

**BOOK REVIEW: PROF. DR. NAUMANA KIRAN¹,
RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN PAKISTAN POST 9/11
SCENARIO, CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS
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Professor Naumana has authored a very comprehensive discourse on Religious Extremism in Pakistan in post 9/11 era as the issue of religious extremism had impact on the domestic as well as on the foreign policy of Pakistan. She has authored other two books on The Federal Cabinet of Pakistan: Formation and Working (1947-1977), and People Role in the Struggle for Pakistan (1940-1947) along with numerous articles in national and international journals. As a historian, she has aptly analyzed the genesis of religious extremism in Pakistan and its contemporary nature and implications. The book focuses on the core areas and issues that give rise to religiously grounded extremist manifestations in society. The author has analyzed that since 9/11, many new dimensions of religious extremism have been observed, in addition to the already existing ones. The call of jihad against the Muslim State of Pakistan by newly emerged forces, especially Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan after 9/11 created a new national

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security question for Pakistan. This group has established a state within Pakistan's Malakand Division. In addition, author has emphasized on the complex situation of Baluchistan because of the ethnic and sectarian element.

The book illustrates that all forms of extremism has a negative connotation as people with extremist views hold a rigid political, and religious views. In addition, they manifest their rhetoric through aggressive, and coercive means by inflicting violence in the society. In this context, the author has mapped out the roots of religious extremism in Pakistan particularly since the period of General Zia-ul-Haq. The author disagrees with the literature claiming that sectarian issue has roots since the inception of Pakistan. Sectarianism in the form of binary division between Shia and Sunni increased religious intolerance and radicalism mainly due to the state patronage of certain religious groups in Zia regime. Moreover, the rise of sectarian based organizations including Sipah-e- Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and Sipa-e-Muhammad (SMP) further divided the society on sectarian lines. Later, Laskar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), the splinter group of SSP remained a lethal force of terrorism in Pakistan. The author has identified that the Islamization policy of General Zia divided the society mainly on religious lines instead of creating unity and harmony. Therefore, politics, social values, and even economy was overshadowed by the religious denomination framed by Zia regime. Then Pakistan's inclusion in Afghan Jihad further

consolidated the position of religious clergy in the politics of Pakistan. Pakistan-Afghan policy of supporting Mujahedeen and later Taliban had domestic social and political consequences. In this regard, Prof. Naumana has mapped out significant areas that became a centerpiece of religious extremism. For example, in Chapter No. One, the author has explained the rise of extremist manifestations in Malakand Division. The main problem within the case of Malakand Division is the negligence of the State to address the issue at time. The author has divided the phenomenon of religious extremism in Malakand Division in five phases in order to understand the policy of state. The formation of Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-i-Mohammadi (TNSM) in 1990s with fanatical views was appeased by the State authorities that later all together challenged the writ of the state in post 9/11 years. Their participation in Afghan Jihad in 2001-2002 against US intervention in Afghanistan, alignment with TTP, declaring the constitution of Pakistan un-Islamic, and later leading TTP expounds the proliferation of extremist organizations and their illicit activities.

Another important issue explored by the author is the rise LeJ and later its transformation as a transnational terrorist organization. The operational capability and tactics of LeJ considerably increased due to their connectivity with Al- Qaeda and TTP. In addition, the author has highlighted a complex yet an important nexus between sectarian outfits and their political

association with several political parties. Through this nexus, they influence the local electoral process and to an extent party leadership. Jhangvi emerged as a militant outfit in 1990s but later it went to low profile due to government's counter strategies in Punjab. Their close association and ideological affinity with SSP provided them a string foothold in parts of Central and Southern Punjab. But the situation entirely changed after 9/11 as LeJ found a new partner, cause, and space to operate. LeJ extended its presence and activities in Karachi and Balochistan, particularly targeting the Hazara community on sectarian lines. Later, the counter-terrorism approach by the Government of Pakistan limited the activities of LeJ but it remained a potential force of religious extremism in Pakistan.

The book further has a complete chapter on Hazara community that expounds a detailed analysis of how LeJ has targeted the Hazara community in Balochistan. During the Mushraff era, Deoband madaris were opened in Balochistan by the Ministry of Religious affairs that eventually increased the influence of clergy in the area. Another important factor that increased sectarianism in Balochistan has been the regional factor. The close geographical proximity of Balochistan with Afghanistan and Iran has made the area more vulnerable. In addition, the author has also conceptualized the link between religious and ethnic fault line in the province. Hazara community has been marginalized and targeted on these fault lines particularly after 2001.

One of the major contribution in the existing literature by Prof. Naumana is the nature and formation of welfare wings of extremist organizations. Funding is one of the main essentials for any organization. In this context, extremist groups have reportedly formed welfare wings to collect funds mainly in the name of charity and welfare. Pakistan had been in grey and black list of Financial Action Task Force (FATF) due to funding and financing of terrorist organizations. Therefore, the author has given a detail analysis on the working of several charity and welfare organizations and their link with extremist activities. Furthermore, Prof. Naumana argues that there is a limited scope for integrating such charity and welfare organizations within the system, as they covertly continue to operate on their set agenda.

Professor Naumana has also investigated the relationship between women and religious extremism. It is a significant contribution as the existing literature on religious extremism in Pakistan with respect to women has limited literature. The author negates the common conception that being part of patriarchal societies, women are expected to follow the decisions made by their husbands, fathers, and sons. Rather instead of an indirect role, women have a direct role in the rise of religious extremism in Pakistan. The common belief that women in Pakistan play roles such as recruiters, sympathizers, financiers, and preachers in extremist groups has been challenged in the post 9/11 era. The incident of Lal Masjid in a clear example. On the other hand,

women had been a direct victim of religious extremism and terrorism. They had faced the issue of internal displacement, health hazards, restricted movement, and above all faced casualties of their families. Therefore, women need to be incorporated as part of counter-extremism strategies to develop resilience in the society against religious extremism. Similarly, the author has also highlighted the role of civil society organizations in post 9/11 era as a viable platform for developing a counter-narrative against religious extremism in Pakistan. Overall, this book focuses on the genesis of religious extremism in Pakistan along with the state policy to deal the menace of religious extremism in the post 9/11 era. This book takes into account the current security situation of Pakistan, as it provides a detailed analysis about the issue of religious extremism and its contemporary nature. In addition, the author has explicitly identified the gaps in the State policies in the before and after 9/11 years. This can assist in the development of an effective counter- violent extremism approach at the national level. This book will help scholars and researchers in comprehending the academic discourse surrounding religious extremism and terrorism in Pakistan.