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FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

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Summary

Religious Extremism in Pakistan and Its Impact on National Security

PhD Thesis

prepared under scientific supervision of
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Warsaw 2019

The topic of this research is chosen due to significance of issue of religious extremism in Pakistan, which severely influenced the different dimensions of national security of the country. The religious extremism was a main motivating element of the most of terrorist activism since 1970s in Pakistan. Factually, then Pakistan's military president General Muhammad Zia ul Haque's brand Islamization in the 1970s and 1980s and as well as the Afghan war shaped a new fundamental religious fanaticism in the region, then post-cold war and post 9/11 events and lastly the worse circumstances in post Arab Spring period fueled it rapidly. In the Afghan war and a decade of post-Afghan war period apart from the extremists including militants associated with the groups like Al-Qaeda from various Muslim countries, thousands of the religious *madrassas* (schools) also produced another group of extremists in Pakistan - with funds received from the different countries, including Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, the post 9/11 military operations in Pakistan had provoked the violent extremists to expand their anti-state terrorist activities and, in the post Arab spring era, many of the Pakistani extremists or militant groups established their links with newly emerged foreign terrorist organization "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria" (ISIS) or "Islamic State" (IS). Growth of religious extremism, failure of state for controlling the religious militancy in different periods since 1970s, including post Afghan war, post 9/11 and post Arab spring eras in Pakistan and its impact on various aspects of country's security, which remains unfocused in the literature, require a comprehensive study.

The main subject of the research is religious extremism in Pakistan - its development and reasons for strengthening as well as its impact on national security of the country. Apart from outlining the cultural and historical background, and the identification of the main radical groups in Pakistan, all important internal and external factors influencing the development of the religious extremism in this state are examined. It is followed by the analysis of threats for political, military, economic, cultural and human dimensions of the Pakistani security. This research covers the period from 1977 to 2018.

The reasons for the choice of the aforementioned time period (1977-2018) are the changing trends within the religious extremism in Pakistan followed by changes in the policy of the state. This time-frame is divided into four phases of 1977-1990, 1990-2001,

2001-2011 and lastly 2011-2018. The first phase of 1977-1990 was a revolving point in the context of religious extremism in Pakistan as three important events, i.e. Islamization of the country by then military dictator General Ziaul Haque (who remained in power from July 1977 to August 1988), Afghanistan's war (started in 1979) and Iranian revolution (of 1979) hugely influenced the Pakistani society. The period from 1990 to 2001 is a post-cold war or post Afghan's war era, when Pakistan continued witnessing religious militancy as the result of Islamization of the country, Afghan War, sectarian terrorism and proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Beside these problems, other internal and external challenges also contributed to fuel the extremism in the country. The period from 2001 to 2011 is post 9/11 era as U.S. led war on terrorism and Pakistan's assistance in this global combat resulted into mounting of violent religious extremism in tribal areas of the country bordering Afghanistan and its impact on other regions of the state.

Lastly, during 2011-2018, the post Arab spring religious extremism also affected Pakistan as the Iraq and Syria based Islamic State radical organization (IS) established its link with Pakistani militant groups. This was the period, when Al-Qaeda became weaker after the death of Osama bin Laden in the American military operation in 2011. The network of IS, after declaring its so-called international political agenda and taking control of some of the territories in Syria and Iraq, quickly drew attention of the world in 2013 and 2014 by spreading its radical religious influence in other countries, including Pakistan. Since entry of IS in Pakistan, the group, its associates and other militant groups and individuals claimed a number of terrorist attacks in Pakistan including a severe violent attack on Karachi's airport in June 2014, massacre of 140 children of a school in Peshawar in December 2014, attack on court's premises in Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan in 2014, suicide blast in two holy shrines in Baluchistan in November 2016 and in Sindh in February 2017.

For countering the challenge, Pakistan's military declared the home-grown militancy as serious threat to the national security in the post Arab spring era. "In what appears to be a paradigm shift in its decades-old policy, Pakistan Army described home-grown militancy as the 'biggest threat' to national security". Thus, under this new military doctrine (of 2013), the state of Pakistan started a huge military operation "Zarb e Azb" in 2014-2017, pursued by another operation, which continued against the militant groups involved in the religious

militancy in the tribal and other areas of Pakistan in 2018. The tough mountain area of North Waziristan, main hideout of the religious extremists involved in the terrorist activities throughout the country, was first target of the operation, which also expended to other areas of the country.

Though, activities of the violent extremism continued during 2018 but position of these groups especially Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamic State (IS) in Pakistan became weaker in this period due to some reasons such as elimination and arrest of a number of their activists in the country and as well as murder of TTP's chief in Afghanistan and nonstop defeats of IS in Iraq and Syria during 2017-2018. In June 2018, the central leader of TTP Mullah Fazlullah was killed in a U.S. drone airstrike in Kunar province of Afghanistan. In December 2018, Donald Trump's declaration of withdrawal of American troops from Syria, shows severe defeats of IS in that country. A sort of achievements in hard actions against the violent extremism and progress in the context of soft actions against the extremism in 2018 in Pakistan appropriates for this timeframe.

In 2018, military declared its success in countering terrorism, especially violent religious extremism through two types of hard actions of military crackdowns and execution of death sentence of a number of convicted terrorists through exceptional military courts. After four years of military operations and initiative of the military courts, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, the Chief of Pakistan's Army, the most powerful entity of country's military forces in second half of year 2018 announced that military has effectively contained the terrorism. In another development, as the governmental set up of the country changed at beginning of second half of 2018 at central and provincial levels through parliamentary elections in the country, the policies of the state were also affected by this variation. In this year, particularly for countering rising extremism in the educational institutions, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan agreed with National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) of the country to review the existing curriculum in order to combat terrorisms and extremism through education in the society.

The main purpose of the study is to thoroughly analyze the developments related to the religious extremism in order to understand the nature and ideology of the extremism emerged in Pakistan since the 1970s. Subsequently, the aim of the study is to investigate the

impact of religious extremism on national security of Pakistan, including defining the main threats for different dimensions of the security.

Pakistan has been a country, where the religious extremism could be provoked under pretexts of many differences in the society. For example, differences among the different sects of Islam including Sunnis and Shias differences, even differences between *Sunni* subsects of *Brelvis* and *Deobandis* and as well as various disagreements between Muslims and Non-Muslims etc. The disturbance and disorder under the pretext of the religion can be exploited then by the various elements for their designs. Therefore, the actual problem is that who fuels the clashes and what are the objectives behind that motive. Tussles among communities can increase because of power struggles of the internal and external forces. Having such ground for its support, it was easy for the militant groups to use the religious extremism in Pakistan as a tool for their political objectives.

The research questions about the development and reasons of religious extremism, exploitation of religion for domestic and foreign interests, connections of local and foreign groups and threats for different dimensions of national security of Pakistan in the different periods were raised during the study in order to verify main hypotheses formulated in the thesis, which are as follows:

- i. Failure of the state of Pakistan in controlling extremist groups combined with connections between some groups in Pakistan and foreign militant organisations, led as key factors to rise of the religious extremism in the country.
- ii. The rising violent religious extremism impacted deleteriously various dimensions of the national security of Pakistan.

The concepts of religious extremism, national security and political change were applied in light of rational choice approach and IR theories of realism (neo-realism) and neoclassical realism as well as constructivism to analyze the main research issue. The perception of religious extremism, which means a radical view or violent behavior of a follower or a group of followers of a religion (or rather something perceived as a religion) about others, can be understood through the rational choice approach, according to which an individual behavior is motivated by self-interest, utility maximization, or, more simply put,

goal fulfillment. The concept of “national security”, is described in this thesis in a broader sense covering political, military, economic, social (cultural) and human aspects of a state’s security. The approach of “political change” which means the change in governmental setup, can be also understood much broader – then it is also about the development of different political processes – in the case of this thesis the development of the religious extremism and the security policy of Pakistan. In the post Arab spring era, Pakistan

engaged its military power against the Pakistani and foreign militant groups such as ‘IS’, in light of the realist concept of states maintaining their national security by use of force to protect their security influence and material interests. As for the neorealist assumption of military actions of the states seeking at least their survival is also a key motivation behind the Pakistan’s offensive behavior for safeguarding its national political, military and economic interests from the threats of religious militancy inspired by foreign violent extremist organizations, including ‘IS’. Pakistan’s internal problems concerning the religious extremism (rooted in state institutions and political organizations), which influenced the country’s external relations with some of the regional countries and non-state actors, have been analyzed also through an assumption of theory of neoclassical realism claiming role of both international system variables and internal factors in the foreign policy of a state.

The constructivist assumption of diverse identities of the actors, threatening the state’s national identity and its interests has been also employed in this study in order to probe Pakistan’s military action against supra-state ideology and diverse identity of the foreign militant groups, especially ‘IS’ in the post Arab spring era.

To arrive at a wise conclusion, the issue was probed at macro and micro levels from different dimensions: political, legal, economical and religious. The multifactor analysis was required then. The qualitative methods including historical method, process-tracing method and comparative method, were employed.

The genetic method as one of historical methods was applied in order to analyze the origins the problem of religious extremism in the broader perspective of political

characteristics of Islam and as well as role of the religion in pre-partition Indian Sub-continent and in post-partition independent Pakistan.

The process-tracing method is used to analyze the process of development of the religious extremism and its reasons in Pakistan. Chains of events in 1977-2018 period led to development of the religious extremism, which in turn generated problems for national security of the country. The chains have been studied in the thesis. For instance, the Islamization of Pakistan and involvement of Pakistan in Afghan jihad in Cold War and war on terror in post 9/11 era led to development of violent activities of Pakistani and foreign religious militant groups, which generated threats for political, military, economic, cultural and human dimensions of the national security of Pakistan in the post Arab spring era. Another example of the chain is as follows: the post Iranian revolution clash of interests between Iran and Saudi Arabia in Pakistan and less control of state of Pakistan over the religious sectarian groups led to escalation of the sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shia, which caused violent sectarian militancy in the society. *The comparative method* was employed to compare the development of religious extremism in Pakistan and its impact on national security of the state in the different periods of 1977-1990, 1990-2001, 2001-2011 and 2011-2018.

The particular technics of data collection and analysis have been also used in the thesis. Sixteen in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted on problem of religious extremism and its impact on the national security of Pakistan with highly experienced individuals like academic personalities, legal experts, educationists, former bureaucrats and religious scholars from Pakistan. The interviews were conducted during 2016-2017 period in different cities of Pakistan. The questions focused on development of religious extremism and its reasons, political objectives and interests of the violent religious extremists, connections of Pakistani groups with foreign militant organizations as well as role of state, civil society, religious scholars, intellectuals and media in dealing with religious extremism posing threats to the national security. The content analysis has been used in the case of official materials and other related documents and speeches to find important data on the Pakistani policy towards religion and religious extremism. For example, the analysis of the speech of Muhammad Ali Jinnah (founder of Pakistan) at the first constitutional

parliament of Pakistan in 1947 confirms the policy of the newly independent state considering religion as a personal matter of the individuals, separated from the business of the state. The analysis of twenty points of Pakistan's state's national action plan of 2014 illustrates in turn that the state introduced some strict measures for curbing terrorism and religious extremism. Furthermore, analysis of the twenty-first amendment in the constitution of Pakistan in 2015, which provided legal way for setting up speedy trial anti-terrorist military courts, confirmed seriousness of the state security policy against religious militancy in the post Arab spring era.

This dissertation consists of introduction, six chapters and conclusions, describing and analyzing various aspects of religious extremism and its impact of national security of Pakistan.

The **first chapter** "Theoretical Framework" is about the description of concepts of religious extremism, national security and political change. Then it covers how the chosen theories of IR are applied in case of development of the religious extremism during different periods, particularly post 9/11 and post Arab spring religious extremism and its impact on national security of Pakistan.

The **second chapter** "Political Characteristics of Islam" is devoted to outlining the relationship between Islam and politics in the aspects essential for the thesis, including the political divisions and conflicts, the phenomenon of political Islam and the concept of Islamic State or "Islamic caliphate" together with its contemporary implementation by the IS. It offers the answer to the question of the role of religion in the political affairs, particularly exploitation of religion for political purposes.

The **third chapter** "Ideology, Religion and Religious Extremism in Pakistan – An Historical Outline" presents the question of the place of ideology, religion and religious extremism in the history of Pakistan in order to have the background for

further analysis of the contemporary development of the religious extremism in the country. It analyzes history of the religious extremism in the region before independence of Pakistan and developments after the independence along with moderate visions of founders of the country. It covers growth of the religious extremism in the 1970s and 1980s through state's

policy of Islamization, Saudi Arabian and Iranian influences on their preferred groups in Pakistan and circumstances in post 9/11 and post Arab spring eras influencing Pakistan's national security. It analyses the origins of the religious extremism in order to understand the contemporary atmosphere in Pakistan, a country being a witness of various violent religious extremist groups in last four decades.

The **fourth chapter** "Political Parties and Radical Organizations in Pakistan – Structures, Actions and State's Response" is aimed at outlining different political parties and radical religious organizations in Pakistan as well as their activities in order to present the characteristics of the religious extremism in the country. The chapter analyses how these groups exploit the religious extremism in order to gain maximum political objectives. In addition, this chapter includes the state's responses to the activities of radical religious groups to outline the policy of the Pakistan's government in this area - a necessary basis for the assessment of its effectiveness.

The **fifth chapter** "Reasons for Religious Extremism in Pakistan" covers factors behind the religious extremism in the country. Its aim is to answer the crucial question about the reasons for the development of this phenomenon in Pakistan, presenting the comprehensive picture. The external factors, which have been identified in this chapter, are: Pakistan's strategic position and its importance in the region, nuclear race, India-Pakistan traditional rivalry and regional influence on jihadism and Islamization of Pakistan. The local factors causing growth of extremism are described as lack of political will of the state, uneven education system, political and economic instability, injustice and inequality, implementation and coordination deficits, hate speech and inflammatory tactic and media agenda setting.

The **chapter six** "Threats for Various Dimensions of National Security of Pakistan" is analysis of the impact of religious extremism on different political, military, economic, cultural and human aspects of national security of the state in accordance with multidimensional understanding of the security. When, it comes to the political dimension, the threats at internal level affected secular system, democratic forces, legislative bodies, electoral process and Pakistani nationalism and threats at external level, influenced the country's relations with Iran, India and Afghanistan. Some internal and external threats of extremism to military dimension of the security of Pakistan, also proved in this chapter as

the extremists attempted to penetrate to the military establishment and tried to make connections with some of the nuclear scientists and as well as violations of Pakistan's borders were committed by the religious extremists and as well as by the foreign forces based in Afghanistan. Threats to economic dimension are confirmed in this chapter as food, shelter and energy securities were affected in the areas witnessing religious militancy and as well as major economic sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, tourism industry and foreign direct investment were negatively influenced by the extremism in the country. Threats to the cultural dimension of national security were climbed, when religious militants started to brutally attack on art, literature and sport and cultural centers, cinemas, artists, singers and musicians in the country. Threats to human dimension of the national security of Pakistan, has been also identified in this chapter as the militant groups targeted personal, community and political securities of this dimension like personal, community, civil and political rights of the people in the country.

In the Conclusions' part of the thesis, the author summarizes the findings on the development of the religious extremism in Pakistan, reasons for its growth and impact on the national security. The research also offers some solid recommendations for remedy of the problems concerning the extremism in Pakistan.

First hypothesis, which emphasizes that failure of state in controlling religious extremism combined with connections between some groups in Pakistan and foreign militant organizations, led as key factors to rise of the religious extremism in the country, was partially positively verified. It is because, beside these two factors; failure of state and connection between the Pakistani and foreign extremist groups, there are also other reasons behind development and growth of extremism in the country, although some of them are connected with the two mentioned factors. Externally, due to Pakistan's important geopolitical position in the region and its role in Afghan war, a large number of foreign extremist groups were attracted towards this country. Moreover, Islamization of Pakistan further encouraged the activities of religious extremist groups, especially foreign jihadi organizations in the country. India-Pakistan rivalry also motivated the religious extremist groups to expand their activities and as well Pakistan also became a ground for sectarian proxy battle between Iran and Saudi Arabia due to their political and sectarian differences.

Internally, the factors like political and economic instabilities, a weak judicial system, uneven education system, hate speech and exploitation of media by the extremist groups also contributed to the expansion of extremism in Pakistan.

The second hypothesis concerning impact of the religious extremism on national security has been positively confirmed in this study. Types of threats coming from the extremism were defined in this research as threats to the political, military, economic, cultural and human security of Pakistan.

The threat to the political dimension of the security was identified as the threat to the secular and democratic forces and their participation in a normal electoral and legislative process in the country. Threat to the external aspect of political security was also detected, when the extremists negatively affected the Pakistan's ties with Iran, India and Afghanistan. The threat of the extremists to the military security in this thesis was categorized as a threat to the capabilities of country's military which

faced various physical attacks and infiltrations of the extremists in the military establishment. The threat to the economic security of Pakistan is described as a threat to the country economic resources, including production, distribution, trade, and consumption of goods and services as main productive economic sectors. When the extremists targeted the education, literature, art, music and sports, the threat to the cultural dimension of the national security was also defined in this study as a threat to the national characteristics such as knowledge, social behaviors, norms and, values of the nation. As the extremists increased insecurity for personal, community and political rights of the people in Pakistan, it is classified as a threat to the human dimension of national security covering the rights of the citizens of the state.

At the conclusions, the author proposed some recommendations such as various measures and reforms including political, economic, educational, judicial and administrative actions. For the political measures, the state should prevent the violent extremist organizations and people affiliated with these groups or the groups having connections with the foreign extremist organizations from participating in the electoral process but should assure the basic political rights of the people to participate in the politics, freedom of

political association, right to vote and right to have political gathering without any fear from the extremists. On the economic front, the state should make reforms in order to reduce corruption and give the people easy access to the necessary economic resources and basic facilities like education, food and health and by introducing development projects, provide employment opportunities in order to decrease poverty and social injustice, particularly in the areas affected by the religious extremism. The judicial system of Pakistan, which has many weaknesses and flaws, needs crucial reforms on technical, moral and social grounds in order to provide a speeding justice to the masses. Administrative and law enforcement arrangements in the country are also required to be upgraded and monitoring and control system should be introduced to stop foreign assistance for the extremist and sectarian terrorist groups in Pakistan. The education system of the country needs some primary reforms, including introduction of some productive programs and reforms in *madrassa* system and removal of controversial literature. Hate speech or hatred, which is also causing inflammation of the religious extremism in the country, needs to be addressed appropriately. Civil society, which has an important role to deal with the issues of the society, is required to launch efficient efforts to manage issues like religious extremism. The state should also use tools of culture and art for creating tolerance and peace building in the society. Media can also be used to play a vital role for both purposes to spread a positive move and stop the negative propaganda of the extremist and terrorist groups.