harmony among various sects. They must fight with full determination against those extremist forces who are damaging not only the security of Pakistan but also the image of Pakistan at regional and global level.

Conclusion

The research paper is concluded with these words that time for debates and paper work is over now, it is hard need of the time that enlightened and moderate leadership has to initiate various economic and educational policies for the betterment of the masses. Religious and sectarian parties, political parties, NGOs and media must promote tolerance in society. Government and various security agencies try to perform their functions properly in a transparent way to curb sectarianism. Through mutual consensus among various segments of society the menace of sectarianism can be eliminated and Pakistan's internal security can be insured. Islam should not be presented as a set of rituals only but its creative spirit has to be translated into social guidance and a complete code of life. If this realization is rekindled, Islam's unifying force will transcend all other minor differences among different sects. It has been observed that state actors, including security forces and intelligences agencies try to blame the involvement of foreign hand in sectarian polarization and do not pay attention to look into the fault lines which since the inception of Pakistan have been destabilizing the social fabric of Pakistan. Militant sectarian organizations pose a major threat to the internal security of Pakistan. Sectarian combatants should be brought at that point where they show their willingness to renounce violence.

It is hard need of the time that conflicting parties should be convinced by the government to enter into dialogue process. In the presence of high intensity sectarian conflicts role of the government becomes more crucial in the process to manage sectarian conflicts. Government has to make a differentiation among the militant groups who are willing to enter into dialogue process and those who are not ready to give up armed struggle. By making this differentiation it will be more easy for government to formulate a long term policy to eliminate sectarian conflicts. Element of coercion by the government to deal with those extremist forces who are not ready to give up armed struggle may prove helpful to resolve sectarian conflicts. Both government and militant sectarian organizations should pursue a moderate approach for seeking a peaceful management and resolution of sectarian conflicts. It is important to highlight different root causes of Sunni-Shia discord. Sectarian conflicts in Pakistan have emerged with higher level of intensity and this intensity only can be brought at its lower level through political means so

the extremist elements of society could not get a chance to play in the hands of some external powers which are not interested to see a stable Pakistan.

Extremist Sunni organizations after 9/11 have been enjoying support by the Pakistani Taliban and al-Qaeda in form of sanctuary, funding and training. Growing nexus between Taliban and sectarian militant organizations can be observed in the current wave of sectarian conflicts. So continuing support for sectarian organizations is one of the major reasons that sectarian conflicts thrive in Pakistan. It is an important fact that previously sectarian organizations used to enjoy financial and operational support from Pakistan's security establishment especially during soviet invasion in Afghanistan when Pakistan became a front line state to wage a proxy war against Soviet Union. There should be no such support to these militant sectarian organizations which actually are becoming a major source to create sectarian conflicting situation in society. Long term policies can be a best tool to curb the menace of sectarianism.

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The growing concern that Pakistan's direct involvement in the Yemeni crisis could have grave consequences for its internal security and sectarian harmony are valid. It will widen the sectarian divide in the society and the risk of sectarian violence will increase. The existing complex militant landscape of the country will open up spaces for ultra-sectarian groups like the self-styled Islamic State (IS). Also read: Pakistan will not participate in conflict that divides Muslim Ummah: Khawaja Asif. In that context, a rational and sensible choice for Pakistan could be to stay away from the Yemeni At great economic cost, Pakistan has constructed a nuclear-armed national security state over many decades to counter the Indian "threat". This somewhat ossified approach has done little to improve security in South Asia. It is also generating dangerous new threats to stability inside the country. Read more: Nuclear war between India and Pakistan? An expert assesses the risk. The conflicting Indian and Pakistani claims to sovereignty over Kashmir have helped generate the emergence of a Pakistani national security state in which the military became a dominant political actor. The Pakistan military has received the lion's share of national resources and began acquiring nuclear weapons during the 1970s. But it has also played a key role in framing Islamabad's national security policy. Pakistan was created on the name of religion and religion played significant role to create unity among the Muslims of Sub-Continent. Muslims of Sub-Continent wanted to get a separate home land where they would be able to spend their lives according to Islamic teachings. Soon after the creation of Pakistan various racial, linguistic, and regional realities started to emerge more forcefully on the political scene of Pakistan. Ideology remained unable to unite different segments of the society. Various sects of society started to assert themselves on the basis of different issues and the issue of Pakistan has fallen a prey of internal threats badly since coming into existence. The challenges of threats faced are, old as well as new. Along with its religious identity Pakistan is also a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural state. These characteristics have created problems for her. As a consequence, it has experienced all varieties of internal conflicts, i.e. tribal insurgencies, ethnic and sectarian struggles, civil war, border conflicts, and conventional war. been spoiled by the religious/sectarian problem. The sectarian threat poses a great danger, and could possibly be devastating for the country. Pakistan has been regarded by some observers as a weak and vulnerable state threatened by the force of ethnicity and sectarianism. ETHNIC UNREST Ethnicity, sectarianism and economic instability are fundamental variables of internal security threats to Pakistan. Religious extremism has created an unenviable image of Pakistan in the eyes of the rest of the world and has affected the country adversely. At the same time inter-provincial grievances could potentially cause serious damage to the federation. Despite recent economic recovery and sound macro policies, the absence of genuine socio-economic development has provided ethno-sectarian elements and regional forces grounds to exploit and weaken Pakistan internally. This paper argues tha