



COUNTERING RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE, EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM IN SOUTH PUNJAB; CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

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Abstract

Pakistan is facing most serious existential threats since 9/11 and American invasion of Afghanistan. These threats include religious violence, extremism and terrorism and the enigma of dispositional failings are exacerbating the problems. In recent years, Pakistan has faced more internal threats and challenges than external, and a messy situation can be seen after American invasion of Afghanistan and beginning of a new wave of Jihad in the neighbouring country. The "War on Terrorism" has reshaped not only the ideologies of the people of Pakistan and South Punjab was the sole victim, where religion was cashed as a tool to attract people by different terrorist organizations. South Punjab is weak point for the opportunists (terrorist organizations) and they have cashed it by increasing their manpower and creating religious extremism in common population of this area. Taking a complete view of the existing challenges and the environment, an attempt has been made to suggest viable policy guidelines encompassing socio-economic, political, legal, ideological, military, informational and other related planes.

South Punjab has been key victim of a sudden wave of terrorism as the poorest districts were targeted for their (terrorist organizations) manpower and building their own narrative to weaken Pakistan's national integration. It resulted in formation of Punjabi Taliban and Pakistan must face multiple challenges while countering terrorism and this paper indicates key achievements of military operations and elimination of terrorist organizations. Furthermore, it also includes countering strategies, achievements and current challenges to internal security of Pakistan and advocates conflict transformation issues.

Keywords

Terrorism, War on Terror, Pakistan, South Punjab, Taliban, Religious Violence, Extremism



1. Introduction:

South Punjab consists of more than 17 districts of Punjab province of Pakistan and the population of nearly 48.5% of the whole province. This area of Punjab province is poverty stricken with a higher rate of unemployment and low literacy rate which is vulnerable to other social evils as well as the religious violence, resulting the activities of terrorist organizations in the province. These factors are leading towards terrorism and the inhabitants of this region are more vulnerable to the terrorist organisations, which can be seen in the context of Punjabi Taliban, Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and other religious right-wing extremists and religious parties, running their political and military wings. The religious organisations are working actively in this region and running their own militia, involved in suicide bombings, mass killings of innocent people and target killings of religious personalities, belonging to different sects. The terrorist organisations are cashing the religion because this region is poverty stricken and inhabitants are backing the active religious terrorist outfits as we witnessed that too many people from this region are joining frequently these active terrorist organisations. These terrorist organisations are also running the madrasas and brainwashing the children, training the suicide bombers for their political goals as we have seen in case of most of the terrorist attacks in Pakistan, where teenagers were used by the terrorist organisations and they have, somehow achieved their settled political goals. There can also be seen

many other social evils in this society as people have been deprived of their fundamental rights and the development ratio is very low as compared to the other provinces, especially to that of rest of the Punjab province.

The case of South Punjab is not easy to understand as there exist many complexities regarding religious violence, extremism and terrorism, which are adding negative effects in the process of national integration and creating loopholes in national security of Pakistan. The terrorist organisations have a breeding grounds here in South Punjab districts because it is hit by poverty and unemployment as well as a less awarded area of Punjab with regards to that of development in South part of province. The social problems and political challenges are the key factors behind the progress of this region and its inhabitants, easy victim of terrorist organisations because people of this region are simple and innocent that this becomes vulnerability to cash for the negative use by different active religious organisations, who are working for their very own branded political goals but manipulating religion. The high-profile terrorist organizations are Jaish-e-Muhammad Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Punjabi Taliban, Sipah-e-Muhammad, Sunni Tehreek and other religious active terrorist organisations in the south Punjab.

Terrorism has a wide range and the diversity can also be found in it but commonly, it is being used in the modern world as an unlawful use of violence and coercion, that is against the civilians, specifically and mainly it has political goals. The

tenacity of terrorism is of two types, one is based on political goals and purposes behind it and other is to preserve that political influence on the region as well as on the globe. But somehow the determinations vary from region to region and tenacity is deviating.

In the modern world, it may be in form of creation of chaos in a country and obviously, religion can easily be manipulated by the internal and external factors and both the conflicting parties may use this tool for their own benefits. "The service and worship of God or the Supernatural that is due to the commitment or devotion to religious faith or the observance, or a set of personal or institutionalized system of religious attitude, beliefs and practices is called as religion. While the advocacy of extreme measures or the views that are based on the concept of radicalism is known as extremism,"¹ in which the religious values, morals and sentiments are utilized to instigate the people for a specific purpose or the specific purposes or the targeted goals.

The incident of 9/11 has brought a lot of changes along with it as the world has to face a new challenge in form of terrorism and "the war on terror" begins under the supervision of United States of America. It affected the South Asia more than any part of the world as the new terrorist organizations emerged here under the umbrella of Al-Qaeda. The people of this region have been more vulnerable during the couple of decades regarding the religious sentiments and

methodologies. So, the emergence of new terrorist organizations is also due to the religious context. These organizations emerged in the name of Islam and they include working terrorist outfits as Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, Lashkar-i-Taiba, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Hizb-ul-Ahrar, Jamaat-al-Ahrar, Sipah-e-Sahaba, Sipah-e-Muhammad and Jindullah. These organizations are using Islam as a tool for their political goals and misinterpreted the Islamic concept of War, especially the concept of Jihad.

These organizations have breeding grounds in Pakistan, especially in the Punjab province. The area of South Punjab is affected by their influence, where these organizations are working actively after 9/11 and Afghan war. Due to higher number of population and poverty-stricken area, South Punjab is an easy target for the working actors and the terrorist organizations, who are playing the religious card for their own benefits. As per the available data, which is provided in this paper, shows the number of terrorist attacks in Punjab, which is further divided into South and North Punjab. These attacks were carried out by different terrorist organizations and among them, mostly involved parties have religious background, who are running their militant wing along with the political wing. As it has been discussed in the introduction that the Southern Punjab is poverty-stricken and is less developed area as compared to the rest of the Punjab, so it is more vulnerable for the religious violence, extremism that finally lead towards terrorism. So, on these grounds, the terrorist organizations are

¹ Religion and Extremism; Definition from Merriam Webster Dictionary

manipulating the religious sentiments and trying to achieve their targeted political goals and the South Punjab is a heaven for these organizations.

2. South Punjab: A Soft Target for Religious Militants and Terrorist Organizations:

After the emergence of a sudden wave of terrorism in Pakistan and the inception of different terrorist organizations, it has been discussed among the political thinkers and the scholars about the funding of different well organized terrorist organizations and about the manipulation of religion, which is being used as a tool to legitimate their agenda. South Punjab, which is well known as 'Saraiki Speaking Belt' is the soft target for these terrorist organizations, which are running their Madrasas and are working their political wings to promulgate their agenda and to separate terror in the country that is primarily the result of religious violence and extremism. We call this region as a soft target for the terrorist organizations due to poverty-stricken, less development and low literacy rate and the people can easily be manipulated due to the traditional religious affiliation as this area of Punjab province is the hub of Sufism and mysticism and the people pay more concentration on the religious feelings and emotions than any other thing.

But unfortunately, South Punjab has lost backing structure either it is Sufism or Mysticism or the traditional religious norms and values. That is why we see it as a soft target for not only the terrorist organizations but also for the religious extremist like Lashkar-i-Taiba (LET), Sipah-i-

Muhammad, Sipah-i-Sahaba, Tehrik-i-Nifaz Fiqah Jafaria, Sunni Tehreek, Jamat-ud-Dawa Jaish Muhammad, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Khuddam-i-Islam. These religious organizations find productive ground not only to inject their very own ideology, but they also manipulate the religious feelings for the recruitment of new militants.

South Punjab is a breeding ground of sectarian violence and religious extremism where Deobandi radicals and the anti-Shia sentiments are the key factors behind this. Furthermore, the Iran-Saudi conflict provoke this religious violence and extremism which is a common factor behind the religious violence and extremism, here in Pakistan. Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Sipah-i-Sahaba are working as religious extremist and they are using the religious card to legitimate their activities and have been involved in provocation of religious sentiments and in the target killings of people, belonging to other sects.

"A swarm of young madrassa students gathered around the main Imambargah in Rahim Yar Khan. "Shias are infidels," they shouted. "Death to America! Death to Iran!" Some vowed to attack Shias to avenge the death of Malik Ishaq. Malik Ishaq, the chief of the banned Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), was killed along with 13 aides in a reported gunfight with the police. But many in the crowd insisted he had been killed deliberately because of pressure from local Shias, and Iran, with which Pakistan has recently started mending ties."²

² <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/sectarian-threat-looms-large-in-south-punjab/>

The main factor is the external funding to the religious terrorist organizations by Iran and Saudi Arabia that is pushing the sectarian violence and extremism in Pakistan and the soft target without any doubt is, South Punjab. For example, the building of mosques within a few months on sponsorship and their proper funding in promotion of religious extremism and terror financing. These monitored mosques are the result of Saudi funding to a specific sect to promote Sunni majority in Pakistan. These mosques are being built rapidly from Jhung to Rahim Yar Khan and four other districts of South Punjab that include, Layyah, Muzaffargarh, Bahawalpur and Bahawalnagar. These new mosques are the upbringing of specified terror groups and tenacity of religious extremists in form of emergence of new sects like Ahl-e-Hadith and others, that are affecting the Sunni Sect of Islam itself.

“Parents cannot afford to send their children to schools, and therefore they send them to madrassas where they get education, food, clothes and even pocket money,” says Sudwani. There are many madrassas in the region but not too many schools, he says. “The boys who go to some of these madrassas are used by their mentors against rival religious groups, and sometimes even against the state.”³

Root Causes Behind Radicalization:

In her book "**Pakistan under siege: Extremism, Society and the state**" Madiha writes about the radicalization and the state narrative about the

terrorist groups. She has clearly portrayed a picture of Islamization in Pakistan and about the working agenda of Islamic terrorist groups who are continuously running their political wings as well as their terrorist organizations. Furthermore, she has said about the education system in Pakistan from formal to informal education and stated about Madrasa education system. The Islamists and Madrassas are interlinked to each other and this is resulting in form of breeding ground of terrorist organizations which are working effectively in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

She has also provided the data of the victims of terrorist attacks by different organizations and about the Pakistani society, which is becoming more radical, rapidly moving towards extremism. There is a perception in the Western countries about Pakistan that it is supporting terrorism due to the loopholes in its education system and the traditional Madrasa education. Furthermore, it is also discussed in the book about the Anti-Western sentiments in Pakistani society and about the terrorist groups who working from Pakistani soil and attacking different Western countries under the supervision of Al-Qaeda. Madiha has wonderfully portrayed about the historical background of religious extremism in Pakistan and about the current changing scenario in the religious context.

In their research paper, "**Radicalization of Youth in South Punjab**" Eram Khalid and Mina Ahsan Leghari have analyzed about the youth of South Punjab, turning into radical Islamists. The

³ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/sectarian-threat-looms-large-in-south-punjab/>

religious extremism in the region of South Punjab and the militancy has donated in violence and terrorism in Pakistan and it possess a constant threat to the internal security of Pakistan. The radicalization in youth of South Punjab is the result of religious extremism and violence which resulted in form of terrorism. Although the Madrasas have been regulated by the federal government but still there are many dodges which are promoting radicalization. There are multiple causes and implication of radicalization which are mostly based on socio-political setup of region and the geography. The demography of the South Punjab is also discussed clearly to build up an opinion about the issue and to suggest the ways to eliminate the problems regarding radicalization in the youth of South Punjab. The population of South Punjab is rapidly increasing as it is now 48.5% that consists upon three divisions and covers the area of 99572 kilometers. As Punjab consists of 9 total divisions and 6 of them are in North of Punjab which consists of 51.5% of population. Multan, Bahawalpur and Dera Ghazi Khan are the divisions of South Punjab, which are underdeveloped, and mainly poverty stricken, per capita earnings in less than 2 dollars. The economic growth is comparatively very low in this region of Punjab as due to low per capita income and sphere back of basic facilities. The economic condition is very pathetic here in South Punjab as nearly 43% of population lives below the poverty line. Comparatively to that of remaining 6 divisions of Punjab, the poverty percentage is much higher, and the economic

growth is lower than other divisions of Punjab. The given data in their paper shows that the literacy rate, health condition and industrial department, is comparatively very low in contrast to that of North Punjab. These all are the sweltering issues where the implication of poverty and under development of South Punjab are main problems of this region. Furthermore, the caste and bradri system and ethnic division are also among the main problems and key hinderance towards the development of this region. The ethnic crossover, the leadership crisis and religious radicalization are also the main problems of the people of South Punjab. The main issue of radicalization in youth of South Punjab, its meaning and definition has been discussed in this paper. The historical background of radicalization is also a part of this paper and the religious radicalization has been clearly described by the authors which is attracting the youth of South Punjab and enhancing the manpower of terrorist organizations. It has been shown in a wide-ranging sense that how many terrorist organizations are actively working in South Punjab, which include Al-Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, Tehreek Taliban Pakistan, Punjabi Taliban, Sipah-e-Sahaba, Sunni Tehreek, Hazb-e-Islami and Afghan Taliban. The youth of South Punjab, joining these terrorist organization is due to poverty, unemployment, corruption and poor education system.

The radicalization in burning issue of South Punjab as mentioned by the authors but they missed the main point of population ratio and

opportunities in the province of Punjab and disproportion of economic growth and circulation of resources. Although this paper has portrayed about the issues related to the South Punjab with statistic data, including demography and economic growth of this region but failed to describe clearly about the main issue of radicalization and about why the youth of this region is becoming an informal victim of terrorist organizations.

Now this area has been shifted from Sufi tradition and tolerance for other religious communities to the religious intolerance and religious extremism. It is now characterized as the main working area of Punjabi Taliban and is becoming a refinement ground of multiple terrorist organizations. The authors of this paper have clearly discussed about the geographic location of South Punjab and its demography with available statistic data and portrayed a comparison with rest of the Punjab, which shows its low economic growth and development. The socio-political condition and the low economic growth are shown as most important issues of radicalization of youth and complexities in the political system of this specific region. The poverty rate of South Punjab is shown as division wise and the paper also illustrates the effects of Afghan war and "War on Terror" up on the people of this region. From the basic issues to the major problems including lack of leadership, religious extremism, economic development and increasing radicalization in South Punjab, has been discussed in this paper and statistically compared to that of rest of Punjab

but lacks the facts and figures about the number of people who are joining the banned groups or terrorist organizations. The authors did not mention the number of young people who have joined so far, the terrorist organizations or estimated data of young people joining them. It also failed to provide information about target killings of religious scholars and killings in the name of sectarianism. The facts are not shown in this paper about active working terrorist organizations and about why people of this region are joining them than the rest of the Punjab. This paper also fails to provide information about the terrorist groups that why they are getting more popularity and easily promoting their agenda than other 6 divisions of the province. This paper also does not suggest any recommendations nor even provides any suggestions to counter the radicalization of youth and about how to eliminate the increasing religious extremism in South Punjab.

Now the question arises here, that why the South Punjab is a soft target and the breeding ground of terrorist organizations. The answer is simple that because this area is very less developed as compared to the remaining part of the Punjab province and even the development rate is comparatively low to that of other provinces of Pakistan. Hence this area is poverty-stricken, and the per capita income is comparatively very low. This region covers the 52% of total population of Punjab province but due to low development ratio and the high population, it is facing multiple problems regarding the imbalance between

income and development. Somehow, it is due to the high rate of corruption and deprivation of fundamental rights that is becoming the safe haven for not only terrorist organizations but also for the right wing radical. There is a direct link between poverty, religious radicalization and the economic hardship so the same case goes with this region and it provides opportunities to the religious extremist and service organizations.

As it has been discussed earlier that behind the root causes of the religious violence and extremism in South Punjab are, poor education system, poverty and corruption due to comparatively less developed ratio than North Punjab and the population is nearly 52% of the total population of the province. As per the reports of United Nations, suggest that the people of this region, have a low per capita income which is not more than 1.25 dollar and it is in between 350 to 450 dollars per annum. People prefer Madrasa education system for their children as they are unable to pay the school dues and fees, as they are unable to meet the criteria of standard life. The madrasas are being run by the organizations which are involved in other activities rather than focusing on their basic work. They are running their political and military wings along with the religious and as per the stats, provided by the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), that clearly says that in most of the suicide bombings in the country, teenagers were used starting from 14 years of age to 18 years. Furthermore, it states that teenagers are the soft target as their minds can

easily be reshaped and re-module and in this case these children are vulnerable.

While many of the active religious militant groups in Punjab, the government had long been banned, they were still active and operational at the onset of National Action Plan. In January 2015 interior minister Nisar Ali Khan announced that 95 proscribed militant organizations were operating in Punjab, alone. The local law enforcement finally begins to act against them and later in 2015, questioning more than 90,000 people and arresting 40 of the hardcore terrorists.⁴

The research paper "Poverty and Support for Militant Politics: Evidence from Pakistan" written by Graeme Blair, C. Christine Fair, Neil Malhotra, and Jacob N. Shapiro, have stated about how the Pakistani society is more vulnerable for the terrorist organizations and about how they are running their political and military wing in the country effectively. They have clearly showed the facts and figures of people of South Punjab joining the religious militia due to less development, poverty and lack of resources. Further it is illustrated about how the psyche of poverty is being cashed by the militant and people with low literacy rate are the key victims of their approach. The result of surveys from different districts of Punjab suffered 787 incidences of religious violence causing 4525 casualties. The variables show the religious extremism by the Sunnis and Shias that also resulted in form of killings of thousands of innocent people. Furthermore, the data shows the political violence

⁴ <https://www.nacta.gov.pk/>

resulting in 27,570 incidences in Pakistan from 1998 to 2010. The paper also shows the poverty level from individual to the sport of militant organizations where mostly the victims are from Punjab province of Pakistan. Although, Pakistanis

do not like the militant groups, but they are divided into opinions between Urban and rural populations and there can be seen the conflict of opinion in them.

3. Data Methodology

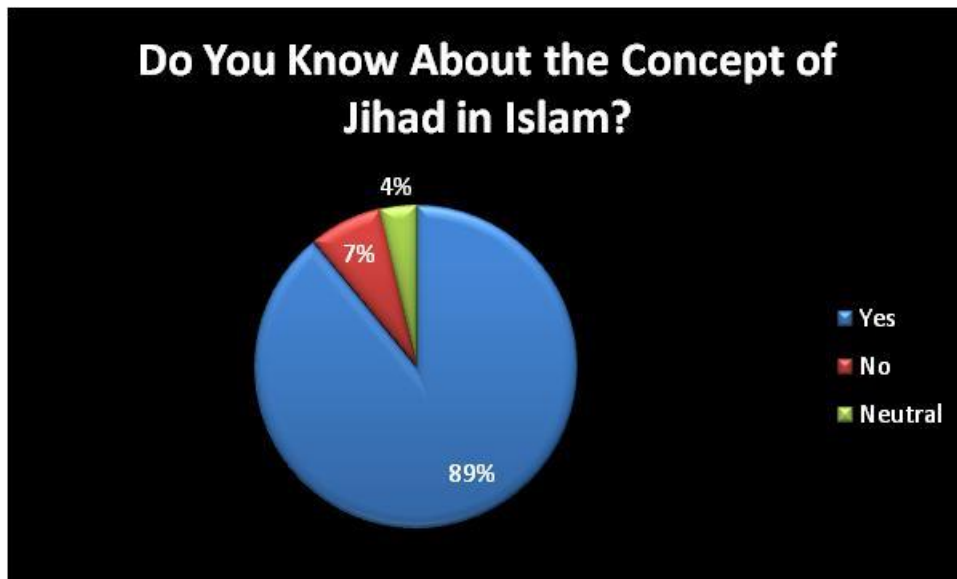
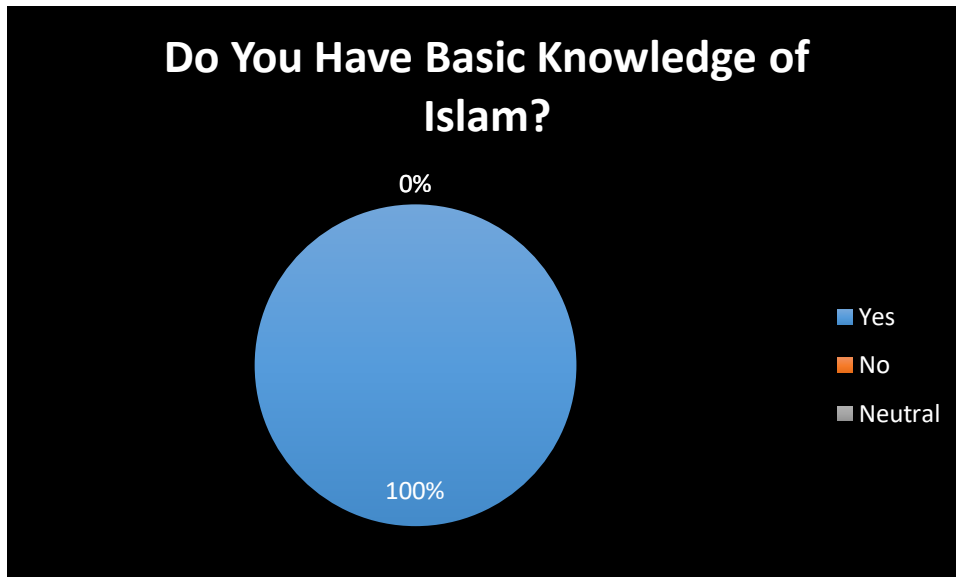
A questionnaire was prepared for the data collection and these questions were included open ended and close ended questions. These are given as follow:

Sr.	Please MARK a choice which represents your best opinion of your agreement or disagreement.	Yes	No	Neutral
1	Do You Have Basic Knowledge About Islam?			
2	Do You Know About the Concept of Jihad in Islam?			
3	Do You Know About Military Operations Against Terrorists in Pakistan?			
4	Do You Think That Islam is Being Used as Political Tool by Terrorist Organizations?			
5	Do You Think That Religious Organizations Are Manipulating Religious Values and Ideologies?			
6	Do You Think That Funding of Religious Modarres is Root Cause of Terrorism?			
7	Have You Ever Met Religious Scholar/Scholars?			
8	Do You Think That Madrassa Education System Needs Regulations?			
9	Do You Think That Educational Reforms Can Help Us Countering Terrorism?			
10	Do You Think That Minimum Education of Religious Scholar Must Be Bachelor?			

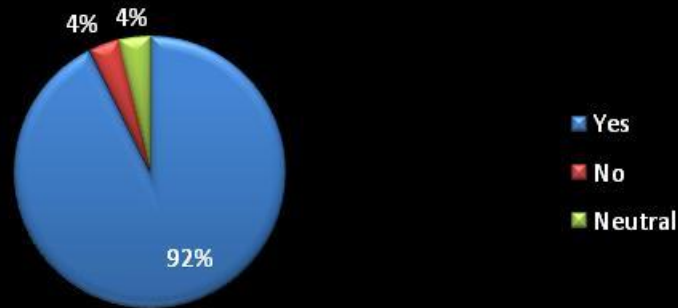
Furthermore, the long questions included as:

- 1- What Are Your Views About Religious Violence and Extremism? (100-200 Words)
- 2- How Many Times You Have Asked Religious Questions from Religious Scholars or Ulemas? Give Some Details. (150-250 Words)
- 3- Do You Think That Madrasas Must Be Regulated by Federal or Provincial Governments? (150-250 Words)
- 4- Suggest Some Ways to Eliminate Religious Violence, Extremism. (250-300 Words)
- 5- In Your Opinion, How Can We Counter Terrorism Effectively? (250-300 Words)

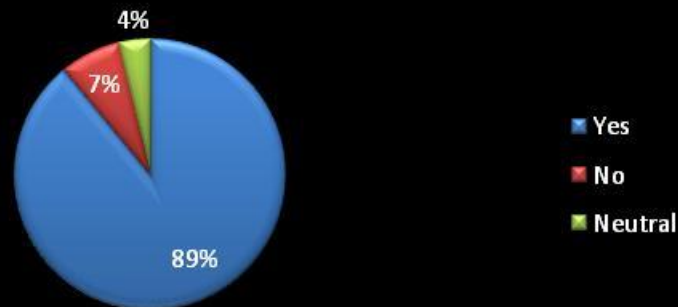
The total responded are 50 in number and their response is shown in graphs.



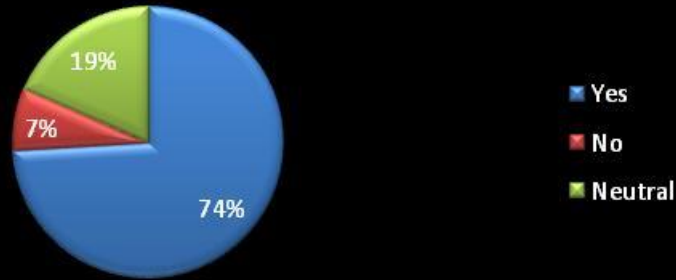
Do You Know About Military Operations Against Terrorists in Pakistan?



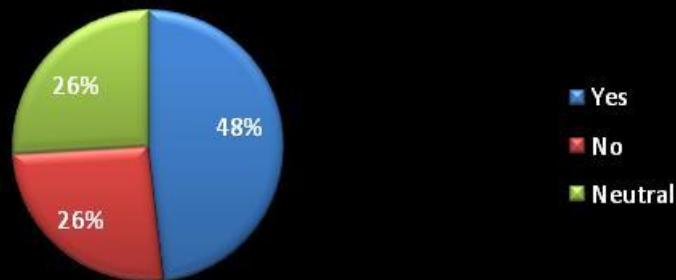
Do You Think that Islam is Beeing Used as Political Tool by Terrorist Organizations?



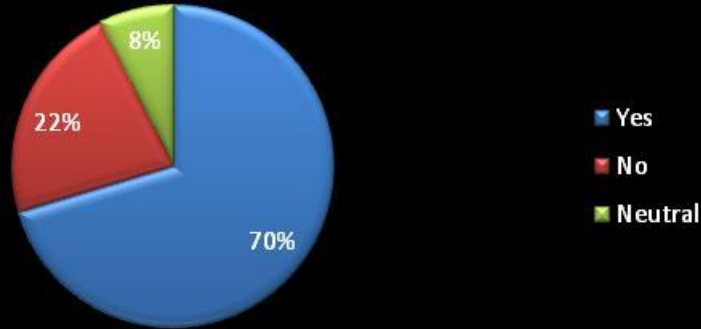
Do You Think That Religious Organization Are Manipulating Religious Values and Ideologies?



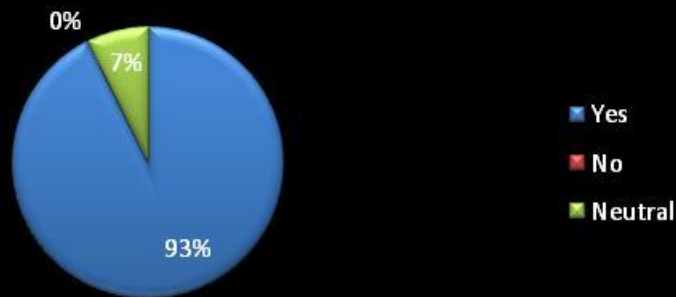
Do You Think That That Funding of Religious Modarris is Root Cause of Terrorism?



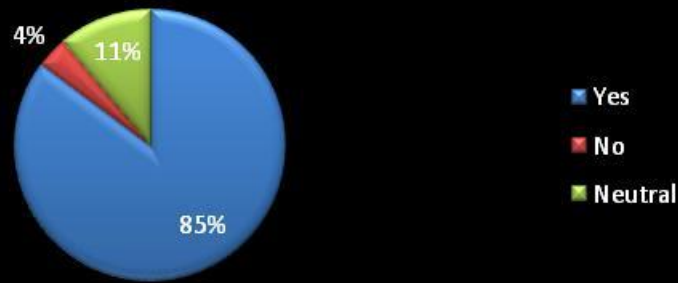
Have You Ever Met Religious Scholar/Scholars?



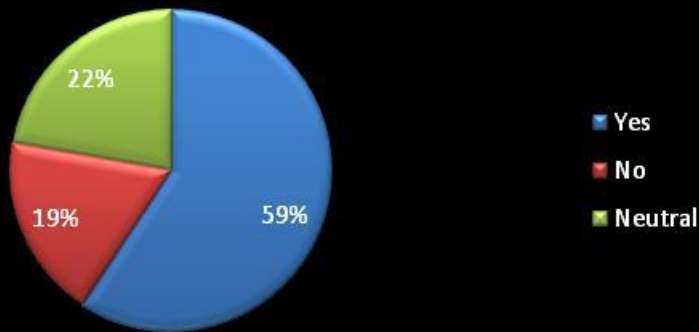
Do You Think That Madrassa Education System Needs Regulations?



Do You Think That Educational Reforms Can Help Us Countering Terrorism?



Do You Think Minimum Education of Religious Scholar Be Bachelor?



4. Challenges and Achievements:

Currently, there are numerous challenges in the way of countering terrorism and religious violence as well as to eradicate the religious extremism in specified region of Punjab i.e. South Punjab and the government has familiarized multiple effective policies to counter terrorism and religious violence but still there are many challenges. It is a long way to cover things as there occur sectarian killings and the religious violence is not easy to counter today because it is properly programmed and the people are not well aware of this about where they are heading towards and where it will lead them? The Jihadi groups and religious terrorist organizations are the headache of Pakistan's internal security and it is not easy to get rid of them but can be refuted by proper legislation and strong actions by law and enforcement agencies can be taken and it can lead towards countering the terrorism which is the result of religious violence as well as religious extremism in the region especially South Punjab of Pakistan. The military operations Zarb-e-Azab and Rad-ul-Fasad have been effective in countering the terrorism but still there are many gaps and trials in countering the religious violence and extremism in the South Punjab. The challenges can be terminated via proper legislation and implementation of National Action Plan in Pakistan to secure the internal security and by the economic expansion in this region and increasing the literacy rate in the province.

The radical Islamist organizations try to allure the soft targets and due to lack of opportunities, the

youth is a soft and easy target for them. The modern jihadis are large in number and it is the high time to set proper regulations of madrasa sector and need to bring reforms in the religious education system. The combing operation under operation "Rad-ul-Fasad" has contributed a lot in countering terrorism but the enigma of the religious violence and religious extremism remains the same as we have seen recently the outbreak of religious extremist, just after the decision of Asia B. B's case. Even after conducting two of the high-profile military operations against the terrorist organizations, somehow the element of religious extremism and religious violence remained the same problem, especially for the South Punjab region. The radicalization and religious extremism can be stopped by banning the religious hate speeches and literature of religious organizations. To counter the religious violence and extremism, the Federal government and Punjab government have banned the religious organizations like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Sipah-i-Sahaba and other working religious outfits. The combing operation has played a vital role in controlling the religious violence and extremism as it has eliminated the religious extremists as well as literature of banned outfits. The Punjab government has regulated the Madrasas to avoid the religious violence and extremism as well as of radicalization and during the past two decades, it is providing free education in all over Punjab. Comparatively, the budget of South Punjab is low, and it can be seen in form of low development

ratio but now, the Punjab government has allocated a specific budget to the Southern Punjab that is also because of the Chinese investment in the province. The religious radicalization is being monitored after the introduction of National Action Plan (NAP) and its implementation in the country and counter terrorism drive has brought a lot of changes in monitoring religious personalities, Ulemas and Madrasas along with the banned religious outfits and their members. Although, it has been effective in controlling the terrorism along-with religious violence and extremism but somehow, there relics gaps which need to be addressed via proper legislation and effective policies.

"In the wake of the assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti (the Minister for Minority Affairs) in 2011, the government took steps to improve religious freedom and tolerance, by establishing a Ministry of National Harmony and appointing a special adviser for minority affairs.⁹⁸ In 2012, the government added four additional seats for

minorities in the National Assembly and the Senate, and placed a five percent quota for minorities in federal government jobs. In November 2014, Prime Minister Sharif approved the formation of a national commission on minorities to promote religious tolerance and harmony in the country. The commission would prepare a policy on inter- faith harmony and review laws, executive instructions, and procedural practices of the government or government agencies. In May 2015, the country's first National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) was authorized to operate and was granted massive powers, including the power to conduct inquiries and take actions on its own accord. However, there were significant delays in beginning operations.¹⁰⁰ In early 2016, the chairman of the Pakistan People's Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari acknowledged discrimination against religious minorities and called for action against religious persecution.

⁵Yearly Compilation of Terrorism Related Fatalities in Punjab

Years	Civilians	Security Forces	Militants
2011	110	198	137
2012	592	916	104
2013	647	10	81
2014	132	2028	180
2015	909	77	176
2016	842	113	9244
2017	322	799	159
Total	3,554	4,141	10,081 ⁶

"According to one report, about 1,132 hardcore elements have been identified in Punjab and 649 persons were arrested for facilitating hate speeches. Recently, officials arrested 42 suspected militants with alleged links to the ISIS, according to the Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah. Sanaullah added that those arrested include the purported ISIS Islamabad chief Amir Mansoor, his deputy Abdullah Mansoori, and the group's chief for the province of Sindh, Umar Kathio."⁷

"Bilawal calls for NAP action against misuse of religious based laws," Sama T.V, January 3, 2016.⁵"

Chart: South Asian Voices Source: SATP Get the data Created with Data wrapper⁶

"42 ISIS militants arrested in Punjab: Rana¹ Sanaullah," Pak Tribune, January 5, 2016⁷.

5. Conclusion:

We may say that the government of Pakistan has done a lot against countering terrorism by taking strong military actions against terrorist organizations and it took strong actions against religious violence and extremism in the country. But it is due to the soft corner for religious organizations in the people of South Punjab that their religious feelings are very easy to exploit so they are part of such kind of activities and that is the reason why they are joining these terrorist organisations so frequently as compared to that of inhabitants of other provinces. Another reason for terrorist organisations who are working so effectively in this region is due to less development, poor infrastructure and low literacy rate, which is comparatively lowest in contrast to

that of north Punjab. The youth is turning into radicalization due to the Madrasa education system. The religious organizations are running their religious militia and military wing in form of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and Punjabi Taliban. The government of Pakistan is working effectively in countering these terrorist organisations as well as countering the religious extremism and violence by making effective laws and regulations for the Non-governmental organisations and for the religious organizations but still there are many ambiguities to be addressed appropriately. There must be suitable development, building up of new infrastructure and increasing the education rate in this region along with proper regulation of the Madrassas. We may say that to eradicate the religious violence and religious extremism from South Punjab and to counter terrorism, it is essential now to take some strong measurements against the religious organizations, who are running their military and political wings and against the band terrorist outfits. We need to provide a helping environment within the provincial government that could be useful to look at the indications of the funding and it will have a check and balance of the mudras as well as the banned terrorist organizations, and to encounter the emerging threats of religious violence, religious extremism and religious intolerance.

"The selected countering terrorism drive and the nepotism of religious groups has Limited the results, and this can only be effective if it is

without any sort of nepotism and favoritism and it need to be addressed by a strong force that can result in eliminating terrorism from the region of South Punjab and can also help in overcoming the religious violence as well as religious extremism."

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⁸ Pakistan's Jihadi Heartland: South Punjab, Page 23

There are several notions that helped in shuffling the modern societies, but two of them are vibrant and above all, one is democracy and other is secularism. The excuses that exist in Pakistan's internal security, need to be addressed either by the Peaceful dialogues or by using force against terrorist organizations without any sort of discrimination. The proper regulations of religious groups, religious Scholars and madrasa education system as well as the schools, colleges and universities in the south Punjab, can help us in reducing religious violence and extremism and it can also help in eliminating terrorism. The good Jihadis and bad Jihadis and the supportive policies by the government, have been a challenging to the state of Pakistan, which can be seen in form of Jaish Muhammad as it has an extensive working networks across Punjab. So, the selective or limited countering terrorism policy cannot work.

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Dividing that countering terrorism strategy into good and bad people and non-use of force against the Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan is ratifying religious violence and extremism.

There must be strong regulation of Mudaris and the active political organisations who are manipulating religious beliefs and it is time that we need to regularize institutions to work effectively in countering not only terrorism but also eliminating the threats of extremism and radicalization. Now it is the time to introduce the new policies for the education system and to regulate the schools, colleges along with the motorization of Mudaris as we can see the incident that a college boy in Bahawalpur has killed his teacher just because of misunderstanding of his words that were related to the prophethood and Islam. So, it can only be countered via proper implementation, regulation and motorization of our education system, whether it is Islamic or the current modern scientific education system. There must be reforms regarding the formation of education system as well as the motorization of the religious personalities.

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