

# Pakistan Extremist Groups' Security Threats against Islamic Revolution

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## Abstract

In the wake of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and the ensuing dominance of political Islam discourse and its impact on Pakistani society, the ground was prepared for the spread of Wahhabism and anti-Shiism in that country due to the failure of the Islamabad government to manage the reactive conduct of extremist Salafist groups as well as its engagement in internal disputes. Consequently, plots and threats from Salafist extremism in Pakistan led to the emergence of a confrontational ideological identity against the Islamic Revolution. In response to the question about the main root of Pakistani extremist groups' security threats and plots against the Islamic Revolution, the hypothesis of this paper is that efforts made by radical Salafist groups for constructing an extremist identity based on authorization triggered the confrontational identity formation against Iran's Islamic Revolution. This research will first analyze the impact of the Islamic Revolution's influence on the reaction of extremist groups in Pakistani society. Then, it will study the impact of such factors as poverty, political instability, religious schools and regional machinations on the growth and creation of extremism in Pakistan. The third section will explain Pakistani extremist groups' security threats and plots targeting the Islamic Revolution.

**Keywords:** Confrontational Identity, Extremist Groups, Iran's Islamic Revolution, Pakistan, Salafist Radical Groups.

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## Introduction

The advent of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, which resulted in fundamental changes in the ruling political elite as well as domestic and foreign policy discourse, significantly affected the Islamic Republic of Iran's ties with many world nations including Pakistan. Pakistan was the first government to recognize Iran's Islamic Revolution in February 1979, but the dominance of ideological discourse based on political Islam, adoption of a revisionist approach in foreign policy and also Iran's exit from the club of U.S. allies (Iran quit the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)) spelled an end to the past strong ties and marked the start of a new chapter in Tehran-Islamabad relations that covered a wide spectrum of sectors varying from competition to cooperation (Kouzehgar Kaleji, 2012: 142).

Iran's foreign policy comprised struggle for independence and justice, and fight against hegemony. Therefore, Iran - relying on revolutionary discourse - dismissed Sunni extremism and was on collision course with General Zia al-Haq's pro-U.S. policy. To that effect, the awakening and motivation of Pakistan's Shia majority following Iran's Islamic Revolution and their growing demand from the Pakistani government negatively affected Iran-Pakistan ties. That downgraded Tehran-Islamabad diplomatic ties to *chargé d'affaires* level (Kouzehgar Kaleji, 2012: 147).

Iran's Islamic Revolution elicited a series of reactions due to its potentially strong clout with Pakistani society that was unable to manage its own affairs due to numerous structural problems including poverty, military interference with political affairs, and madrasa-based education that had spread extremism at the national level. One such reaction was the extremist fundamentalist groups vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic of Iran. Such issues must be discussed within the framework of identity issues. In fact, the plots and threats resulting from the extremist conduct of radical groups in Pakistan were in ideological contrast with the revolutionary attitude dominating Iran. It means that radical Pakistani group's insistence on "Salafist Islam" gave rise to a confrontational identity.

Furthermore, as said before, the atmosphere in Pakistan has created fertile ground for extremism to grow due to its internal problems, which would in return add to the threats posed by Pakistani extremist groups against the Islamic Republic of Iran's security. The present study would seek to explore the roots of security threats and plots against the Islamic

Revolution posed by extremist groups of Pakistan.

This study is based upon Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis approach which is one of the most applicable theories in this field. What distinguishes it from other discourse theories is the extension of discourse from culture and philosophy to society and politics (Hosseinizadeh, 2004: 193). Laclau's and Mouffe's Theory of Discourse is a coherent theory that provides us with the appropriate analysis tools for analyzing large-scale political and social phenomena. This theory has been recognized as a desirable model of cultural policy for the new political sociology because of its emphasis on issues such as identity (Nash, 2005: 47) and by providing concepts such as ideology, identity, Nihilism, and hegemony to explain the evolution of discourse. (Hosseinizadeh, 2004: 193).

To apply the discourse analysis approach, it is necessary to first explain its concepts. The characteristic of these concepts is that they are interconnected in a chain and that the understanding of each concept leads to the understanding of subsequent concepts. To that end, the signifier and the signified enjoy a key role to play in articulating the main discussion. Such articulation is possible in a complex social, historical, and cultural context. Henceforth, similar textures lead to similar articulations and different textures to different articulations (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 112).

### **1. Islamic Revolution's Effects on Pakistan Society**

The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran marked a significant event not only in Iran, but also across the region and the entire world. Nonetheless, interpretations of Iran's revolution were not identical and that is why Pakistan had a specific reaction to this big event. Until before the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, sectarianism and Shia-Sunni issues had no decisive role in Iran-Pakistan ties (Javadi Arjomand et al., 2012: 65), But as soon as the Islamic Revolution transpired Iran, leading to the establishment of a religious democracy whose leaders clearly spoke about the necessity of supporting the disadvantaged in the world and exporting the revolution, allies of Western governments started to worry. Iran's easy and quick access to Pakistan thanks to their shared borders, Pakistan's important Shia population and the Iranian bodies' activity in that country triggered the anxiety of Pakistani leaders. Shortly following the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Shias in Pakistan held an armed protest against Zia al-Haq's decision to draw up Pakistan's Sharia law based on the Hanafi school of thought, occupied public buildings including

ministries in a bid to force the government to drop its plan to impose the Hanafi school of thought on Shias, and they were successful (Salimifar, 2019: 74). This move delivered a strong message to Zia al-Haq and instigated fresh extremist actions against him (Shafiei and Qelichkhani, 2010: 9). Despite the fact that Pakistan was the first government to recognize Iran's revolution, the dominance of ideological discourse based on political Islam and the adoption of revisionist approach in the foreign policy put an end to the previous strong ties and launched a new chapter in Tehran-Islamabad ties which covered a wide spectrum of sectors ranging from competition to cooperation. Since Iran's revolution, many Shias in Pakistan looked at Iran as a spiritual and political leader (Zambelis, 2006: 1).

Given the fact that Iran and Pakistan are both Muslim nations, share borders and ruled by an Islamic government, and some Muslim scholars were familiar with the revolutionary character of Imam Khomeini and the aspects of Iran's Islamic Republic, the ground was prepared for the Islamic Revolution's influence on Pakistan.

Pakistani Shias were among the groups who were influenced the most by the Iranian revolution. They were also devoid of political recognition until early 1980s and there was no Shia-dominated political group or party.

Therefore, in light of General Zia al-Haq's insistence on the role of Islam in Pakistan's political scene and resumption of sectarian strife and the emergence of Salafi Arabs in Pakistan, terrorist anti-Shia groups like the Sipah-e-Sahaba and the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi came into existence (Masoudnia & Shah-Qal'e, 2009: 201). That led Arab governments in the region to curb Shia influence by investing heavily in religious proselytism. Anti-Shia groups like Sipah-e-Sahaba and Ahl-i Hadith were created to counter Iran's influence (Javadi Arjomand, 2012: 65). What has caused these groups to negatively impact Iran-Pakistan relations is their anti-Iran and anti-Shia attitudes that are based on extremist and superficial interpretations of Sunni teachings (Kouzehgar Kaleji, 2012: 151).

Article 152 of Iran's Constitution and Article 40 of Pakistan's Constitution call for giving priority to neighboring and Muslim nations in their foreign policy. Nevertheless, the emergence of Islamists during Zia al-Haq's rule (1977-88), which set the precedent for the state-authorized systematic spread of Islamism, led Zia al-Haq, a moderate practicing Muslim, to take advantage of Islamism. Dozens of radical and fundamentalist groups were born out of this approach. Generally, Zia al-

Haq favored Sunnis' religious activities as an instrument to contain the wave of Shia-led political Islam from Iran. At a lower level, such confrontation granted identity to fundamentalist religious groups in Pakistan.

Since each identity is formed through setting "self" against "other." Pakistan's Sunni-led fundamentalist identity considered itself to be on collision course with Iran's revolutionary Islam. The stronger such confrontation, the more visible this identity became. The result was the emergence of a wide spectrum of fundamentalist groups in Pakistani society over the past three decades, leaving harmful impacts on Pakistan's ties with Iran (Kouzehgar Kaleji, 2012: 146). Extremist teachings based on identity issues were mainly passed on to the aforesaid groups through religious schools. Pakistan's religious schools are an ideological instrument in the hands of extremist groups for countering Iran's Shia-led revolution (Arefi, 2003: 81). The growth of religious schools in Pakistan is reflected in the Sipah-e-Sahaba teachings. In a leaflet titled "Disclosure of Real Image of Islamic Revolution," the Sipah-e-Sahaba explains: "Iran's Islamic Revolution is a global plot against Islam. Khomeini's revolution was the first main attempt by Shias to spread Shiism across Europe, from Turkey to Russia, and through Central Asian Muslim states to Sri Lanka through Pakistan. Followers of the Sunni faith in Iran are being harassed and tortured. Sunni students are forced at Iranian universities to study Shia texts. Therefore, the government of Pakistan has to declare this country a Sunni state and Shias as non-Muslim" (Shafiei and Qelichkhan, 2010: 25, 26).

The Sipah-e-Sahaba shot to prominence following Iran's Islamic Revolution. This Sunni sectarian group follows the Deobandist school of thought. Haq Nawaz Jhangvi is leading this group with a mission to proceed with anti-Shiism agenda. Pakistan outlawed Sipah-e-Sahaba in January 2002, but it continued its activity after renaming itself "Millat Islamia" and Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a. The outstanding feature of this group was to stage anti-Shia rallies, alleging that Shias are non-Muslim, and to assassinate prominent Shia leaders (Firdous, 2013: 117-118).

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi is the military wing of Sipah-e-Sahaba and favors terrorist operations to realize its objectives. After being outlawed, it warmed up to the Taliban and al-Qaeda (Hussain, 2007: 94). Furthermore, this group has carried out numerous operations against Iran's interests as well as Iranian nationals living in Pakistan (Ibid).



## 2. Why Extremist Groups Grow in Pakistan

Forms of discourse are molded based on specific notions; and they are strictly associated with the contexts of the region (Sajadpour & Salimifar, 2019). In fact, the identity of every discourse cannot be molded from the context which may be characterized by contradicting notions that the discourse per se chooses to prioritize. Accordingly, the contexts and their characteristics must be studied before addressing and taking into account any discursive topic. Pakistan is no exception as it is a context in which extremism grows. Therefore, the identification and the characteristics of this context are essential to engage with the topic of the present study.

### 2.1. Poverty and Social Differences

Pakistan is a thickly populated and impoverished nation. Sectarian inclinations prevent political stability and subsequently economic security in this country. Pakistan's demographic growth rate, lack of underground resources, chaotic taxation system, growing financial corruption and exorbitantly high military costs, have prevented economic recovery. Currently, all foreign investors are ignoring Pakistan and have shifted their investment from Pakistan, known as the most politically, economically and socially unstable and unsecure nation, to more stable markets in developing nations (Masoudnia & Najafi, 2011: 92-93).

Over the past five decades, the Pakistani government's spendings have surpassed its revenue and its investment has surpassed its savings. A widening gap between revenue and spendings has given rise to budget deficit in the fiscal year, wide gap between foreign currency deposits and investments, and shortage of current accounts' balance. Both of these factors have together led to the accumulation of domestic and foreign debts in this country (Karimipour, 2013). That has posed threats to Pakistan's national security, disappointing mainly jobless youth and young adults with the government's ability to resolve their economic problems and instead seeking refuge in Islamic charity foundations. These youths join jihadist parties in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kashmir in order to make a living. The persistence of such conditions has led the youth and impoverished people in Pakistan to embrace Islamist parties' radical and revolutionary slogans like economic and social justice (Arefi, 2013: 267).

### 2.2. Political Stability and Military Interference with Politics

Pakistan's powerful military never recognized the superiority of political leaders (Bora, 2010) and that explains why after nearly seven decades, this country has failed to institutionalize a democratic culture, particularly after so many coups. Since August 1974, when Pakistan

gained independence, the country has seen profound political instability, sectarian strife, growing fundamentalism and military authoritarianism (Dehshyar, 2007: 4). Most Pakistani presidents have taken power through coup (Lotfian, 2009: 237). Therefore, the growing political and security instability in Pakistan has created the impression that the government and army are not able to maintain law and order in the country. Such impressions among Pakistani people have led them to resort to radical Islamist groups for the restoration of law and order because the government has, in their view, plunged in corruption and internal disputes, thereby dashing hopes for any change in the status quo (Masoudnia & Najafi, 2011: 94).

In light of such conditions, belligerent groups like Tehrik-i-Taliban in Pakistan (TTP) have managed to settle in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) zones or at least deepen their social roots, both of which have resulted in the creation of parallel organs. The government's failure to integrate politically FATA to the rest of Pakistan has encouraged people in such areas to groups opposed to the central government, if not considered as instigator of unrest and lawlessness (Khan, 2017: 3-4).

Apart from that, these zones are mainly grappling with poverty and have a meager share of economic development (Abdollahkhani, 2009: 118).

### 2.3. Religious Schools

In Pakistan, education is divided into the three low-income, middle-income and high-income levels. Poor schoolchildren living in rural areas choose to study at religious schools due to the lack of access to public education. Afghanistan and Pakistan are among several Muslim nations to have created religious schools on a large scale in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These schools have no standard curricula and they may attract children based on the level of their investment. These schools have no state affiliation and are scattered in Britain's East India colonies. Some of them are affiliated with radical Islamist groups like Ahl-i Hadith, but they are mostly affiliated with Deobandism that is influential mainly in northern Pakistan (Roy, 2001: 9).

The curricula offered at religious schools follow a worldview totally different from that of other social classes. Graduates of such schools mainly favor a politico-ideological system while the other two levels are mainly inclined towards secularism (Munir, 2015: 15). Above all, graduates of religious schools are not able to find jobs because of the content of their curricula, which would produce social disenchantment in their minds and push them towards extremism and terrorism (Witt, 2013:

20).

Based on Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life report, Pakistan is the third least tolerant country in the world in terms of social acceptance of religious diversity (Muni, 2015: 63). Sectarian violence is one of major security challenges in Pakistan. It began under Zia al-Haq, when Wahhabist preachers flocked to Pakistan. Based on opinion polls, students at religious schools are less tolerant than the other two schools vis-à-vis different ideologies, and show calmer reaction to prevailing discrimination and violence as if they saw nothing negative (Witt, 2013: 25).

#### **2.4. Saudi Backing of Pakistan Fundamentalists**

The Saudis believe that radical Sunni Islam would naturally counter any promotion of the doctrine of Iran's Islamic Revolution in the region. Therefore, they have invested heavily in Pakistan's religious schools. That explains why a significant number of Pakistani and Afghan youths follow religious teachings (Vaezi, 2011: 12-13). With respect to its belief in Wahhabism, the Saudi government has close ties with some fundamentalist groups based in Pakistan because some religious sects in the country, like Deobanism, almost share Wahhabist views and are very sensitive vis-à-vis other Islamic sects. During anti-Soviet jihad, oil-rich Saudi Arabia delivered financial aid to Afghanistan and set up thousands of religious schools in Pakistan in a bid to set the stage for the spread of Wahhabism (Esmatollahi, 2009: 117).

### **3. Pakistani Extremist Groups' Security Threats and Plots against Islamic Revolution**

The extremist groups in Pakistan have not only constituted constant threats to the security and national interests of the South Asian country but they jeopardized the neighboring countries as well. The reason for this wide spectrum of influence is laid on the ideological signified notions of their discourse in which sectors of Islam, most notably Shia, is associated with infidelity. That has resulted in the alienation and hostility towards Shias even outside their traditional geography as a signifier. As a matter of fact, this is not a new phenomenon as the idea of alienation and hostility towards Shia Muslims do exist in the discourse of other extremist and terrorist groups, namely Daesh. (Salimifar, 2018).

#### **3.1. Assassination of Iranians and Infringement of Iran Territory**

Amid a tense atmosphere caused by religious inclinations and concomitant disputes, marked mainly by Sipah-e-Sahaba, Iran's cultural attaché in Lahor, Sadeq Ganji, and Iran's cultural attaché in Multan,



Mohammad-Ali Rahimi, were assassinated by Sipah-e-Sabaha operatives in 1989 and 2007 respectively. Furthermore, two Iranian engineers who were involved in a bridge construction project in Karachi were gunned down by extremist militants. In another act of terror, five Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) cadets who were following a training course for pilots in Rawalpindi were killed by Sipah-e-Sahaba agents in the city (Shafiei & Qelichkhan, 2010: 26).

Due to Iran-Pakistan joint borders, autonomous tribal zones in Pakistan have turned into a safe haven for the terrorist groups operating against Iran in border areas. These groups, who are mainly active along eastern borders, are trained in Pakistan's tribal zones. They are influenced by fundamentalist thoughts and make planning to carry out acts of terror in Iran (Ahmadi & Bidollahkhani, 2012: 33). Therefore, given the political clout wielded by Pakistani extremist groups along the border with Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan Province, they may pose serious threats from inside to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The terrorist attack on Pakistan's Consulate in Zahedan was a case in point (Kheybari, 2002: 30).

### **3.2. Wahhabism and Anti-Shia Terrorist Groups**

Some terrorist anti-Shia organizations, mainly based in Pakistan, hire most of their members from religious schools in the country and also jihadists from other nations. These schools are mainly located in tribal zones in the three provinces of Waziristan, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The clerics are mainly Uzbek, Tajik, Chechen and Arab. When they return to their home nation in Central Asia, they become promoters of the deviant Wahhabi sect. Saudi and Emirati Wahhabis have heavily invested in building religious schools for Pakistan's Sunni population in order to spread their thoughts and lay the foundation for the establishment of armed sectarian organizations. In light of their politico-ideological paradox with the Islamic Republic of Iran's Shia government, that can bring about to soft and hard threats (Talabeh, 2012).

### **3.3. Potential Nuclear Threats Undermine Regional Security**

In the mid-1970s Pakistan embarked upon the uranium enrichment route to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. Pakistan conducted nuclear tests in May 1998, shortly after India's nuclear tests, declaring itself a nuclear weapon state. Pakistan currently possesses a growing nuclear arsenal, and remains outside both the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Considering the presence and influence of extremist groups in Pakistan, the neighboring and regional countries are always facing

potential nuclear threats should weapons of such nature end up at the hands of the terrorists.

### **3.3.1. Extremists Likely to Use Nuclear Arms against Iran**

As the central government's control over state affairs is weakened, extremist elements are more likely to get their hands on nuclear arms in Pakistan. Shia-majority Iran would be the primary target should these extremist groups possess nuclear weapons. The Islamic Republic of Iran would be affected even if it is not the direct target of a nuclear attack. Therefore, nuclear terrorism would pose a direct threat against Iran. On the other hand, extremism has indirectly reduced Iran's factor of security because the West and the U.S. have introduced Tehran as a supporter of al-Qaeda and extremist groups' terrorism and ratcheted up pressure on the Islamic Republic. That is while the dominant discourse and principle in Iran is based on the fight against the West's bullying. Iran is also among few nations to have resisted against excessive demands from the West, particularly the U.S. Therefore, Washington has sought to label Tehran as a state sponsor of terrorist groups and nuclear terrorism (Sajjadpour & Qahroudi, 2011: 250).

### **3.3.2. Transfer of Nuclear Arms and Technology to Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia is unlikely to be able to develop nuclear arms and have capacity to use them. However, due to progress in Iran's nuclear program, the Kingdom has been highly motivated to develop its own nuclear program secretly and through dipping into its huge oil money. Riyadh revealed its intention notably after Tehran and six world powers struck the 2015 nuclear agreement. After the conclusion of the deal, nuclear-armed nations expressed their readiness to transfer nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia in exchange for big amounts as long as no conflict of interests occurs.

However, due to the sensitivity of international organizations and nuclear powers, development of nuclear arms in Saudi Arabia sounded very difficult. Therefore, other scenarios like buying arms and projectiles, signing security agreements, creating nuclear security umbrella in partnership with global and regional powers looked more reasonable. For instance, military analysts saw the October 19, 2003 visit by Saudi Arabia's then monarch King Abdullah to Pakistan as part of attempts for upgrading military cooperation and purchasing nuclear weapons.

Aharon Ze'evi-Farkash, director of military intelligence at Israeli Ministry of Defense, wrote in his report to the Knesset Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee in October 21, 2003: "Saudi officials have

been seeking talks with Pakistani officials to purchase nuclear warheads for their CSS-2 missiles” (Jokar & Madani, 2010: 149-161).

Islamabad also enjoys sufficient capacity to provide aid to Riyadh in preparing nuclear fuel cycle and nuclear materials (Kahl, Dalton & Irvine, 2013: 23).

Saudi Arabia also compensated Pakistan financially for developing atomic weapons (Chumley, 2013). Some experts consider Saudi Arabia’s nuclear armament threat much more disastrous than Cold War Cuba’s missile threats (Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, 2012: 19-20).

### **3.4. Drug Trafficking**

There is a significant and direct relationship between drug trafficking revenue and the operations by groups fighting against the Islamic Republic of Iran because these groups live on narcotics and profits gained from drug smuggling (Vaezi, 2011: 37). For instance, Taliban leaders have openly sanctioned production of narcotic drugs and delivering them to "infidel" nations. And Iran sits on the transit route for that purpose. Since 1996 and the Taliban’s influence growth in Afghanistan, Iran-Afghanistan borders have seen massive caravans of narcotics, heavily escorted by the Taliban, travel towards Iran and Central Asian nations. Countering the Taliban has been possible only through huge spending (Haq-Panah, 1998: 160).

Autonomous and gray tribal zones like Khyber, Sarhad and Mand have also provided the ground for the activity of numerous laboratories in drug production and conversion. That poses threats to Iran’s national security.

Al-Qaeda militants took 9 Iranian police conscripts hostage in December 2006 and took them to Pakistan. A total of 3, 600 Iranian border guards have been killed and about 12, 000 others become disabled in their fight with drug smugglers. Drug combat has inflicted hundreds of millions of dollars in damage on the Islamic Republic directly or indirectly (Vaezi, 2011: 36).

Moreover, the Pakistani government’s dishonesty in dealing with drug smugglers travelling between Iran and Pakistan have added to security challenges for the Islamic Republic (Mohammadi & Ghanji, 2002: 105-110). Apart from that, international drug traffickers have used every trick to set up front companies to cover up their illegal activity and inject their money legally into banking systems. That has led Iranian smugglers to invest big sums outside the country. That has struck serious blows to national economy and minimized the possibility of capital accumulation in tribal areas (Haq-Panah, 1998: 160).

### **3.5. Separatism and Greater Baluchistan**

The idea of the Greater Baluchistan dates from 1955. The Baluch community is based on a geographical zone covering southeast Iran, southwest Afghanistan and East Pakistan. The Baluch is mainly based in Iran and Pakistan and their transactions are mainly with these two countries.

The Baluch communities of Afghanistan and Pakistan stand at lower levels than Iran's Baluch community economically, socially and culturally. The Baluch people claim to be Sunni Muslims rather than ethnic Iranians (Azizi & Azarkaman, 2011: 103). That plays well into the hands of Pakistani extremist groups to instigate separatist acts in Iran's Baluchistan.

#### **3.5.1. Pakistan Extremists Role for the Greater Baluchistan**

##### **3.5.1.1. Instigating Iran's Sunni Minority**

The reaction from Arab world, led by Saudi Arabia, to Iran's Islamic Revolution was forging an alliance and exerting efforts to spread Sunni political Islam based on Wahhabism as well as employing conservative approaches in the region. Moreover, Iran, as the sole Shia state in the world, felt ideologically responsible vis-à-vis Shias and it could not remain indifferent vis-à-vis their fate. In reaction, Pakistan and Arab nations decided to instigate the Iranian Sunni minority along eastern borders (Javadi Arjomand et al., 2012: 65).

Iran's most important Sunni-dominated city is Zahedan whose Makki religious school enjoys high credibility. At this school, in addition to Iranian Baluch, Fars, Kurdish and Turkmen clerics, Afghan and Pakistani migrants are learning religious teachings. In the aftermath of Iran's Islamic Revolution, Mawlawis gained fame in Sunni zones in the political, cultural and social sectors. Mawlawis have mainly studied in Pakistan and are followers of Deobandi school of thought. They naturally consider Pakistan as the country of their origin and hold a brotherly look at them (that applies even to Persian-speaking Mawlawis) (Kaviani, 2010: 201).

The al-Forqan party operating in Iran's Baluchistan is a mainly religious group comprising Mawlawis unhappy with Iran's Shia government. In Pakistan, this party is affiliated with Sipah-e-Sahaba. Maintaining constant relationship with Riyadh, Sipah-e-Sahaba dispatches delegates to Saudi Arabia at the invitation of the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah (Hafeznia & Kaviani, 2006: 34).

##### **3.5.1.2. Pakistan: Separatists' Safe Haven**

Tragic incidents involving the death of Iranians in recent years in eastern

and southeastern areas of Iran are indicative of the fact that terrorist groups are led from inside Pakistan. Terrorist operatives and infiltrators can easily cross Pakistan's borders to enter Iran. Meantime, Pakistani officials often claim they are unaware of the activity of such groups as Jundullah; however, behind the scenes, Pakistan is using these groups to serve its own regional interests like winning concession in the issue of gas pipeline. The Baluch communities of Iran and Pakistan are among the most underdeveloped and disadvantaged areas in both nations. Violence is rampant in these areas, not to mention the flow of illicit drug, arms and illegal immigrants (Javadi Arjomand et al., 2012: 67).

### **3.5.2. The Greater Baluchistan Threats against Iran Security**

#### **3.5.2.1. Armed Attacks, Hostage-Taking and Killing Iranians**

Tribal and ethnic affinities between the Pashtuns and the Baluch and the Taliban-style Salafist mindset of some extremist groups would pose serious threats to Iran's national security. Ethnic separatist and armed revolts, sabotage guerilla battles as well as jihadi wars are among serious threats against ethnic security in Iran's eastern border provinces. The penetration of al-Qaeda agents and Talibanism into some Baluch movements may lead to association between terrorist groups, organized crime networks, extremist nationalist parties and religious fundamentalists, which would gradually open a politico-military front for the Islamic Republic of Iran in the eastern provinces. Since insecurity along Iran's eastern borders requires more attention to regional issues and developments following the 9/11 attacks, some senior Iranian officials maintain that Jundullah is inspired with Talibanism (Pishgah Hadian, 2007: 1-2).

Taking Iranian border guards hostage, attacking police forces, killing 22 Iranian citizens and holding 7 others hostage on the Tasuki-Zabol road are among the most important acts of terror by this group. The worst was the October 2010 assassination of dozens of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) senior officials including Brigadier General Nour-Ali Shoushtari, the then deputy head of IRGC Ground Forces, which negatively affected Iran-Pakistan ties (Kouzegar Khaleji, 2012: 149-150).

Finally, the self-declared Jaish al-Adl, an offshoot of Jundullah, killed 14 Iranian border guards in October 2013. This group had threatened on its weblog to continue such killings. The perpetrators had fled Iran and sought refuge in Pakistan. The Jaish al-Adl group claims to have killed dozens of others too.

Despite having been influenced by Talibanism, this group pledged allegiance to so-called Islamic State in Khorasan. The Taliban, under the



pretext of defending the Baluch community, targeted this group. Such phenomenon indicates the high fluidity of extremist developments in the region (Giustozzi, 2018).

### Conclusion

Taking into consideration all aspects, it shall be concluded as follows: Pakistan is a country with a highly complicated and multilayer social structure. On the other hand, Shia and Sunni people have their own extremist leaders and followers alongside non-Muslim Hindus living in Jammu and Kashmir. That itself triggers clashes which continue in the form of discursive rivalry. Such political and security conditions have made Pakistan constantly experience terrorist and vengeful attacks with religious motivations. What adds to this religious complexity is the multi-ethnic and multi-racial structure of Pakistan, which is rooted in the country's tribal fabric. Therefore, the activity of extremist and terrorist groups in Pakistan is rooted in a variety of beliefs that determine policy for their actions within the framework of extremist ideologies. In this context, the extremist notions of the "self," namely their sectarian religious identity that defies other minorities or sectors of religion, have been the most important driving force behind radical Islamic identity. Believing in this shared identity has brought them unparalleled cohesion at the regional and even global levels.

The actions taken by extremist Islamist groups in Pakistan against the Islamic Republic of Iran's national security are essentially rooted in identity issues. The new identity developed with the victory of the Islamic Revolution in the form of Shia Islam is in conflict with the very essence of fundamentalist Sunni Islam. Therefore, teachings of radicalism have been formed in the context of Sunni ideology and they are in full coherence.

In the meantime, growing insecurity in Pakistan has created the impression that the Pakistani government and army are unable to maintain law and order in the country. Such impressions among Pakistani people have led them to show inclination for radical Islamist groups for the restoration of law and order. In view of ordinary people in Pakistan, the government is too plunged in corruption and infighting to change the status quo.

Therefore, the non-functional factors in the political and religious aspects of radical Islamist groups in Pakistan, spread of Wahhabism, inefficiency of the government in establishing security, internal

challenges stemming from the spread of fundamentalism within Pakistani society in light of transformative identity have increased anti-Shia and anti-Iran activities within the framework of threats against Iran's national security. Therefore, the most significant factor in the conflict between extremist groups and the ideals of the Islamic Revolution is rooted in sectarian and identity interests as well as their manufactured authorization.

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