

Extremism Watch

Mapping Conflict Trends in Pakistan 2010-2011



A Jinnah Institute
Research Report

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Jinnah Institute (JI) is a non-profit public policy organisation based in Pakistan. It functions as a think tank, advocacy group and public outreach organisation independent of the government.

JI seeks to promote knowledge-based policy making for strengthening democratic institutions and to build public stakes in human and national security discourse. It remains committed to investing in policies that promote fundamental rights, tolerance and pluralism.

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JI actively seeks to articulate independent national security strategies for Pakistan that incorporate the country's stated policy imperatives while making room for voices from civil society, parliament, academia and media experts. Jinnah Institute's SSI also encourages constructive engagement between the international community and local policy and opinion makers on key national security interests, with the goal of seeking broad strategic convergences in multilateral and bilateral forums.

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Introduction

The religiously-motivated violence that has racked Pakistan over two decades is rooted in denominational differences, but expresses itself in the context of today's political and geopolitical realities. Denominational differences provide the site in which the violent groups and individuals situate the legitimacy of their actions. The targeting of specific communities, their symbols, institutions and ideologies has become routine, and the reporting of incidents that violate the norms of peaceful societies is not given due attention in the public discourse.

The 'Extremism Watch Project' at Jinnah Institute aims to address the need to define the concept of extremism as it exists in Pakistan today. The objective is to outline and categorise the forms taken by religiously motivated violence, define the context for each category and trace existing trends to inform civil society representatives and policy-makers of the complexities that attend the use of such violence by groups and individuals. *'Extremism Watch: Mapping Conflict Trends in Pakistan 2010-2011'* is the outcome of research undertaken from September 2010 to September 2011, and aims to present a holistic picture of religious extremism as observed over this time period.

Salmaan Taseer's assassination and the continuing public support for the assassin illustrates the polarization of Pakistani society over the blasphemy issue. Similarly, groups have increasingly resorted to killing people in places and on occasions that were considered sacred.

The existence of such conflict is not a recent issue. Religiously-motivated violence can be traced back to the anti-Ahmadiyya riots in Lahore in the early 1950s, but the phenomenon gathered momentum during and after General

Zia-ul-Haq's 11-year rule. Zia placed religion overtly and squarely in public life and the contest for the domination of public space is now marked by hostility among members of different faiths and sects within Islam, with varying claims to orthodoxy and righteousness. This endogenous process, subsuming within it multiple factors, has been given a fillip by regional and international events. The first Afghan War during the 1980s and the US-led War on Terror since October 2001 have also led to the proliferation of armed extremist groups, whose operations blur the line between extremism and politically motivated terrorism.

'Extremism Watch: Mapping Conflict Trends in Pakistan 2010-2011' looks at recent incidents of violence rooted in religious extremism to determine trends in an increasingly militarized public space. The report seeks to isolate incidents of extremism from terrorism – notwithstanding the academic debates on definition for both terms – to identify the broad overlap in the cause, nature and agents of both phenomena and to show that in addition to acts of terrorism this mindset has also become a social norm. The methodology devised for the study used a working definition of extremism against which news reports were assessed and categorised in the data.

The report is divided into six segments, according to thematic areas of focus:

The first essay, *'Conflict Trends: Presenting the Data'*, presents the aggregated statistics compiled by the research wing. This is an immersion into the data and provides a broad overview of extremist incidents as well as more detailed information about each of the identified categories. Based on the numbers, patterns have been deduced showing the geographical concentration of specific kinds of extremism, as well as the trends followed over the course of the year.

This is followed by a comprehensive analysis on the *'Rise of Violent Sectarianism'*, tracing the path of sectarian conflict in Pakistan from the 1950s to the present day. It offers an insight into the forms taken by prejudice today, the role of non-state actors that incite and perpetrate violence.

The essay on *'Religious Intolerance, Interfaith Violence and Public Discourse'* touches upon the Blasphemy Laws and their susceptibility to abuse, manifestations of radicalized thought and the role of the media in influencing public opinion.

'Turning Schools to Stones' explores the detrimental effects of religious extremism on education in the country. In particular, it draws on the data for attacks against schools and the consequences for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA. The motivation for attacks on infrastructure has been discussed, and the difference between incidents of extremism and terrorism has been delineated. The paper also offers policy recommendations to protect and enhance this crucial dimension of development.

The '*Militarisation of Islamic Spaces of Worship*' presents examples to illustrate the growing intolerance for public expression of religious beliefs. It focuses specifically on Muslim spaces of worship like mosques, shrines and imambargahs.

To add final nuance to the narrative, the impacts of extremism on women are explored in the piece titled, '*Through the Gender Lens*'. This is a theoretical investigation of the direct and indirect effects of extremism on both men and women. The constraints experienced in obtaining gender disaggregated information have been addressed, as well as the need to add a gender dimension to further the policy discourse.

Methodology

The Extremism Watch project gathered data from six leading English dailies over the period September 2010 – September 2011. These included DAWN, Express Tribune, The News, Pakistan Today, The Nation and Daily Times. Urdu newspapers Jang and Nawa-i-Waqt and international news agencies Reuters and Associated Press were consulted to corroborate reports that were not carried by more than one English newspaper.

To reconcile statistical discrepancies that appeared in the reports, such as the numbers of casualties after a major bomb blast, all newspapers were consulted to arrive at a consensus figure. Statistics were taken from reportage as they appeared in the press the day after an incident. It was seen that casualties often keep increasing over the days following each incident, but a final count is seldom reported. Therefore, it proved difficult for the research team to ascertain final statistics that were not accounted for in the press.

A working definition of religious extremism was developed for this project to enable the identification and categorization of the incidents reported in the press. A basic taxonomy of extremism is as follows:

1. Interfaith extremism: incendiary speech or writing, and physical attacks directed against (or exchanged between) members of different faiths, against their property, symbols, congregations and places of worship. Incidents involving Muslim, Christian, Hindu and Ahmaddiya communities have been included in this category.

Blasphemy related incidents form a subset of interfaith religious extremism, but have also been considered separately in the narrative.

2. Sectarian extremism: incendiary speech or writing and physical attacks directed against (or exchanged between) members of different Islamic sects, against their property, symbols, congregations and places of worship. Incidents recorded under this category include target killings and suicide attacks against Shia processions, attacks against Barelvi mosques and funerals, clashes between Sunni, Shia, Barelvi and Ahl-e-Hadith groups.

3. Attacks against shrines: physical attacks directed against Sufi shrines, the congregations or devotees present there. Although attacks against shrines constitute a subset of sectarian violence, they are presented as a separate category as they form a relatively new kind of religious extremism.

4. Attacks against schools: physical attacks against private and public school infrastructure, or violence against students and schoolteachers.

5. Other forms of religious extremism: incidents that cannot be categorized under any of the above, but are clearly motivated by religious extremism. These incidents frequently involve incendiary speech or writing, or violence in the public space. These include attacks on marketplaces, CD shops and billboards.

Conflict Trends: Presenting the Data

The cast of perpetrators of extremism is a mixed one, including the militant terrorist organizations of the 1990s who continue to operate with impunity, as well as common citizens, who espouse non-violent forms of extremism. Countrywide data collected over a one-year period (September 2010 – September 2011) showed 181 incidents of religious extremism, resulting in the loss of 534 lives and 1,391 injured. According to aggregate figures in the tables below, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa saw the highest number of incidents as well as the greatest loss of life. Although the second highest number of incidents and injuries sustained was recorded in Punjab, the deadliest cases were observed in Balochistan. In FATA, 28 incidents were recorded but since the majority of these were attacks against school infrastructure, the number of casualties is relatively low.

Table 1 | Incidents of Extremism
From September 2010 To September 2011

Categories of Extremism	Baluchistan	Punjab	Sindh	Khyber Pakhtunkwa	FATA	Gilgit- Baltistan	Total
Interfaith Violence/ Blasphemy	1	31	13	8	-	-	53
Sectarian	16	5	8	12	3	-	44
Attacks against Schools	-	-	-	37	23	2	62
Shrine Attacks	-	3	1	1		-	5
Other	-	3	2	10	2	-	17
Aggregate Figures	17	42	24	68	28	2	181

Source: Jinnah Institute Extremism Watch Project, Sep 2010 – Sep 2011

Table 2 | Casualties of Extremist Violence by Province and Category
From September 2010 To September 2011

Categories of Extremism	Baluchistan		Punjab		Sindh		Khyber Pakhtunkwa		Federally A		Gilgit-Baltistan		Total	
	Death	Injury	Death	Injury	Death	Injury	Death	Injury	Death	Injury	Death	Injury	Death	Injury
Interfaith Violence/ Blasphemy	-	-	6		-	1	1	4	-	-	-	-	7	5
Sectarian	142	220	47	392	14	37	184	357	67	83	-	-	454	1,089
Attacks against Schools	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	61	-	-	-	-	3	61
Shrine Attacks	-	-	53	136	9	70	3	-	-	-	-	-	65	206
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	30	-	-	-	-	5	30
Aggregate Figures	142	220	106	528	23	108	196	452	67	83	-	-	534	1,391

Source: Jinnah Institute Extremism Watch Project, Sep 2010 – Sep 2011

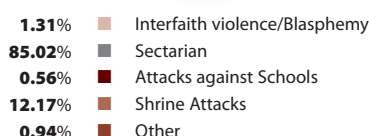
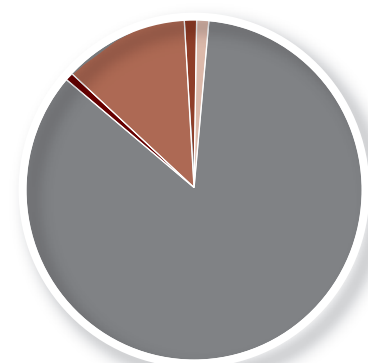
The largest number of incidents by category related to interfaith extremism, with 53 cases reported over the year. Such incidents did not ordinarily translate into violent attacks - a total of seven lives were claimed and five persons were injured due to interfaith extremism. Similarly, in the 62 attacks against schools, three lives were lost and 61 were injured. The alarmingly high number of casualties was reported in 44 sectarian attacks, with 454 persons killed and 1,089 injured. The 25 recorded incidents of extremist violence specifically targeting the Shia community resulted in 214 killed and 665 injured. Seven shrine attacks killed 65 and injured 206, while 17 other incidents of extremism claimed 5 lives and injured 30 persons.

December 2010 stood out in the monitoring period for the highest number of incidents, recorded at 30, 10 of which were cases of interfaith extremism. However, November 2010 recorded the highest numbers of casualties in 24 incidents, of which 4 sectarian attacks claimed 130 lives and injured 268. Sectarian attacks have been high throughout the monitoring period, with September - December 2010 and January 2011 recording very high casualties. This trend picked up again in April and August 2011.

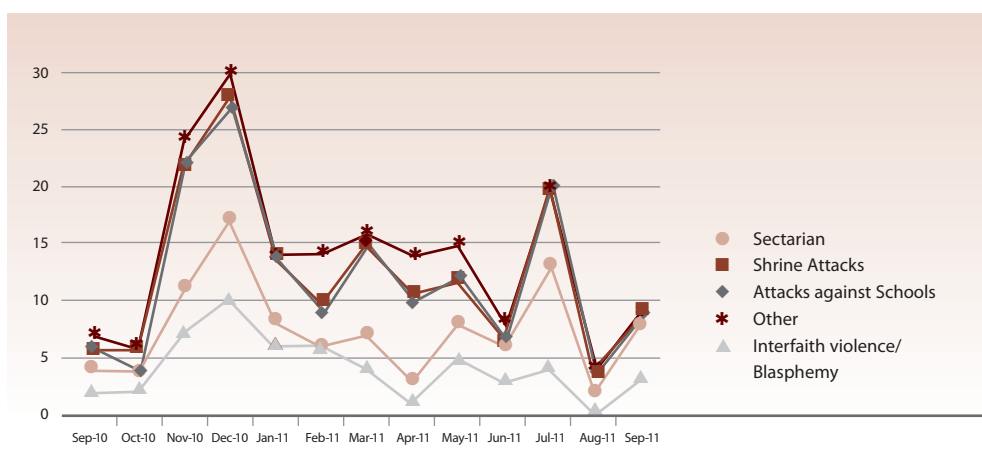
While the frequency of sectarian attacks has varied over the year, month-wise data shows that cases of interfaith extremism grew from September to November 2010, peaking suddenly in December 2010 and climbing down steadily afterwards. The frequency of school attacks has been fair-

Loss of life in Extremism Violence

From September 2010 to September 2011



Trends According to Categories of Extremism



ly consistent other than two peaks in the data, November-December 2010 and March-April 2011, indicating the greatest number of attacks. Month-wise data does not suggest a pattern for attacks against shrines or for incidents recorded under the other incidents category.

Incidents by Category

1. Interfaith Conflict

Newspapers reported 53 cases of interfaith extremism over the monitoring period, which included various discriminatory acts against religious minorities, blasphemy allegations against Muslims and non-Muslims as well as violent attacks. Punjab recorded the highest number of incidents at 31, followed by 13 in Sindh, 8 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and one case in Balochistan. The majority of news reports collected pertained to blasphemy related cases. The Hindu community's demands for the Hindu Marriage Act was reported several times in the press, but was not recorded in this compilation.

i. Blasphemy Related Cases

A total of 18 news reports in the data involved accusations of blasphemy against one or more persons. Eight Muslim men and a teenage boy were accused of blasphemy and out of these, there were four cases in which Muslim men were killed. There was one reported case in which the police did not register a blasphemy case against a Muslim male. In addition, there were four separate cases of Muslim women being accused of blasphemy.

The blasphemy related cases pertaining to members of minority groups included two Christian women and a teenage girl. One of the accused women was Aasia Bibi, whose case received international attention. Two Christian men were threatened with violence due to blasphemy cases, while one was killed.

Those killed in blasphemy related attacks include the Governor of Punjab, Salmaan Taseer, and Federal Minister for Minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti. Five inci-

dents related to rallies or groups agitating against Salmaan Taseer, protesting any amendments to the blasphemy laws or asking that Aasia Bibi be put to death. Several newspaper columns and editorials in leading English and Urdu newspapers reviewed for this project showed the divide in public views over the Aasia Bibi incident and echoed much of the sentiment on the street. In one incident, a leader of a religious political party stated that Mumtaz Qadri, the killer of Salmaan Taseer had committed no wrong. In another incident, members of Senate refused to pray for Salmaan Taseer.

Two of the men and a teenaged boy accused of blasphemy were reported as having mental disabilities. Five incidents involved the families of the accused asking for justice or protection against mob violence.

Several news stories revealed how blasphemy accusations were used for making criminal gains and settling personal vendettas. In one case a Christian woman sought to accuse her rival of blasphemy, but upon reaching the police station found that she herself was facing blasphemy charges.

ii. Persecution of Christians

Fifteen news stories in the data reported various kinds of discrimination and acts of violence against Christians. These included a ban on the Bible demanded by the leader of a religious party; there were protests when a Christian lawmaker was asked to read out the annual budget in the Punjab Parliament; Christian relics and graves were desecrated in a Lahore graveyard; a pastor's life was threatened unless he converted to Islam; the Bible was desecrated and the police did not register a case for blasphemy when demanded by Christian protesters. Mixed marriages between Muslim and Christians led to at least two deaths.

Two attacks against churches are recorded, whereas two attacks were averted. On 14 September 2010, two persons were injured in a bombing at the Northern Diocese of Pakistan Lutheran Church in Mardan. On 16 November 2010, a wall of the King of Kings Church in Saddar, Lahore was demolished by municipal authorities reportedly under pressure from local influential persons. On 22 March 2011, police were able to avert large mobs in Badami Bagh, Lahore from demolishing a church. Similarly, on 1 May 2011, police was successful in turning away a mob that had gathered to attack a church in Gujranwala.

iii. Persecution Against Other Religious Minorities

There were reports of two incidents of targeted violence against Ahmadis in which five persons were killed and two injured. A pamphlet calling for the killing of Ahmadis was distributed openly in Faisalabad. In two separate incidents, an Ahmadi place of worship was attacked in Mughalpura, Lahore, while the body of an Ahmadi was exhumed under pressure from local religious groups from a Muslim graveyard in Sargodha, to be buried elsewhere.

The body of a Hindu girl was also exhumed from a Muslim graveyard in Rawalpindi to be buried in the adjacent Christian graveyard. There were two news reports of discrimination in aid relief distribution against the Hindu community during the 2010 floods in Sindh. In addition, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan threatened to kill all non-Muslim employees of Punjab government, if they were not removed from office. In Lahore, members of the Sikh community were prevented from offering prayers at the gurdwara by Dawat-e-Islami.

iv. Interfaith Violence

In rare cases of violence between religious minorities, it was reported that a mob of Hindu men in Thar had attacked a family that had converted to Sikhism. In another incident, a Muslim convert from Christianity in Peshawar was tortured by members of the Christian community. He asked for protection for himself and his four family members.

Three news reports carried stories of interfaith marriages in which the couples faced extreme discrimination from their communities. A woman who had converted to Islam for her marriage was killed by her Christian brother in Faisalabad.

2. Sectarian Conflict

Sectarian extremism accounts for 92.6% of all casualties recorded over the monitoring period. The category takes on several forms in the data: violent attacks against Shias; Shia-Sunni clashes; intra-Sunni violence among Barelvi and Ahl-e-Hadith groups; violent attacks against Sunni mosques and congregations. For several incidents, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan or Lashkar-e-Jhangvi have claimed responsibility, but many of the incidents recorded under this category cannot be classified as either Shia-Sunni clashes or anti-Sunni violence.

i. Anti-Shia Attacks

The highest statistic in sectarian extremism relates to violent attacks against Shias. Of the 44 incidents of sectarian violence reported over monitoring period, 25 involved target killings of Shias, bombings of Ashura or Chehlum processions, attacks against Shia pilgrims and mosques. In these target killings, 214 lives were lost and 665 persons were injured. Out of these 25 incidents, 12 took place in Quetta and rest in Karachi, Kurram and South Punjab.

The highest number of target killings was recorded over the period September - December 2010 and January 2011. A major incident occurred in September 2010 where 30 persons were killed and 300 injured in a suicide attack on the Yaum-e-Ali procession in Lahore. In November 2010, 54 persons were killed and 150 injured in the Yaum-al-Quds rally in Quetta.

A spike in sectarian attacks was seen in December 2010, which coincided with the Islamic month of Moharram. Six separate attacks were reported in different parts of the country, including attacks on Ashura processions in

Hangu, Peshawar and Shikarpur that killed 30 and injured 69. These incidents included a bomb blast in Karachi University that injured five members of the Imamia Students Organisation, in addition to a car bombing outside the Al-Zahra Hospital in Hangu that killed 10 and injured another 22.

June and July 2011 stand out for an increase in the frequency of target killings, particularly in Balochistan. Four persons were killed and nine injured in June in two target killings, while five such attacks in July took the lives of 35 and injured 15. All except one attack occurred in Quetta, which has a significant Hazara-Shia population. The incident on July 28 2011 involved Shia pilgrims being intercepted en route by unidentified gunmen. Seven pilgrims were killed and 12 injured in the firing. Two days later, on 30 July, another bus was intercepted and 11 Shia passengers were reported killed, while three sustained injuries. Similarly, in September 2011, a bus carrying Shia pilgrims was again intercepted and 28 persons were reported killed. Three days later, on September 23, a passenger van carrying Hazara coalminers was attacked. Three were killed and five injured.

ii. Shia-Sunni Clashes

Newspapers reported 13 deaths and 35 injuries in three separate incidents that involved Sunni-Shia clashes. Two of the incidents involved the now defunct Sipah-e-Sahaba. In one incident, as many as 17 inmates of the Kohat Jail were injured when fighting broke out after a sectarian argument.

There were occasional opinion pieces related to the ongoing violence in Kurram Agency between rival Sunni and Shia groups. However, for the most part, the mainstream English print media carried comparatively little coverage of this conflict, particularly from a sectarian perspective. The two news stories in this compilation were both related to attacks against unarmed civilians in Kurram, the first incident involving a bus carrying Sunni passengers and the latter carrying Shia passengers.

iii. Anti-Sunni Attacks

One Sunni scholar and three clerics lost their lives over the monitoring period. This included Swat University Vice Chancellor, Dr. Farooq Khan, who was working to rehabilitate children trained as suicide bombers and militants. Maulana Abdul Kabir Qadri, associated with the Qambrani mosque in Quetta, Mufti Maulana Irshadullah Abbasi, Imam of Daee Masjid in Karachi and Maulana Abdul Karim Mengal, Imam of Jamia Albadar in Quetta were killed in the sectarian attacks.

Six mosques were attacked in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, five during the Friday prayers, resulting in huge losses of life. The worst attack occurred on 5 November 2010, in which 72 were reported killed and 80 injured, when a bomb went off in the Wali Khan mosque in Darra Adam Khel. On the same day, another mosque in Sulemankhel near Peshawar was attacked, killing 4 and injuring 20. On March 4, 2011, a bomb exploded in a Nowshera mosque,

killing 11 and injuring 44 persons. On August 19, 2011, 50 persons were killed and 80 sustained injuries when Jamia Masjid Madina in Jamrud, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Agency, was attacked during Friday prayers.

iv. Intra-Sunni Clashes

One person was killed and 10 injured in Karachi when Barelvi and Ahl-e-Hadith groups clashed over the control of a mosque. In another incident 18 were injured in a shootout in Khuzdar when rival Sunni groups fought over the issue of leading the prayers.

In two other incidents, funerals of tribal lashkars were attacked by suicide bombers which killed 43 and wounded 52 in Adezai, while 31 were killed and 63 wounded in the Dir incident.

3. Attacks Against Sufi Shrines

Attacks against Sufi shrines constitute a new category of violence against the Sufi version of Islam. In recent years such attacks have claimed hundreds of lives. Over the monitoring period September 2010 – September 2011, five attacks against Sufi shrines were recorded which killed 65 and wounded over 200 devotees. As mentioned in the methodology, these figures have been collected from news reports carried on the same day or the day after the event, whereas the actual number of casualties increases over subsequent days after the incident. It was attempted in some cases to ascertain the actual number of casualties through hospital registers and police records a few days after the incident. However, these figures proved very difficult to confirm, especially in incidents with a high toll of casualties.

Attacks against Sufi shrines were recorded as follows:

7 October 2010: At least nine persons were killed and more than 70 wounded in suicide bombings at the Abdullah Shah Ghazi shrine in Karachi. There were outbreaks of violence and protests following the event as parts of the city came to a standstill. The Abdullah Shah Ghazi shrine was packed with devotees on Thursday night when the bombs went off.

25 October 2010: At least seven persons were killed and 14 injured when a bomb planted in a motorcycle went off outside the gate of Baba Farid Ganj Shakkar's shrine in Pakpattan. No group claimed responsibility for the attack. The Ganj Shakkar in Pakpattan is one of the most revered Sufi shrines in South Asia.

14 December 2010: Three persons were killed in an attack by militants on the Ghazi Baba shrine in Budhber near Peshawar.

3 February 2011: Two people were killed and at least 22 injured when a bomb went off at the Urs celebration at Haider Sain shrine in Lahore. Police sources could not confirm whether the bomb had been planted near the entrance of the shrine or whether the explosives were thrown in from a truck.

3 April 2011: Two suicide bombers blew themselves at the 13th century shrine of Ahmed Sultan Sakhi Sarwar in Dera Ghazi Khan, killing 44 and injuring more than 100. The shrine had been receiving threats for a long time, it was reported.

4. Attacks Against Schools

A total of 62 attacks against schools were recorded over the monitoring period September 2010 – September 2011. The majority caused damage to school infrastructure without a loss of life – three persons were killed in these attacks on institutions, with 61 being injured. In addition, two school vans were attacked, both in separate incidents in Peshawar, killing five school children, a van driver and wounding 21 individuals including six children and two teachers. In a target killing case in Khar, Zakia Bibi, the headmistress of the Government Girls Primary School Dak Bangla, was killed when masked men fired on her. Two of her female colleagues also sustained injuries.

A pamphlet was circulated in Peshawar by the relatively unknown Jamatul Tawheed wal Jihad group, threatening teachers and students attending educational institutions. The pamphlet stated that such institutions promote “infidelity”.

Information compiled about the 62 incidents is presented in Table 3. Of the schools attacked, at least seven were private institutions while 37 were reported to be Government Primary Schools - 21 were for girls and 16 for boys. Two Government High Schools and a Girls’ Degree College were also attacked.

Table 3 | Attacks Against Educational Institutions

From September 2010 To September 2011

Extremism Watch	Balochistan	Sindh	Punjab	KPK	Fata	Gilgit	Total
Incident	-	-	-	37	23	2	62
Death	-	-	-	3	-	-	3
Injured	-	-	-	61	-	-	61
Govt Boys’ School	-	-	-	8	8	-	16
Govt Girls’ School	-	-	-	8	11	2	21
Private	-	-	-	4	3	-	7
Unknown	-	-	-	17	1	-	18

5. Other Incidents of Extremism

Other incidents of extremism include a range of news stories that could not be categorized in any of the above.

Twenty CD shops were blown up in six incidents, killing five persons and injuring 30. All of these incidents have taken place in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province over the monitoring period. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were used in all the bombings, which occurred in Peshawar, Badaber, Mardan, Kohat, Landi Kotal and Swabi. The TTP have been threatening CD shop owners in many of these areas to discontinue their business and at least two news stories reported how shop owners were compelled to change their line of work.

In two separate incidents, copies of the Quran were burnt in mosques in Swabi and Akora Khattak. Both incidents sparked furious reactions among the residents of the localities. It could not be determined who carried out the act in Swabi, but in Akora Khattak, the accused was a young man who admitted burning the Quran in protest.

Separate incidents were recorded about a private radio station being bombed in Charsadda; a statement against classical dance classes by a religious party leader in Karachi; a billboard in Peshawar with the image of a woman being defaced; a protest against cable television led by a local cleric in Jhwarian; and a protest in Lahore against the celebration of Valentine's Day led by the Tahaffuz-e-Namoos-e-Risaalat. Finally, in two separate incidents the TTP asked for imposition of Sharia law in the newly created district of Torgar in KP and flogged 65 men in Orakzai for violating the TTP ban on the use and sale of drugs.

The Rise of Violent Sectarianism

Denominational differences are not new to Islam, just as they are not to other religions. However, the history of sectarian violence in Pakistan is a phenomenon that, while drawing on old differences of faith, has unfolded in a modern context. The recent rise in sectarian killings, for instance, is a continuation of the trends already gathering pace in Pakistani society from the 1980s. They indicate the growing retreat or failure of state and law enforcement agencies against the expanding power of militant groups that deploy guerrilla tactics to achieve their goals. Sectarianism in its contemporary manifestation, therefore, cannot be delinked from the larger growth of Pakistan-based terror groups and their alliance with the global Jihadist project negotiated by the loose conglomerate known as Al Qaeda.

The rise of global militant Islamism is a subject that has been researched extensively from various angles and is a bitterly contested narrative among various ideological positions (Byman 2003; Burke 2004; Moghadam 2008). For several interconnected reasons, Pakistan has been labeled as the 'epicenter' of global terrorism, while the popular, corporate media has bestowed on it the uncharitable title of the 'world's most dangerous place'.

Three developments are most worrying for Pakistan. First, the widespread acceptance of Al Qaeda's anti-West stance has permeated large swathes of the population (Khaled Ahmed, 2010). Second, the US policy of targeting Al Qaeda and its affiliates through drone strikes has forced its leaders to spread out and find new operational bases within urban Pakistan. Karachi, for instance, has been cited as a major ground for the continuation of its operations, in addition to Faisalabad, Lahore and other areas.² Third and most dangerously, in the past decade, Al Qaeda may have entered into an alliance with home-grown militants such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)³ and sectarian outfits such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Jaish-e Mohammad (Chisthi, 2010)⁴.

The Roots of Modern Sectarianism

Sectarian conflict in Pakistan traces its roots to the Pakistani state's attempts to forge a national identity based on Islam. Muslim nationalism in India at the start of the Pakistan movement was broadly pan-Islamic in nature and aloof to sectarianism (Ahmed, 2010). However, as early as the 1950s when new textbooks were commissioned for junior classes, the official narrative began to shift. The Pakistani state, as a matter of policy, decided to formulate a coherent national identity for the diverse territories that formed the federation of Pakistan. This virile new identity was based as much on constructs of Pakistan's Islamic identity as it was on a virulent anti-Indianism. It is from this ideological trajectory of the Pakistani identity that "an unspoken negative evaluation of Shiaism" emerged (Ahmed, 2011). In making public education the site for building a non-inclusive identity, the state privileged the history and teachings of a number of religious personages, including Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb and Shah Waliullah, who abhorred Shiaism. Decrees of apostasy against the Shias of Pakistan in the '90s would refer to the works of the same religious figures to justify their pedigree.

In addition to the emphasis on a singular Muslim identity, which excluded the Shias, the 1974 constitutional amendment stoked fresh fires of sectarianism by launching apostasy verdicts against the Ahmadi community of Pakistan. According to this constitutional amendment, "a person who does not believe in the absolute and unqualified finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) as the last of the prophets or claims to be Prophet, in any sense of the word or of any description whatsoever, after Muhammad (PBUH), or recognizes such a claimant as a Prophet or a religious reformer, is not a Muslim for the purposes of the constitution or law" (Ahmed, 2011). The amendment did not explicitly mention the Ahmadi community and has been used by hardliner Sunni clerics to also target the Shia community in Pakistan. Apostasy *fatwas* relied on the phrase "a person who does not believe in the absolute and unqualified finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad" to give their judgment against the Shia (Ahmed, 2011).

Sectarianism in Pakistan reached its pinnacle under the dictatorial regime of Zia-ul-Haq. In his nine years in office, Zia proceeded to impose a rigid interpretation of Islamic law on Pakistan, in part to legitimize his illegal rule and in part as a result of his own ideological inclinations. A gradual movement from the more tolerant, pluralist expression of Islam to a more austere and puritanical Deobandi Islam⁵ had already begun in the country earlier. Khaled Ahmed calls this phenomenon a movement from the 'Low Church Islam,' native to the unsettled plains of the Punjab and Sindh to the 'High Church Islam'⁶ of the seminaries of Northern India and Afghanistan (Ahmed, 2011).

Towards 'High Church' Islam

Once the nation's policy elite decided that Islam was to be the primary factor around which Pakistan's identity would be constructed, it was clear that the more rigid 'High Church' Deobandi creed would dominate the ideological landscape of

Pakistan, with its influential seminaries in urban centers and its emphasis on laws and punishment. The 'Low Church' Barelvi clerics, who were tolerant of the rural Shrine culture and of Shiaism were gradually sidelined. However, it may be noted that the Barelvi *ulema*, the "high priests" of the "Low Church" were no strangers to exercising the sectarian, exclusionary approach to apostatize other creeds. A good example of this is Ahmed Raza Khan Barelvi's treatise, *Husam-ul-Hermayn* in which he ended up apostatizing six Deobandi clerics of his time. Similarly, Barelvis were known to have been the in the vanguard to defend the controversial Blasphemy Laws and attack the Ahmadi community. Despite this it would still not be wrong to say that the popular expression of the shrine Islam was definitely more tolerant of other creeds than that of the Deobandi seminary Islam.

The Deobandi creed was further strengthened with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the advent of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. Afghanistan had always practised the Deobandi variant of *Fiqh Hanafia* and the 'jihad' against the Soviet Union increased the charisma of the Deobandi seminary. In a conflation of Pak-Afghan fundamentalisms, all religious students, including those from the Barelvi creed were required to attend a Deobandi Madrassah before they could enlist in the Afghan jihad, if the Afghans were to not consider them infidels (Ahmed, 2011). The geopolitics of Shia-Sunni tensions in the Middle East after the Iranian revolution also added to the hardening of religious identities. At first, Zia tried to remain neutral between Iran and the Gulf Arab states, but a series of unpleasant meetings between Zia and Imam Khomeini changed that. In Pakistan, the local Shia population mobilised in protest when Zia made the payment of *Zakat*, the Islamic poor due, obligatory. All Muslims, regardless of their sectarian affiliation were to pay the *Zakat*, 2.5% of the value of their annual savings and assets, to the state. The Shias, who differed in their interpretation of the *Zakat* edict, refused. The Shia community in Pakistan organised against the new law and staged one of the biggest protests in the country's history, descending in large numbers on the capital (Ahmed, 2011). Zia eventually had to announce an exemption for the community. The *Zakat* law, specifically on the Sunni population of the country, further strengthened the hand of the High Church clergy in the country. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia was reported to have given seed money for Zia's *Zakat* fund on pre-condition that a part of the money would be donated to the Ahl-e-Hadith, an Islamic party closely allied with the puritanical Wahabbi movement of Saudi Arabia (Ahmed, 2011). The number of Deobandi madrassahs shot up exponentially following the imposition of the *Zakat* law, from 401 in 1960 to 1745 in 1979. *Zakat* money was an important factor in this growth, though not the only one.

Letting the Monster Grow

Zia's reaction to Iran's hostility, coupled with the Shia opposition he faced within Pakistan, led to state impunity for the "anti-Shia stirrings among the Deobandi clergy in Pakistan" (Ahmed, 2011: 31). Evidence points to the fact that Zia was informed of the sectarian trouble brewing in the Jhang district of the Punjab, but chose to ignore it. As a result, when the Anjuman Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (ASSP) institutionalized the politics of sectarian violence in 1985 in Jhang, announcing

its mission as militancy against Shias, no official censure ensued. The ASSP to this day remains one of the most notoriously barbaric anti-Shia militant outfits in Pakistan (Ahmed, 2011). In 1986, a year later, a prominent Indian Muslim cleric funded by Saudi Arabia asked Deobandi Madrassahs in Pakistan to say whether the Shias were Muslim or not. The seminaries sent him *fatwas* that declared the Shias non-Muslim. These *fatwas* later led to the death of many Shias in Pakistan. This, too, was ignored by the Zia government (Ahmed, 2011). Also, in 1986, General Zia allowed “a purge of Turi Shias” in the city of Parachinar, in the Kurram agency of the Tribal Areas.

The sectarian situation in the country continued to worsen even after the advent of democracy in Pakistan in the 90s. Even though formal state patronage was reduced for organisations like the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), the new incarnation of ASSP, political support from a series of actors gave them the space and resources needed to grow. Candidates fielded by both the PML-N and the PPP were supported both overtly and covertly by the SSP during the 1990s (AbouZahab, 2006). SSP’s local clout in Jhang complicated the battle against sectarianism in Pakistan and the governments of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif haplessly tolerated their growing sectarian militancy. During 1996-98, for instance, “sectarian violence had gripped the province with 204 terrorist attacks, killing 361 people. Lahore alone had shared the 64 attacks. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a splinter, hardline group of Sipah-e-Sahabah and the Shia underground group Sipah-e-Muhammad were the major culprits behind these attacks” (Rana, 2010).

When things became unmanageable, Nawaz Sharif, then Prime Minister, initiated a clean-up operation against the SSP but stopped when the SSP tried to assassinate him. Today Nawaz Sharif’s party, the PML-N, has been accused of forming an electoral alliance with sectarian elements in the Punjab.

In the past 30 years, many sectarian organisations have mushroomed in Pakistan, the most prominent of which are listed below:

Sectarian Organisation	Area of Operation	Detailed Description
Sipah-e-Sahaba	Founded in Jhang, Punjab, Pakistan. Active across Pakistan.	The Sipah-e-Sahaba (The army of the prophet’s companions) is a Sunni militant organisation found by Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi. The SSP has carried out several terrorist attacks against the Shias in Pakistan, including the May 2004 attack on Shia worshippers in Karachi that killed 50 people. The SSP also operates as a political party and its members have been elected to the parliament of Pakistan. The organisation was banned by General Musharraf in January 2002. Following the ban, the SSP changed its name to Milat-e-Islamia Pakistan, but this was banned again in 2003.
Lashkar-e-Jhangvi	Pakistan, Afghanistan	An offshoot of Sipah-e-Sahaba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (the army of Jhangvi) has carried

Sectarian Organisation	Area of Operation	Detailed Description
		out many terrorist attacks against Shias and other minorities in Pakistan. The organisation was banned in 2001 by General Musharraf and thereafter sought refuge in Afghanistan. After the collapse of the Taliban, LeJ members actively supported terrorist activities in Karachi, Peshawar and Rawalpindi. LeJ was involved in an attempt to assassinate former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shahbaz. LeJ is also thought to have carried out attacks on Christians in Pakistan, including a grenade assault on the Protestant International Church in Islamabad on March 2002, that killed US citizens. Intelligence reports have also linked the LeJ to Benazir Bhutto's assassination. The group is associated with Al Qaeda and TTP.
Sipah-e-Muhammad	Active in Pakistan, primarily in the Punjab province.	Sipah-e-Muhammad (the army of Muhammad) is a Shia militant organisation involved in sectarian terrorist activities in Pakistan. The organisation was founded by Mureed Abbas Yazdani in 1993 to train its young cadre to physically counter the militancy of Sunni groups like the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sahaba. The organisation is known to have links with the Iranian regime. The organisation was banned by General Musharraf's government in 2002.
Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqah Jafaria	Active in Pakistan.	The Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqah Jafaria (the movement for the imposition of the Jafari Fiqh) is a Shia political party founded in 1979 following the Islamic revolution in Iran. The Tehrik aims to implement the Shia version of Islamic edicts on Pakistani Shias and protect them from being subjected to the Sunni version.
Tehrik-e-Jafaria	Active in Pakistan.	An offshoot of the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqah Jafaria, Tehrik-e-Jafaria (the movement of the followers of Jafaria) was headed by Allama Arif Hussaini who was assassinated during the Zia regime. The TJP was banned twice by General Musharraf, but continues to operate under different names.

Note: Tehrik-e-Jafaria or Tehrik-e-Islami, as it is now called, denies any linkages with sectarian terrorists. It was one of the six parties in the Muthahidda Majlis-e-Amal, a conglomerate of Islamist parties.

The key sectarian groups operating in Pakistan as evinced from the table above are: Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Sipah-e-Mohammad, Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqah Jafaria and Tehrik-e-Jafaria. All of the groups above have been involved in sectarian violence since their inception and continue to wreak havoc in Pakistan today.

The strategy of using Deobandi militia proxies in Kashmir further alienated the Barelvis. Barelvi mosques began to be forcibly taken over by Deobandis with state patronage. Today, bolstered by the support lent to them by the Saudis and radicalized further by the presence of Al Qaeda commanders of the likes of Al Zawahiri and their Salafi teaching, the Deobandis dominate the ideological landscape of Pakistan.

Why Al Qaeda Matters in Pakistan's Sectarian Battles

Al Qaeda is more of an ideology than an organisation. *Qaeda*, an Arabic word, variously translated as a "base of operation" or "method" has always been understood by the militants as the latter. In 1987, Abdullah Azzam, a radical Sunni Muslim ideologue, exhorted young men from across the Muslim world to fight the alleged oppression of the West. He termed his envisioned movement of Muslim warriors "Al Qaeda Al Sulbah" (a vanguard of the strong). It was the FBI that formally christened the loosely linked group of militants led by Osama bin Laden "Al Qaeda", during its investigation of the 1998 US embassy bombings in East Africa (Burke, 2004a).

With the US invasion of Iraq, Al Qaeda became active in the country and proactively inflamed sectarian tensions as a tactic. Civilian populations in Shia and Sunni neighbourhoods were targeted to aggravate inter-sect relations (Evans, 2009). Sacred pilgrimage sites frequented by the Shias, like the shrine of Imam Moussa al-Kazim in Baghdad, were also targeted (Al Jazeera News, Dec 2010).

Al Qaeda continued to operate from the Pak-Afghan border despite the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, and its leadership found safe havens in Pakistan. Although over the years Bin Laden and his partners were successful in creating a structure in Afghanistan and Pakistan that attracted young recruits, it was never established as a cohesive terror network. Instead, Al Qaeda continues to operate like a 'venture capital firm', providing funding, contacts, and expert advice to militants from all over the Islamic world. In Pakistan Al Qaeda is known to have links with the TTP and several other extremist groups.

Is Sectarianism Gaining Strength?

It is now widely recognized that sectarian killings are on the rise in contemporary Pakistan. Several research-based commentaries argue that sectarianism is growing in affiliation with Taliban franchises in Pakistan that in turn are linked with Al Qaeda remnants. For instance, Ahmed Rana says:

"Eleven major sectarian terrorist attacks have been reported in Punjab during [the] last five years [2005-2010]. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and its affiliate groups have claimed responsibility for these sectarian attacks. This trend reveals the close nexus between the Taliban and several major sectarian and militant groups in Punjab, which are now labeled as 'Punjabi Taliban'. This alliance

between the Taliban and sectarian outfits is now expanding its targets. The killing of Mufti Sarfaraz Naeemi⁷ was the first indication, and the horrific terrorist attack on Data Darbar⁸ is a manifestation of the expanding sectarian agenda.”

More recent data testifies to this trend and the following table presents an overview of sectarian incidents over the last one year.

Sectarian Attacks over the Period September 2010-September 2011

	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	Total
Incident	2	2	4	7	2	-	3	2	3	3	9	2	5	44
Death	36	6	130	20	17	-	54	2	15	4	48	51	71	454
Injury	300	22	268	69	95	-	96	-	38	9	31	80	81	1,089

Source: Jinnah Institute Extremism Watch Project, Sep 2010 – Sep 2011

Statistics point to a worrisome trend. Since September 2010, an average of three or four incidents of sectarian violence took place every month in the country. The number of attacks peak during the time of Ashura (seven attacks in December 2010). The statistics also show a spike in the number of attacks in July of this year, the same month the Hazara were brutally attacked in July. The spike can be indicative of a premeditated attack on Shia communities throughout the country by one of the several Sunni extremist organisations operational in the country.

Sectarian Violence Casualties by Location

Extremism Watch	Baluchistan	Punjab	Sindh	Khyber Pakhtunkwa	FATA	Gilgit- Baltistan	Total
Incidents of Sectarian Violence	16	5	8	12	3	-	44

Source: Jinnah Institute Extremism Watch Project, Sep 2010 – Sep 2011

Data that isolates the number of sectarian attacks by location demonstrates that most sectarian attacks took place in Balochistan, followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the tribal areas. In Balochistan, this was largely characterized by targeted attacks against the Shiite Hazara community. In KP, the violence is consistent with the increasing influence of local militias that style themselves ‘the Taliban’, and are in some cases supported by both Al Qaeda and the TTP. Sectarian violence in the northern areas can be attributed to the pervasion of extremist Salafist ideology in the region, implemented by these armed groups. Statistics indicate that sectarianism is also still persistent, albeit to a lesser degree, in Sindh and Punjab. This tenacity points to the truth that sectarian outfits are still very much in business in the country. It also reflects continued government and state inability to erode their capacity.

Flashpoints for Violence

Parachinar: Sectarian tensions in the tribal city of Parachinar are centuries old. The situation worsened during the time of Zia-ul-Haq, when the Sunni

The uncrowned sectarian commander of Pakistan

On 14 July 2011, the Lahore High Court released Malik Muhammad Ishaq, the leader of banned Sunni militant organization Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, due to a lack of evidence. Soon after, sectarian violence in the country spiked and the Punjab government was forced to put him under house arrest once again. Following his release, Ishaq vowed in a rally in Multan to continue to kill the enemies of the Sahaba. In addition, Ishaq also visited the house of high profile terrorist Abdul Wahab whose name is included in the list of the most wanted terrorists in Pakistan. Despite having been charged with involvement in a 100 plus sectarian murders, Ishaq is yet to be convicted. Ishaq was acquitted of most of the murder charges due to a lack of evidence. The last charge leveled against him was masterminding the March 2009 terrorist attack against the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore from his jail cell. Investigations showed that LeJ terrorists wanted to take the Sri Lankan cricket team hostage and demand the release of Malik Ishaq in return. He was released by the Supreme Court on bail due to a lack of evidence anyway. While pronouncing its verdict the Supreme Court bench chastised the prosecution for its failure to come up with sufficient evidence to get a conviction. Maulana Ludhianvi, the chief of the SSP has claimed that Shahbaz Sharif, the current Chief Minister of the Punjab had requested him to meet Ishaq in jail. According to Ludhianvi, Sharif offered to release him if he remained peaceful for the rest of his life. Ludhianvi also claimed that Sharif held a clandestine meeting with Ishaq in Mecca to sort out long standing differences. Nawaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharif's brother and the former Prime Minister of Pakistan had been threatened with assassination by LeJ and SSP during his last term. In prison, Ishaq was allowed to use his cell phone and continued to receive a monthly government stipend that had been started once Shahbaz Sharif became the Punjab Chief Minister. Salmaan Taseer, the former Governor of Punjab who was gunned down for his views on the Blasphemy laws, had also accused Sharif of courting the LeJ in South Punjab, where the LeJ is exceptionally active, to guard his vote bank.

Mujahideen, together with the local population, attempted to purge the city of its Turi Shia population. The Zia government aided the Mujahideen through its inaction (Ahmed, 2011). Sectarian tensions flared up again following the US invasion of Afghanistan and the rapid Talibanisation of the Af-Pak border region. In 2008, the local Sunni population sided with the Taliban and laid siege to an enclave of Shiites in the city. The resulting fighting forced Shia residents to flee and seek refuge in the city of Peshawar. Since then the Taliban have been successful in exploiting the generations-old sectarian conflict in the region as a way of challenging the government's writ in the Kurram agency (Perlez, 2008).

The terror in Parachinar has been unrelenting. Parachinar's Shiite population has been subjected to abductions, violence and murder. Sunnis perceived as being too friendly to the Shias have also been targeted. (Ali, 2009).

Mastung: Ethnic violence against the Hazaras in Mastung has also been on the rise in recent months. The Hazara are a Dari-speaking ethnic group native to Central Asia and are mostly Shia. Over a million Hazaras live in and around Quetta in Pakistan. Of late, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi has carried out a series of brutal attacks against the Hazaras. In the latest of these attacks LeJ militants killed 13 Shiites travelling on a bus on their way to work in Quetta on 4 October 2011. The Shias were forced off the bus, lined up and shot. On 20 September 2011, LeJ killed 29 Shia pilgrims on their way to Iran. The heavily armed attackers forced the Shia pilgrims off the bus and while women and children were spared, they were made to watch the execution of their male relatives. This was the deadliest attack on the Shia community in Pakistan since a suicide bombing at a procession in Quetta that killed 57. Since 1999, the LeJ has killed over 400 Shia Hazaras in Balochistan. Despite this, elements within the government of Pakistan remain sympathetic towards the LeJ and Malik Ishaq, a founding member of the LeJ who was recently released on bail (Mir, 2011).

Karachi: Pakistan's largest city has also seen its share of sectarian violence over the past few years. Ashura processions, marking the death of Imam Hussain bin Ali, the grandson of the Prophet (PBUH), have been targeted repeatedly. On the 28 December 2009, a Shia procession was attacked by a suicide bomber on the Shia holy day of Ashura. The attack killed 30 and injured over 60 people. Following the attack, a Shia mob set fire to a market in the city (The Guardian, 2009). On 5 February, another Shia religious procession was attacked. In an audacious twin bombing, Shia mourners were attacked while in a procession on the busy Shahrah-e-Faisal, the main road that connects the airport to the city. As ambulances made their way to Jinnah hospital with the injured, another bomb went off in the premises of the hospital near the emergency ward. A total of 25 people were killed in the incident, 12 in the first and 13 in the second attack (BBC, 2010). Attacks in the city have also targeted *Imambargahs* and Shia religious leaders. Most recently the prayer leader of a mosque in Orangi Town was shot and killed near his home (Dawn News, March 2011). Despite reassurance from the government, violence against the Shia community continues in Pakistan's commercial capital.

Policy implications

The Pakistani state needs to protect and enable religious plurality and repeal or amend laws and official procedures that reinforce sectarian identities such as the mandatory affirmation of faith in application for jobs, passports and national identity cards. Laws that apostacize the Ahmadi community and extend state approval to the process should also be repealed. The state should not use Zakat revenues to finance the activities of a particular sect or creed within the country. The Pakistan Studies and Islamic studies textbooks should be purged of material that promotes sectarianism or spreads hatred.⁹

Sectarian organisations like the SSP continue to operate out of brick and mortar offices in the Punjab with impunity. The state should disband all armed militias and militant organisations under Article 246 of the constitution. Existing bans on sectarian organisations like the SSP should be strictly enforced. The government

should publicise evidence of sectarian organisations' involvement in violent or criminal activities. Laws against hate speech should be strictly implemented. Jihadi publications supporting supra-state ideologies and sectarian agendas should be banned and the license of such publications should be revoked.

There is a dire need to reform the madrassah network in the country. The government should draft a new madrassah law and register all madrassahs under the same law. All madrassahs with proven links to militants should be closed down in a phased timeline. The government should appoint prayer leaders and orators at mosques and madrassahs run by the Auqaf department only after verifying their credentials. Prayer leaders with known involvement in sectarian activities should be removed from positions of authority.

Government officials and politicians accused of maintaining links with sectarian organisations should be investigated and, if found guilty, should be prosecuted. The government should ensure a competent prosecution team for those being tried for sectarian violence. The security of judges who oversee sectarian cases should also be ensured (Asia Human Rights Commission 2011).

In addition, the Pakistani state policy of allowing space for militant organisations needs a serious overhaul. The militarisation of Pakistani society and the havoc wreaked by rogue 'strategic assets' on the country should be evidence enough that the state cannot continue to support militant organisations at the cost of dividing Pakistani society.

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1. The author would like to acknowledge the research, data collection and inputs made by Osama Nadeem, Pakistan Policy Group, Lahore.
 2. After Al Qaeda had in early 2002 made Karachi its operational headquarters and started to disseminate its philosophy to local sectarian organisations in addition to forming an operational relationship with various Jihadi groups based in Karachi" (Chishti, 2011)
 3. "In Karachi Al Qaeda remains the biggest terrorist planning and financing organisation whereas TTP (Qari Zafar Group), with its huge Mehsud population based in Karachi's outskirts provides logistical support and suicide bombers. The operational aspects are entirely outsourced to the sectarian terrorist groups like Jandullah and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (that transformed into 'Jandullah'). It was on a visit to Karachi that Faisal Shehzad was picked up by TTP in preparation for the Manhattan bombing." (Chishti, 2010).
 4. "In January of 2003 Jack Thomas — an Australian Al Qaeda fugitive — was captured in Karachi which gave 'actionable intelligence' on the whereabouts of KSM who was finally caught in Rawalpindi in March — too late to prevent the beheading of Daniel Pearl and the establishment of a strong nexus with the local sectarian groups working in Karachi, including Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which had turned into Al Qaeda's B team along with another spinoff name 'Jandullah.'" (Chishti, 2010),
 5. The Deobandi school of Sunni Islam gestated in the Dar ul Ulum Deoband seminary in Northern India. The seminary brought together Muslims who were hostile to British rule in India and were committed to a literal and austere interpretation of Islam. The Deobandi school of thought had considerable clout in Pakistan today due to state patronage accorded to the creed in the past.

6. Khaled Ahmed (2011) equates 'High Church' Islam with the Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith creeds which are more austere and puritanical and 'Low Church' with the mystic Sufi creeds native to the plains of Punjab and Sindh and the Barelvi school of Sunni Islam which is tolerant of the native shrine culture.
7. A Barelvi cleric, who publicly opposed Taliban tactics and ideology was brutally murdered at his Lahore madrassa in 2009.
8. Pakistan's major and much-revered Sufi shrine located in Lahore.
9. For more details please see: International Crisis Group, 2005. Asia Report No.95. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/pakistan/095-the-state-of-sectarianism-in-pakistan.aspx>

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Religious Intolerance, Interfaith Violence and Public Discourse

Given the rising tide of extremism in Pakistan, an issue that has led to increasing volatility in the last year is that of blasphemy and interfaith violence. As part of its Extremism Watch Project, Jinnah Institute has documented 53 incidences of blasphemy and interfaith violence. The majority of these cases (31) have been in the Punjab province, which is home to a large Christian community. This is followed by Sindh (13), which contains a large part of the Hindu community. The data recorded by Jinnah Institute is representative of a larger national trend of steadily rising blasphemy cases over the last 30 years.

This section examines Pakistan's current situation with regard to issues of blasphemy and interfaith violence against a historical context. Specifically, it explores public opinion and discourse on a subject that now has fatal consequences for those who raise questions or seek a rational response to the abuse of discriminatory laws like the Blasphemy Law. Within this, it is interesting to examine the role of Pakistan's thriving media industry, which advocated strongly in favor of the lawyers movement in 2007-2008, but has taken a much more conservative position on blasphemy just four years later.

Historical Context

The term "Blasphemy Laws" relates to Sections 295 A-C and 298 A-B of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC). Section 295A, which prohibits blasphemy against all religions and sacred personalities, was introduced into the Penal Code in 1927 by the British and remains on the statute books in both India and Pakistan. Section 295C was introduced into the PPC by General Zia-ul-Haq in 1986, as part of his political goal to Islamize laws in Pakistan. The legislation metes out harsh punishment, including life imprisonment and the death sentence, for:

“derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet ... either spoken or written, or by visible representation, or by any imputation, innuendo or insinuation, directly or indirectly ...”

At the time, many politicians and Islamic scholars were concerned about the vagueness of the law, the potential for its misuse, and the lack of foundation for the law in the Quran and other Islamic texts. But the move found wide support among the religious right, who lobbied for swift implementation of the laws and an end to the debate in Parliament. As it turned out, initial concerns by politicians, rights activists, jurists and non-partisan scholars were well-founded.

The Radicalisation of Thought

Between 1927 and 1986, there were 9 reported cases of blasphemy, none of which could be proved and all of which were thrown out of courts. However, since the addition of 295C, thousands of people have been charged with blasphemy and many killed through vigilante action. While the initial surge was against Christians and Ahmadis and although minorities remain the most vulnerable and prosecuted population in an increasingly violently intolerant society, the vast majority of blasphemy cases have been made against Muslims by other Muslims. Many of these cases have been marked by a lack of evidence and indications that personal vendettas and unrelated disputes motivated the accusation. There have also been cases where Christians and other minority communities have been threatened with blasphemy accusations to induce cooperation or conversion to Islam. At the same time, however, Section 295A, which prohibits blasphemy against any religion, is largely ignored. Instances where Muslims have burned a cross, demolished or damaged churches, desecrated graves or defiled the Bible in front of witnesses, have gone unprosecuted by police and legislators.ⁱ

Zia's efforts at Islamization, most notably the Blasphemy Laws, have proven to be instrumental in sewing ethnocentrism and intolerance into the moral fabric of Pakistani society. This has manifested in widespread discrimination and violence against Pakistanis of faiths other than Islam, with little to no accountability for the perpetrators. It has also served to exacerbate denominational differences within Muslim sects. In many cases, those accused of blasphemy languish in jail for years before their cases are heard at court, or they are killed in captivity. While no one has been executed in Pakistan under Section 295C, there have been several cases of individuals or mobs taking the law into their own hands and murdering not just those accused of blaspheming, but even those who defended the accused, including public officers and legislators. There have been instances when judges who ordered the acquittal of those accused of blasphemy could not escape the fury of vigilantes.ⁱⁱ

Moves to repeal or even amend the laws have been met with violent opposition, leading to the assassinations of two politicians and death threats to a third, as well as widespread support for vigilante action (despite its constitutional and religious illegality) against so-called blasphemers. Such attitudes have become so institutionalized and entrenched in Pakistani society that the definition of

“blasphemy” has evolved from disrespecting the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and Quran, to including simple debate on the validity of the man-made laws; advocating for justice for falsely accused citizens; and recently, quoting the Bible. Several clerics have appealed to the Supreme Court to take suo motu action to ban the Bible in Pakistan for alleged blasphemous content.ⁱⁱⁱ

This particular aspect of the radicalization of Pakistani society is not only manifested in the form of mob violence, but more significantly in the growing power the religious right to mobilise supporters. It is evident in instances of extreme tension among different religions: there have been reports of violence between the Hindu and Sikh communities, as well as murders of those who converted from one faith to another in order to facilitate an inter-faith marriage. This radicalization is also evident in police complicity and failure to maintain law and order; in the silence of the “moderate majority”; and the recent public discourse around blasphemy, especially its portrayal in the media.

Media and Public Discourse

The role of the media in society is such that it does not simply reflect public opinion, but also has a hand in shaping it. The media has immense power in influencing the beliefs of a society and setting a standard for its values. In the last decade, Pakistan’s media industry has grown and flourished, expressing bold opinions and refusing to be silenced by political pressure. It was an outspoken defender of the Lawyers’ Movement for civil rights during General Pervez Musharraf’s regime. However, the same industry has come under criticism for failing to use best practices when reporting on blasphemy and interfaith violence, and for fanning the flames of intolerance and hatred. This has been most pronounced in the last year, following the assassination of Salmaan Taseer and Shahbaz Bhatti, and the glorification of Taseer’s assassin, Mumtaz Qadri.

With the exception of the English print media, mainstream media in Pakistan has not engaged in meaningful debate on the validity of the Blasphemy Laws under the Quran and Islamic teachings. It has largely failed to analyze and present to the public the details of the law, including potential for misuse and abuse. It has underreported, and reflected a bias when reporting cases of persecution of religious minorities. This is partly due to the vague and draconian nature of the laws themselves: the media is unable to reveal details of blasphemy accusations because the revelations themselves may be deemed blasphemous. Some media spokespersons have also claimed that liberal and progressive voices on this issue have refrained from commenting after the assassination of Taseer, leaving them with no choice but to have one-sided or lackluster analyses of the situation.^{iv} While it is true that the media faces dire pressures in a society where any criticism of the Blasphemy Laws is represented as un-Islamic and blasphemous, the media has also been implicated in playing the ratings game: reporting that which is sensational in a quest for ratings in an increasingly competitive industry. In this, it has played an irresponsible and dangerous role in mainstreaming extremism.

In the days leading up to Taseer's assassination, when the debate had reached a boiling point, editorials in some newspapers called for his death. This incitement to violence went unchallenged by regulatory and law-enforcement authorities. In the aftermath of Taseer's assassination, popular TV anchors suggested that his murder was justified and aired views from religious 'experts' and guests in favour of his murder. Two TV stations even aired a statement from Qadri without any commentary on the legality or morality of his action.

The volatility of the blasphemy issue and the media's implicit condoning of extremist ideologies and actions have led to a largely one-sided public discourse. The violent tactics used with impunity by the religious right and the subsequent cowering of the state have proliferated an atmosphere of fear and silenced dissenters. The silence can also be partly attributed to widespread ignorance of the law and the extent of its basis in Islamic scripture. Online forums indicate that some people are reluctant to object to Blasphemy Laws because their own religious sensibilities are offended by the act of blasphemy, so even when undecided about the validity or suitability of the laws, they tend not to challenge them. Thus the public discourse seems to focus on how the act of blasphemy is wrong, as opposed to a conversation on what constitutes blasphemy; what examples of blasphemy and its punishment exist in Islamic texts; the actual laws in the PPC and their misuse; and murder and vigilantism – support for which negates the necessity of the law in the first place.

The Way Forward

After the assassination of Bhatti, Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), demonstrated a shift from its stance on blasphemy by stating that the misuse of the Blasphemy Law was not desirable and should be discussed. Whether this position will be supported by other religious leaders is yet to be seen, but if it does, it may open up the parameters of the discussion ever so slightly. At the same time, civil society has begun to voice its concerns over these laws and the rise of extremism, and to organize in favour of democracy, justice and equality. One example is Citizens for Democracy, a coalition of professional organisations, NGOs, trade unions, student unions, political parties and individuals formed in the aftermath of Taseer's assassination. These voices, although currently drowned out, may represent the potential for a more robust debate outside the confines of violence, extremism and intolerance.

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Turning Schools to Stones

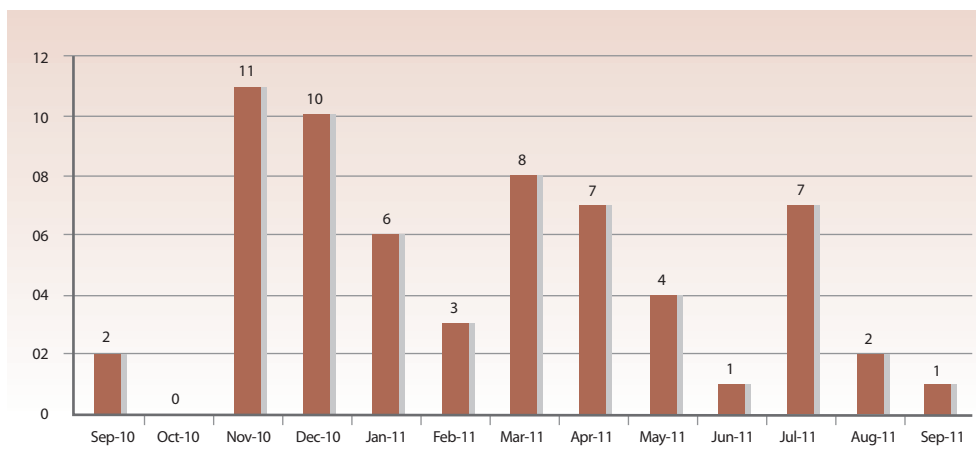
Schools as Contested Spaces

In early 2011, the government of Pakistan declared an 'education emergency.' A report released by a government-organized taskforce revealed that 25 million children in Pakistan do not have access to education, a right guaranteed in the country's constitution under Article 25A of the 18th Amendment which requires the state to provide free and compulsory primary education to all children between the ages of five and six.ⁱ Despite being a constitutional requirement the government has done little to promote education. According to the report of the same task force, "funding for schools has been cut from 2.5% of GDP in 2005 to just 1.5%." This is much less than what is given in subsidies to state-owned enterprises such as Pakistan International Airlines and Water and Power Development Authority.ⁱⁱ Battling against the challenges of finances, human resources, and facilities, the education sector is now confronted by a new enemy: the rising tide of extremism.

Between September 2010 and September 2011, Jinnah Institute's Extremism Watch Project collected publicly available data from media sources. The research revealed that in this span of time, 62 schools were targeted and subsequently destroyed or damaged by militants. The number of injuries or death related to schools remained low, but the psychological effect on populations (not measured in this data, but captured in qualitative news reports) has been intense. The attacks against schools have created fear amongst communities, and in some instances parents have chosen to keep their children at home. However, from the dust and debris of schools also emerge stories of courage and resilience where communities and students have come together to keep schools open despite threats, coercion and attacks; highlighting that schools are indeed contested spaces – perhaps not in the minds of academics, or specifically the liberal or conservative elements of societies, but in the minds of communities and students who are directly affected by these attacks.

The Extremism Watch data indicates that there was a consistent stream of violence directed towards schools in these 12 months, with a spike in attacks in

Month-wise Attacks Against Schools



Source: Jinnah Institute Extremism Watch Project, Sep 2010 – Sep 2011

November and December. While there is no proof of a causal link, it is interesting to note that the spike in violence against schools coincides with the time that there was a battle raging in the rest of the country over amending the Blasphemy Laws. Most of the instances noted in the data were attacks against school buildings. There were also a few instances where no direct attacks were made on school premises but threats were issued to the administration and staff in instances where certain activities of the school were deemed “un-Islamic.” It is interesting to note that it is not only militants who have been involved in threatening schools. Mainstream political parties are also guilty of coercion and threats to schools. This highlights growing intolerance in Pakistani society which is not just limited to extremist groups but also actors within mainstream Pakistani society.

The following article is an analysis of the data collected by Jinnah Institute. While this is not a comprehensive collection of all the various instances of coercion or violence against schools, students and/or educators; it is indicative of the kinds of violence faced by both students and teachers. The data suggests that schools are becoming contested spaces. They are being attacked not only as symbols of the state but also for what they stand for and what they provide. While education and curriculum in particular have always been deeply contested and hotly debated subjects in Pakistan, most of these debates have been academic. Incidents of violence based on educational content have been episodic. What has emerged in the last few years is a systematic and highly violent targeting of not just educators but also educational infrastructure – a shift that threatens the very existence of schools in areas that need them the most.

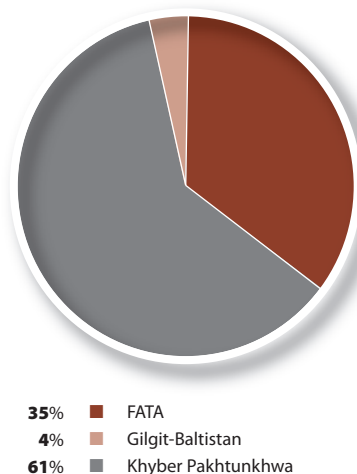
The Geography of Attacks Against Schools

The majority of attacks against schools occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and FATA. These two regions accounted for 96% of all attacks recorded against schools between November 2010 and May 2011. The nature of attacks in KP, FATA and Gilgit-Baltistan were similar. Two incidents were recorded against institutions in

Sindh as well, but they were not included in the dataset for schools; one was sectarian in nature and has been documented in the relevant section of the reportⁱⁱⁱ, whereas one was a press release against dance classes being held at a private school and has been included in the category of 'Other' attacks.

It is also interesting to note that no attacks against schools were recorded in the province of Punjab - which has, incidentally, seen some of the most violent attacks against minority communities. However, there were significant numbers of attacks against educators and schools in Balochistan throughout this time period. However, given the political economy of Balochistan and the contours of that conflict, it was difficult to isolate those incidents from the internal struggles in the province. As a result those were not included in this data, but merit an independent analysis.

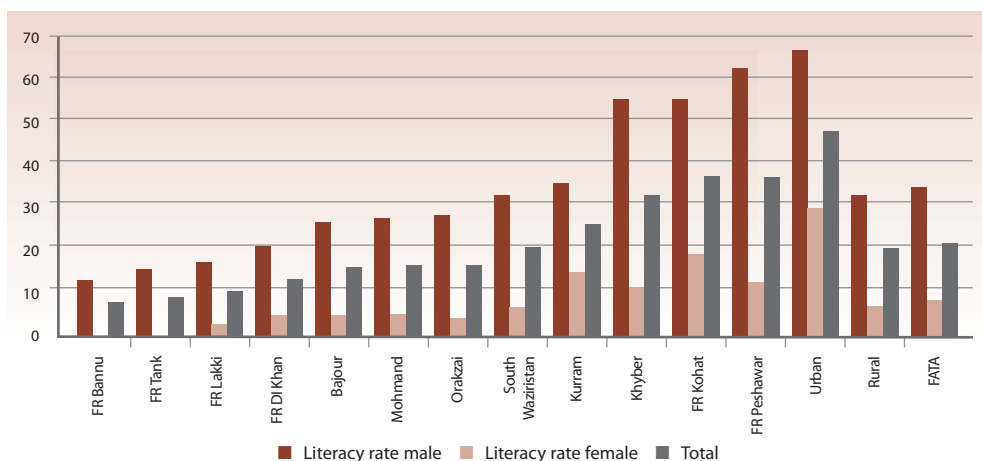
Attacks Against Schools by Province



Source: Jinnah Institute Extremism Watch Project, Sep 2010 – Sep 2011

Attacks on schools in KP, FATA and Gilgit-Baltistan were primarily against school infrastructure. A number of schools were bombed and severely damaged. Most of the attacks took place at night or in the evening when school was not in session. Therefore the damage to human lives was limited, but damage to infrastructure was so severe that the schools were rendered useless and could no longer be used for educational purposes. A large majority of the attacks hap-

Literacy Rate of 10+ years population, FATA, 2007



Source: FATA Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2007 – 2008

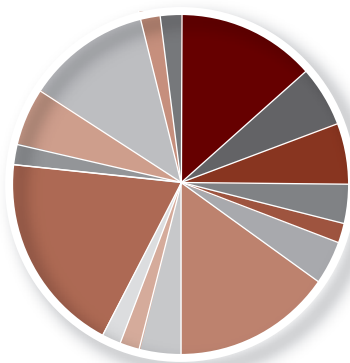
pened in and around Peshawar. Therefore, attacks against schools are not a phenomenon restricted to the tribal areas but is a creeping threat in and around urban centers.

The large number of attacks in FATA will have a severely negative impact on education in the area. The region already lags behind the rest of Pakistan in terms of literacy - FATA's literacy rate is 22%, well below the national average of 56%^{iv}. The disparity is sharper when comparing gender disaggregated data. In FATA, 35.8% of men and 7.5% of women receive education compared to a nationwide average of 44% for women.^v

If attacks are disaggregated further by district, the Mohmand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Bajaur Agencies of FATA have experienced the highest incidents of violence. Literacy rates in Bajaur and Mohmand were already under 20% while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa fared slightly better with a literacy rate of 30%. In all three agencies, literacy rates for women were under 10%. Even before the onset of attacks against schools, FATA had the lowest recorded literacy and enrollment numbers in the country. Recent events have only worsened the situation and education outlook for the children of FATA. The impact of attacks against school infrastructure will accrue with time, depending on how fast the government is able to respond to the destruction of schools. The longer residents have to suffer without schools, the more educational outcomes for children will suffer. This will invariably translate into an ever widening gap between young people from FATA and other parts of the country when it comes to competing for jobs and other opportunities.

The two attacks that occurred in Sindh were completely different from the attacks in KP, Gilgit-Baltistan and FATA. One incident occurred at Karachi University. A bomb was planted on the University premises to specifically target Shia students. While this attack was sectarian in nature, its location was key. Educational spaces that are supposed to function as safe and tolerant spaces are being used not just to incubate hate (as is evident from some of the taught curricula) but also as spaces to display it. Usurpation of educational spaces for intolerant, extremist and violent actions is a trend that will continue to grow if not curbed at the earliest.

Attacks By District (Nov 10 to May 11)



13%	Bajour Agency	2%	Mardan
6%	Bannu	15%	Mohmand Agency
6%	Charsadda	2%	North Waziristan Agency
4%	Diamir	6%	Noushera
2%	Jamrud	12%	Peshawar
4%	Karachi	2%	South Waziristan Agency
15%	Khyber Agency	2%	Swat
4%	Kohat		
2%	Malakand		

Source: Jinnah Institute Extremism Watch Report

The other incident in Karachi was the case of a private school being threatened by a mainstream religious political party for including classical dance classes in the curriculum, which the political party viewed as un-Islamic.^{vi} This incident also highlights that there is a wide spectrum of violence towards education. It is not just educational infrastructure that comes under attack but also educational content. Debates over educational content have raged in Pakistan since the establishment of the country and have epitomized the struggle between extremists and moderates over the character of Pakistan, the nature of Pakistani citizenship and how it should be presented to future generations.

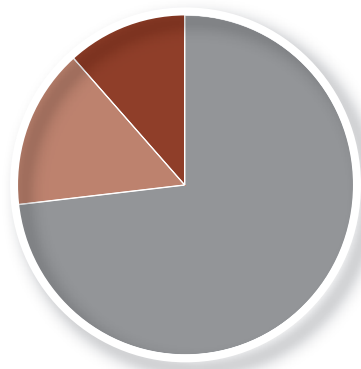
Targeting Schools: Extremism or Terrorism?

There has been concern that the majority of these attacks are not incidents of extremism but instances of terrorism. While it is difficult to separate terrorism from extremism, the attacks in KP and FATA in particular are believed to be retaliation against the government for the military crackdown on militants in the region. It was also reported in the local press that security forces were using schools as hideouts and operational bases, hence attacks against schools were actually against security forces. However, given the negligible number of casualties reported as a result of the attacks, it seems unlikely that the schools destroyed were being utilized by the military.

Analysis of the schools attacked between November 2010 and May 2011 confirms that the majority were public-sector institutions. A small number of private

schools or schools run by NGOs were also targeted, while the ownership of a further 12% could not be confirmed. Given that the majority of the attacks took place in the tribal areas where the presence of NGOs is limited, it is likely that most of the incidents tagged as unknown were also incidents of government school targeting.

Attacks By Institutional Ownership (Nov 10 to May 11)



12% ■ Unknown
15% ■ Private
73% ■ Govt.

Source: Jinnah Institute Extremism Watch Report

The disproportionate targeting of government schools can be explained by two factors. Given that the government is the single largest owner of educational infrastructure in KP and FATA, there are more government institutions available to attack. Secondly, these schools are symbols of the state. State-owned and run while being poorly protected, they make easy targets for anti-state actors.

Attacking schools as symbols of the state makes a powerful argument for considering these attacks as incidents of terrorism only. However, if these attacks were indiscriminate instances of state targeting, they would not reveal a pattern of higher targeting of girls' schools despite the fewer number of girls schools. According to the FATA School Census Report, the number of schools for boys is greater than schools for girls at every educational level.^{vii}

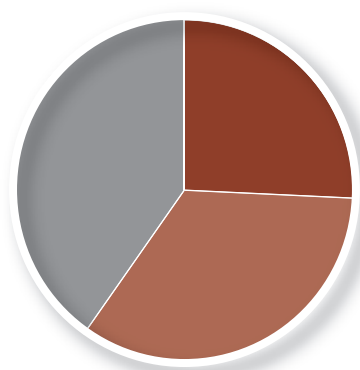
School Type	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary	2107	1533	3640
Secondary	299	156	455
High	233	42	275

Source: FATA Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2007 – 2008

Statistically, if attacks are indiscriminate then a higher number of boys' schools should have been attacked than girls' schools, given the higher number of boys' schools in the area. However, data analysis reveals that a much larger number of

girls' schools were targeted. Therefore, seeking out and destroying schools providing education to girls is an indication that revenge against the state is not the only motivation behind the attacks on schools. Earlier on, prior to the operation in Swat, militants operating in the area had made open statements calling education of girls un-Islamic. In 2009, Mullah Shah Doran, the Taliban second-in-command in Swat, announced through a public radio address, "From January 15, girls will not be allowed to attend schools."^{viii} Officials estimated that militants blew up or burned down 134 schools and colleges between 2008 and 2009 in Swat and the majority of the institutions were those that provided education to girls.

Girls' Schools or Boys' Schools?



26% Govt. Boys School
34% Govt. Girls School
40% Unknown

Source: Jinnah Institute Extremism Watch Project, Sep 2010 – Sep 2011

The Way Forward

The current spate of violence against schools mirrors a chilling trend that has been observed in Pakistan and Afghanistan before, where female education bears the brunt of the battle against education that is perceived to be secular or un-Islamic. It is becoming alarmingly apparent that the state's capacity, which is already spread thin in the fight against terrorism and militancy, cannot be mobilised realistically to provide protection to the hundreds of schools located across the country. Although such demands have been made, it is unlikely that they will be met, given resource constraints. However, stakeholders concerned about the state of

education in Pakistan must continue to pressure government to divert security and other resources to protect it. Given the importance of education and the recognition of its clear linkages with the social development and uplift of communities, civil society organisations must also act. They can facilitate the mobilisation of community groups who can lobby with local groups about prioritizing the protection of schools as shared public space and community assets. Local community involvement in raising awareness about the importance of schools and the need to protect them is likely to yield better results than outside intervention. Communities must also explore the idea of setting up community schools attached to the homes of respected local elders, to decrease the chances of attacks against them. Since the majority of attacks seem to be against government schools, civil society organisations and providers of low cost private education should also step up their activities in the area to bridge the service gap. Ensuring that the resource and development gap between FATA and regions of KP and the rest of Pakistan does not grow at a rapid pace will be critical to restoring sustainable peace in the troubled region. Finally, providing quality education to the children of these areas will be an essential element of any strategy aimed at bridging the development gap that is a key driver of conflict in the region.

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Militarisation of Islamic Spaces of Worship

Representative Cases: Illustrations of Intolerance

In societies where religion is embedded in social life, rituals and worship in sacred spaces contribute significantly to the framing of identity in the public space. This has been the general case in most Islamic communities, Pakistan being no exception. Now, public sites and symbols of worship belonging to a variety of Muslim groups are increasingly under attack from religious extremist groups.

Attacks directed at public places of Islamic worship included mosques, imambar-gahs, religious processions and Friday prayers. Militants also struck revered Sufi shrines and popular festivals across the country. By striking at public symbols and spaces of faith, extremist groups have been able to communicate a message of fear. The violence has not only targeted the values and definitions of various communities, but has also militarized the space for negotiating religious identity.

The detailed list of representative cases below reveals how religiously motivated violence struck major urban centers like Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar in the past year. Sectarian tensions were also heightened by conflict in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Prominent dates on the religious calendar and public spaces of worship were visibly targeted by extremist violence.

6 May 2011: Members of the Hazara community in Quetta were attacked in a public park. As one witness claimed, "In minutes, the playground turned into a slaughter house."ⁱ The provincial capital of Balochistan has been a flashpoint of sectarian violence since 2006.

3 April 2011: Suicide bombings outside the venerated shrine of 13th century Sufi saint Sakhi Sarwar in the Dera Ghazi Khan District of the Punjab province led to over 50 casualties. The attacks took place when hundreds of worshippers had gathered at the shrine for the annual Urs festival. The Urs celebration is an important symbol of worship for the Chishtiya Sufi order.ⁱⁱ

25 January 2011: A Chehlum procession claimed thirteen lives when a suicide bomber detonated a bomb at a check post set up near Karbala Gamay Shah in Lahore. The same day, in Karachi, a motorcycle bomb killed at least four people, including three policemen.ⁱⁱⁱ

16 December 2010: A grenade was thrown on the Ashura procession in Peshawar, while a suicide bomber was shot down as he attempted to detonate at a majlis in Shikarpur.^{iv}

5 November 2010: Over 72 people lost their lives after a suicide bombing at a mosque in Darra Adam Khel during Friday prayers. According to witnesses, over 300 people were present in the Wali Khan Mosque.^v

2 November, 2010: The body of an Ahmadi resident of Sargodha was exhumed after local clerics protested against the burial of the body in a Muslim graveyard. Following the protests, the Sargodha tehsil police forced the heirs of the deceased to remove it from the graveyard.^{vi}

25 October 2010: At least five people were killed after a bombing at the shrine of popular Sufi saint Baba Farid Shakar Ganj in Pakpattan at the time of morning prayers. According to officials, explosives were strapped to a motorcycle parked outside the shrine's gate.^{vii}

7 October 2010: The shrine of revered Sufi saint, Abdullah Shah Ghazi was attacked by suspected suicide bombers in Karachi when hundreds of devotees thronged the shrine on Thursday night. Sporadic violence broke out in Karachi and the metropolis came to a standstill after the attack.^{viii}

Ideological Clash: What is a Muslim State?

Muslim identity, shaped by symbols and rituals and their relation to the public space, has been under debate for centuries preceding the creation of Pakistan. Its evolution has been affected by varying periods of Islamic history, where intellectual and political debates have responded to conditions in which Islam was the dominant religion. Since the arrival of the Mughals in India, Muslim rulers, scholars and poets have vacillated between Akbar's model of cultural synthesis to the more theocratic notion of the Islamic state propagated by Aurangzeb. Certainly, these models of religion and faith in the public space do not lose currency in the post-partition period, when differing visions were put forward by Jinnah the secularist and Zia the Islamist.

The debate over the role of religion and, in particular, the version of religion in the Pakistani context, is shaped considerably by the processes of modern state formation. Questions of faith and public identity were addressed through legal and political categories required for the administration of the state. In 1974, the Parliament adopted laws defining "who is a Muslim", for the purpose of alienating the Ahmadiyya community. Then Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto pushed for the legislation as a counterweight to increasing rightwing pressure on his government.

After him, General Zia-ul-Haq amended the constitution, forbidding Ahmadis from calling their places of worship “mosques”, or from worshipping in non-Ahmadi public praying areas. The after-effects of this labeling are still visible today: on November 2nd 2010 in Sargodha, a member of the Ahmadi community was exhumed from a Muslim graveyard, illustrating how many mainstream groups are still unwilling to cede the public space for ritual and worship to Ahmadis.^{ix}

The proliferation of madrassas, heavily patronized by the state, has enabled many militant Deobandi groups to organize themselves as representatives of Sunni orthodoxy. Hard-line groups, which have mushroomed since State-led ‘Islamisation’ in the 1970s and 1980s, also display hostility towards the Shia community - many have gone to the extent of apostatising the Shia. In addition, extremist and militant groups have also targeted other Sunni schools of thought. Many of these systems of beliefs, such as the Bareilvi School, have supported a culture of shrines. The numerous attacks on this colourful popular culture across Punjab and Sindh demonstrate that multicultural Islamic beliefs and practices have been deemed as un-Islamic. It must also be noted at the same time that on certain issues like blasphemy and the finality of Prophethood, Bareilvi clerics and followers are as susceptible to resorting to violence as the more hardline Deobandi and Wahabi denominations.

The Cost of Militarisation: Religion in the Public Space

The practice of religion in Pakistan is as much a public affair as it is a private one. The attacks, bombings and violence on places of worship such as mosques, imambargahs, shrines and festivals have made public rituals of faith in Pakistan insecure. It is commonplace to pass through metal detectors when entering areas of worship, while processions and festivals are heavily policed, often by army personnel. This presence of law enforcement agencies at places of worship and religious processions is a visual reminder that diversity in Islamic thought and practice is under attack. The increasing need for protection and policing of public places of worship is a heavy cost of religious intolerance.

Certainly, as the cases of religious extremism indicate, groups with arms and weapons are able to create an atmosphere of anxiety and militarize the space for public worship. According to one definition, militarization is a social process in which groups organize themselves for the production of violence. Another classification is “the process by which war and national security [become] consuming anxieties and provide the memories, models and metaphors that shape broader areas of national life”.^x External events on the western border, the Indian threat and the dominant role of the military in the administration of the state have significantly contributed to the process of militarization. It is connected not just to expansion of the armed forces or militant groups, but the shaping of national symbols and spaces is such a way that military strength and action is legitimised in the social order.^{xi}

The need to protect and secure the public space is a challenge for the state: it will not only have to provide safety, but ensure extremist groups are de-weaponised. This process of de-arming the public space will require the facilitation of dialogue between estranged groups, encouraging the arbitration of differences without the show of military strength.^{xii} How this will be achieved – and at what pace – is a question that requires urgent attention on the part of policy-makers and peace-brokers in the country.

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Through the Gender Lens

Any analysis of extremist trends in Pakistan would be incomplete without including a gendered perspective, isolating the impacts of violence and conflict on both men and women as social actors. Extremism finds expression in acts of collective or targeted violence, as well as non-violent forms of conflict. This analysis seeks to investigate how women's human security is directly threatened by manifestations of extremist thought. The incidents are divided into three main categories to examine trends that may not be immediately apparent. The first pertains to public transport and marketplaces; the second focuses on the female presence in religious ceremonial spaces, particularly shrines; and the third addresses the threat to women as members of marginalized communities.

What follows is a more theoretical investigation of how women are indirectly threatened by recorded incidents of extremism: the implications for social, economic and personal security, and the norms influencing social identities. The ultimate goal is to add layers of nuance to a simple reading of numbers to show how women are affected by extremism.

Violence, Conflict and Statistics

As far as direct violence is concerned, there are several constraints to be considered when examining the patterns revealed by the Extremism Watch Project. The methodological tool of using news reports has to be employed cautiously because these reports seldom provide a gendered breakdown of casualties. The lack of disaggregated information exposes gaps in reporting and limits the ability of data to fully identify the impacts of violent extremism on a crucial demographic.

It is clear from the reported statistics that the proportion of females affected by violent attacks is significantly lower than that of males. However, clearly visible gaps in information mean that caution must be exercised when drawing conclusions from these figures. Only 41% of the data on fatalities and 26% of data on those injured in extremist attacks over the monitoring period is gender disaggregated. Thus, the statistics compiled through newspapers convey but a lopsided account of the gender composition of those affected by extremism in the last year.

	Total	Male	Female	Unknown
Killed	534	211	7	316
Injured	1391	320	52	1019
Affected	102	92	10	0

Source: Jinnah Institute Extremism Watch Project Sep 2010- Sep 2011

The single category for which there appears to be complete information in the table above is the third row, labeled 'Affected'. This covers less tangible forms of conflict, where threats may not give way to actual violence. To a large extent, it deals with victims who are persecuted on the basis of blasphemy allegations, or on the basis of association with minority communities. However, the small proportion of females visible here is also misleading, as only individuals specifically mentioned in news reports have been counted. Others in the families or communities of the reported victims, who may also have been directly or indirectly affected by the incidents, have not been included.

One important category of violence identified by the Extremism Watch Project consists of attacks on educational institutions. The issues pertaining to the education sector have been elucidated in great detail elsewhere. However, it is worthwhile to mention that out of the schools for which details are known, more than 50% were all-girls' institutions.

Educational Institutions

Total	Male	Female	Unknown
62	16	21	25

EWP: School attacks recorded over the period
September 2010- September 2011

The trend observed over the year was such that initially there seemed to be a concerted effort to target female institutions, which gave way to a spate of indiscriminate attacks on government infrastructure in the second half of the year.

The Female Presence: Women in the Public Sphere

Densely populated public spaces are ideal targets for extremist violence, where faceless victims become a means of perpetuating a climate of fear. While it is difficult to isolate the gender dimension of scattered attacks, it is clear that women often become collateral damage simply because of their presence in the public sphere. Even in the most conservative communities in Pakistan, the relative mobil-

ity provided by veiling means that women do leave the house for everyday tasks such as shopping or for other household needs. This means that they are vulnerable to the kind of collective violence characterized by attacks on public transport facilities and marketplaces, particularly in the urban areas.

There have been several major attacks on public market places, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A recurring theme has been the targeting of CD shops in bustling, crowded places. These incidents are an illustration of “coordinated destruction”, a category of collective violence “in which persons or organisations specialized in the deployment of coercive means undertake programs of action that damage persons and/or objects.”ⁱ Women and men are equally victims of these programs of action, as no distinction is made between them by the perpetrators of violence.

There were seven accounts of buses and passenger vehicles being attacked in the research data. Some of these were school buses, but the rest were public transport vehicles, often targeted on the basis of sectarianism. Here, too, women have been victims of indiscriminate violence. Firing on Sunni passengers in a bus in Boshehra, Kurram Agency, for instance, led to the deaths of ten individuals “including women and children.”ⁱⁱ The insecurity bred by such attacks has indirect impacts on the social identities of men and women, as it affects the extent to which women can safely engage in public life.

The “Female Voice”: Shrines and Religious Spaces

As far as religious spaces are concerned, there is a larger female presence in non-Muslim places of worship as compared to mosques. On the other hand, the “female voice”ⁱⁱⁱ has a distinct niche at Muslim Sufi shrines, where there are often fewer constraints on women expressing their faith in public. The sanctity of such spaces is no longer a deterrent for extremist violence. As elaborated elsewhere, attacks on mosques and shrines have become a regular occurrence, particularly during congregations with large numbers of people.

Sufi shrines are notable for their unique inclusiveness towards women. Apart from supplicants, females also have a larger role in the rituals of various Sufi orders. As mystics, poets and ethnographers, they have a place in Sufi history, and to this day can be accepted as caretakers and symbols of spiritual authority. They are also more actively engaged in the rituals of Sufi shrines as singers, dancers and providers of support services. At the annual “Urs”, particularly in Punjab and Sindh, gender constraints are less visible, with entranced females dancing the *dhamaal* and eunuchs or “khwajasirahs” being a part of the traditional celebrations.

The composition of the regular crowds at shrines is also mixed, with devotees hailing from diverse backgrounds. It is not unusual for affluent women to visit these shrines to make specific requests to the saints, while the gatherings at *langars* offering free food also cater to destitute women. Shameem Burney Abbas writes: “The audiences at the shrines come from a variety of socioeconomic back-

grounds... women come in large numbers. The majority of participants are rural peasants, factory workers, housewives, and middle-class devotees. A large number who come are illiterate but well versed in the oral culture. The shrines fulfill devotional needs and provide outlets from the chores of daily life.”^{iv}

During the time of monitoring, there were five major attacks on shrines. These included attacks on smaller shrines in Lahore, Dera Ghazi Khan and Nowshera. On 7 October 2010, a double bombing at the Abdullah Shah Ghazi tomb in Karachi left at least eight dead and 60 injured;^v less than three weeks later, an attack on the renowned shrine at Pakpattan left eight dead and 12 injured, with the victims including “at least one woman”. While the headlines again lack complete gender disaggregated information, it can be inferred from the composition of regular audiences at shrines that the affectees of attacks include a significant proportion of females from all walks of life.

Finally, religious ceremonial spaces also include processions and gatherings to commemorate religious occasions such as the *Ashura* and *Yaum-e-Ali*. The incidents recorded this year include sectarian attacks on such congregations. One such attack taking place in Lahore on 2 September 2010, believed to have been carried out by two suicide bombers and possibly one planted bomb, had over 27 fatalities and 300 injured.^{vi} In addition, women and children have suffered as direct victims of incidents like a grenade attack on an Ashura procession in the crowded Qisa Khwani Bazaar, Peshawar.^{vii}

Females at Risk: Members of Minority Communities

When it comes to the abuse of laws such as the blasphemy law, women from marginalized communities are at a double disadvantage. Gender influences the vulnerability of such individuals, as the perception that females belong to the “weaker sex” makes them susceptible to persecution. Here, conflict can certainly manifest itself violently, but it can also remain non-violent, in the form of threats to life and property.

Blasphemy charges are generally leveled against individuals, but the consequences are borne by families as well as entire communities. In one case, in Gujranwala, the local church had to call upon the police for protection after being informed that that an angry mob had been incited to attack it on grounds of retribution for supposed acts of blasphemy. Women are also among the direct victims of attacks against churches.

As far as individual accusations are concerned, women are at equal or more risk. There are several cases demonstrating how individual minority women have borne the brunt of rising extremism. The most prominent case has been that of Aasia Bibi, who received the death sentence subsequent to allegations of blasphemy by Muslim women. This particular example is illustrative of how women

can be perpetrators as well as victims of extremism. At the same time, blasphemy charges targeting women and their families often have their roots in personal vendettas or property disputes, where the stronger party exploits vulnerability and stokes extremist sentiment to get its way.

One component of the Extremism Watch Project has also been the monitoring of interfaith conflict, in the form of injustice for minority communities. Examples include protests against the denial of basic rights, such as the Hindu community's agitation over the non-existence of marriage laws.^{viii} Interfaith marriages also become a source of conflict, sometimes ending in harm being inflicted on the husband, wife, or both. Finally, a small number of recorded incidents also highlight how women can become victims of extreme sectarianism. One particularly horrific case was that in which a 17 year old girl was stabbed by her Sunni father, for being drawn to Shia rituals.^{ix}

Insecurity and Indirect Impacts

In the academic literature discussing gender and extremism, there are ongoing debates about the construction of gender and the mainstream assumption that conflict is between men. This assumption disregards the role of women as possible perpetrators, as well as the direct and indirect impacts on women as victims. The link is seldom made demonstrating that a male casualty suggests by implication an injured woman and family unit.

The economic impact of extremism is associated with an equally strong social impact. Davies points out that "conflict or extremism may affect women and men differently – in joining the military or radicalized movements, in displacement and loss of families, spouses and livelihoods."^x In fact, many of the incidents of deaths reported in the last year explicitly state that victims are survived by wives, mothers and children. In patriarchal societies, the need for a family unit to sustain its livelihood without the traditional male breadwinner means a shifting of identity and role for the female, with tangible effects on family life.

Apart from economic insecurity faced by female-headed households in societies undergoing conflict, the lack of guaranteed personal security has decelerated development in several ways. One of these is the decrease in female mobility in conflict-prone areas, partly due to prevalent attacks on public transport and marketplaces. The targeting of schools has placed particular restrictions on the activity of school-teachers willing to follow their professions.^{xi} Extremist strategies to reverse social gains therefore include the creation of an increasingly hostile environment for women entering public space.

It is important to consider the shifts in attitudes that are corollaries of the rise of extremism in society. Norms of behavior are affected not only because of the threat to human security, but also because of the stigmatization of certain identities. The alarming trend of attacks on billboards showing images of women, for instance, constitutes a condemnatory response against "promiscuity" or lax standards of modesty.^{xii} On one hand, a woman's freedom of choice is curtailed by

such responses and the family unit becomes a crucial outpost against the incursion of progressive influences. On the other hand, those who consider themselves to be liberal and progressive seek to insulate their lifestyles, creating deep polarization in Pakistani society. As both passive and active agents, therefore, women contribute to the schisms that fuel further conflict.

In a Nutshell

Due to a dearth of quantitative information, applying a gender lens to the data yields limited insights. However, both direct and indirect impacts can be determined by looking at the context in which extremist incidents take place. As far as collective violence is concerned, the size of the effect is determined by the particular size of the female presence. In the public sphere, this is indeterminate; in religious spaces, it depends on the degree of inclusiveness offered to women by different belief systems and religious communities. Mosques and more orthodox centers of worship will usually have a lower female presence than, for instance, Sufi shrines. Finally, women from minority communities are vulnerable to extremist sentiment at the individual level, but also suffer from the abuse of laws such as the blasphemy laws as part of a larger community.

Endemic conflict also has broader, long-term effects on society. The indirect impacts of extremism on women include threats to economic and personal security, and the need to adapt their activities and lives in response. The culture of insecurity in Pakistan has led to the need to challenge tradition in some ways – and in other ways, to raise defensive barriers to protect it.

The Extremism Watch Project monitors the larger structural forces that shape the lives of individuals in Pakistan. Conflict in society affects both men and women in a number of ways beyond their control, but their agency is not simply defined by victimhood. Men and women are not merely passive players, but participants in sociopolitical processes, engaged in complex interactions with each other and their environment. In their multiple roles as mothers, wives and members of larger communities, women cannot be excluded from the discourse on the factors behind – and impacts of – extremist conflict in Pakistan.

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