

Rise of Violent Extremism in India, Kashmir and Implications for Pakistan

Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Awanⁱ

National Defence University Islamabad
sizova79@hotmail.com

Rooh Ul Aminⁱⁱ

National Defence University Islamabad
rua58@yahoo.com

Muhammad Saleem Qazi

Visiting Lecturer, Pak Studies Department
Bahauddin Zakriya University, Multan
saleemtaunsvi82@gmail.com

Ms. Toheeda Begum

Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University, Peshawar
Toheed236@gmail.com

Abstract

Rashtriya Swamysavek Sangh, commonly known as RSS, is a Hindu volunteer organization with its branches and millions of members in entire country. Its violent extremist approach and ideology is an emerging major challenge not only within India but is likely to affect some of its neighbors as well. RSS with number of affiliated organizations like Viswanathan Hindu Prasad (VHP), Bajrangdal, Shiv Sena and Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) are stretching its muscles to discipline Muslims and Christians minorities. All these organizations are collaborating and working for a majority Hindu nation state with no place for minorities, either they have to convert to Hinduism or leave the country. Indian Citizenship amendment bill 2019 (ICA, 2019) is an effort to encourage Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Christians, and Parsi from neighboring Muslim countries to opt for Indian citizenship less Muslims. National Registration Citizenship (NRC, 2019) is another effort to push out minorities mostly Muslims and Christians either for conversions, staying in detention camps or leaving India. A list confirming citizenship issued on August 31, 2019 has left 1.9 million, mostly Muslim as non-citizen in Assam. Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Damodardas Modi has been a staunch follower of the ideology of Hindutva advocated by M.S. Golwalker (Pilai, 2017) and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (Veer Savarkar Bio, 2019) in their books on Hinduness. Both Golwalker and Veer Savarkar are considered actual brains behind entire philosophy of Hinduism. Mr. Modi joined RSS in 1970 and has gradually risen in ranks thus deeply indoctrinated with Hindutva philosophy, dominance of majority Hindu and reversion to Hinduism by Muslims and Christians. Revoking of article 370 and 35 A by the BJP government has long been on its agenda. By dividing and making sole largest Muslim state as part of Union territory is being taken as great Hindu victory and revenge of so many years of Muslims rule.

This article shall make an attempt to provide insight, understand the nature of contemporary challenges of rising violent extremism, revoking of article 370, locking down of Jammu and Kashmir, its intended aims and objectives, manipulation of

governance and political arena, spreading of hate, intolerance, bigotry in a wrap agenda of Hindu nationalism. Article will review its impact and implication for Pakistan and a way forward.

Keywords: *Hindutva, Nationalism, Hinduism, Philosophy, Rashtriya Swamysavek Sangh (RSS), Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), Narendra Modi.*

Background

India got independence on August 15, 1947 from British Empire. British Parliament passed an act (Independence Act, 1947) with the name of 1947 Indian Independence Act on July 18th, 1947 to voluntarily grant independence by creating two states of India and Pakistan. However, behind this voluntarily independence was long struggle and persuasion done by Indians Muslims and Hindus. Efforts by the British Indians during World War II to push the British out of India through a movement Quit India (Quit India Movement, 1942) failed as British were desperate to keep its hold on Indian resources during their imperial war effort. World War II made Britain substantially weak to continue its hold on India and thus British Parliament had no options less to pass an act granting independence to India and Pakistan as two new sovereign states.

Founding fathers of India decided to maintain its diversity and democratic governance despite having number of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. Cohesion of India was considered by jelling all type of communities into a secular nationalism wrappings where everyone was allowed to live as per their culture, social values and religious orientation. Diverse and composite culture of India was considered as one of strength and major binding force. Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, first Indian Prime Minister being witness to the division of India had seen communal violence and considered it as bane for survival and progress of a secular country. His apprehensions proved true when Mohandas Karmchand Gandhi was killed by a fanatic Hindu Nathuram Godse, affiliated with Rashtriya Swamysavek Sangh (RSS, 1948). This model of secularism proved to be quite successful till Bhartiya Janta Party came into power after elections of 2014 with a majority vote. (Jaffrlote, 2019)

Creation of Rashtriya Swamysavek Sangh (RSS)

RSS was established in 1925 as a national volunteer organization by a Hindu Keshav Baliram Hedgewar. This was an organization essentially established to preserve Hindutva and Hindu culture through creation of extreme nationalism. Its ideology is highly influenced by the writings of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. The organization is mainly based on upper class Hindus who feels under an obligation to protect Hindu religion, culture and political interests. Before proceeding further, it may be appropriate to see RSS and its affiliated organizations.

- **Vishva Hindu Prasad (VHP).** It was established in 1964 by Mr. M.S. Walker with an aim to organize, consolidate the Hindu society and protect the Hindu religion. It has been declared as a terrorist organization by Central Intelligence Agency of USA. (The News, 2018)
- **Shiv Sena.** Shiv Sena was created by Bal Thakery in 1966 in India. It has its thousands of followers. A Hindu extremist organization working in

Mumbai, Maharashtra and other cities. A coercive organization with its visible ideology and efforts against Muslims(Encyclopedia, 2019).

- **Bajrangdal:** It is a youth organization established in 1984 to properly indoctrinate Hindu youth through various youth camps and assemblies throughout the country. It has been declared as a terrorist organization by Central Intelligence Agency of USA(The News, 2018).
- **Bhartia Janta Party (BJP):** Bhartia Janta Party is a political face of RSS and its affiliated extremist organizations.

RSS has remained highly controversial (Ankit, 2012) since its inception and has been temporarily banned for three times in history due to its involvement in communal violence. First it was banned in 1948 when Indian founding father Mahatma Gandhi was murdered by a fanatic Hindu Nathuram Godse. Later it was banned in 1975 on proclamation of emergency rule in India and in 1992 after demolition of Babri Mosque in Ayodhya. RSS is well established organization with over 6.8 million members throughout the country. It has never committed in public that it is working for the creation of Hindu nationalists' state but for all practical purposes, it seems it is moving in that direction with intolerance at its peak especially for minorities. Major threat perception of RSS remains from Islamic Proselytization. Narendra Damodardas Modi, second term Prime Minister of India, joined RSS in 1970 and gradually risen through its ranks. BJP as a party is a political face of RSS and completely embedded in its approach, philosophy and outlook of future India. BJP has remained highly critical of secular values propagated by the Congress party. Main policy priorities (Jaffrlote, 2019), of BJP are listed below:

- Hindu temple construction at Ayodhya at the site of demolished Babri Mosque. As per Hindus, this is a place where one of the Hindu god Ram was born.
- Creation of same personal laws (uniform civil code) that should be applicable not only to Hindus but Muslims and Christians as well. Same personal laws is going to eliminate the separate identity related to their religious inclinations thus gradually absorbing into Hindu culture and Hinduism.
- Revoking of article 370 and 35 A that had given special autonomous powers to Jammu and Kashmir, the only Muslims majority state of India.

Some of the auxiliary priorities are listed below:

- Ban on cow slaughtering to be ensured. Hindu enthusiastic to be patrolling on main highways to ensure there is no transportation of the cows by Muslims or any other for subject purposes. However, an interesting point to note is that India remains one of the major beef exporters in the world (Wambugu, 2018). In recent past, many Muslims have been lynched in many cities for transporting cows for possible slaughtering (Siyech&Narain, 2018).
- Reconvert Hindus who have converted to Islam and Christianity.
- Creation of violence and hate within community against minorities to discourage and demoralize them either to change their religious beliefs or consider leaving India.

- Creation of Hindu nation building based on Hindu culture and religion besides saving Hindutva under all circumstances.

RSS has been serving as base for running campaigns for BJP candidates while sharing similar faith, belief and ideology. Being present at grass route level, have been great campaigners for their political masters. For Muslims, they have kept five litmus tests, (Bhagwat, 2018) to prove their patriotism and loyalties towards India. These five questions were asked from Mohan Bhagwat, head of RSS after a 3 days seminar in India.

- **Loyalty Test.** Indian Muslims have to prove that they do not love any Pakistani Music. Similarly, they are not fans of any Pakistani Cricket personality like Shahid Afridi or Muhammad Amir. They should also avoid wearing green shirts as it also belongs to Pakistan. Any violator to such expectation will be considered as disloyal to India.
- **Muslims as a villain:** Centuries of frustrations and inferiority complex is now oozing out of many fanatic Hindus in India. Muslim families are believed to be a child producing machines who are committed to change the population balance. They are also considered as facilitators of terrorism(Jaffrlote, 2019).
- **Lynching of Muslims.** Cow is considered a scared animal in India. It is required to be protected at any cost. Muslims have been mercilessly killed in broad daylight on suspicions of transporting cows. Most of the attackers have not been punished so far through courts.
- **Love Jihad:**Hindu vigilantes had been persistent in assaulting and accusing Muslims of seducing and marrying young Hindu women to convert them from their religion. These groups under the patronage of local police and politicians have been active in launching campaign for *Ghar Wapsi* (returning back to home) where efforts are done to reconvert Muslims and Christians to Hinduism whose forefather had once changed their religion(Bhagwat, 2018).
- **White Muslims' Cap and Beard:** Muslim's cap and beard has become a sign of hate. Muslims in India were already in precarious conditions as far as jobs and education is concerned. Present wave of hate by RSS dogmatists is likely to further marginalized this oppressed community.

One of the Indian politicians Mahua Moitra, member of Parliament of 17th Lok Sabha elections from Krishnagar, West Bengal had been quite vocal on issues of extremism and intolerance being practiced in India. In her maiden speech in Lok Sabha on June 25, 2019(Pandey, 2019) she highlighted early symptoms of Fascism emerging in India.

- A major hype of nationalism is being created in India and is slowly getting into all segments of the society. It is artificial and extremely contracted with a sole aim of creating division within society based on cast and religion. Indian society is already fragmented enough on religious and various division of classes and ethnicities. Many Indians who have been part of the society for thousands of years are now being asked to prove their citizenship through newly initiated process of National Registration of Citizenship.

- Expecting a poor marginalized Indian to produce these papers is asking for too much as even Indian politicians can't produce their educational degrees despite being at the helm of affairs.
- Human rights violations have become a daily routine where weak and marginalized Muslims are lynched in broad daylight and assaulters are never punished. Videos of such heinous crimes are made and proudly shared on WhatsApp, a social media web site which is widely used around the world. Criminal involved in such incidents are portrayed as saviors of *Gao Raksha*(cow protection). No such individual has been punished so far from the courts.(Schultz, 2019).A common Indian running after cow protection should understand and reconcile with the fact that India is one of the leading beef exporters to the world(Wambugu, 2018).
- Indian mass media is entirely paid and controlled by a single party. Most of the prime time of TV channels are being used to glorify acts of government in power. Fabricated news is created and repeated so many times that one starts believing in its truth.
- Playing with public fears and massively exaggerating it to create an environment of uncertainty. It has been providing a good refuge to Modi led government where issues of unemployment, slow moving economy, farmers issue, poor health, education and other issues are being ignored. It is leading to entire chaos and creating enemies every day.
- Government and religion are being intertwined. NRC and citizenship amendment bill has been tabled to target a particular community in Assam. It is going to seriously affect Bihari Muslim community. (NRC list has been issued on August 31, 2019 declaring 1.9 million mostly Muslims as non-citizens of India. Detention centers are being created where these non-citizens are likely to be pushed after sometime.) A massive deployment of troops has been done to suppress any protests that may come up as result of this massive discrimination(Ratcliffe and Bhattacharya, 2019).
- There is entire scorn of intellectuals and arts. All nonconformists are being intimidated through various coercive means. Funding is being dried up for liberal education. These measures have already failed and it is also going to push India back to stone ages. Indoctrination remains a top priority agenda of the Modi government where all text books are being twisted and modified to create new heroes and villains as per the ideology of Hindutva. History is being re-written to suit the Hindu ideology.
- Elections are being manipulated through control of key personnel postings and transfer of Election Commission. Out of 60,000 crores spent on election of 2019, 27000 crores have been spent by one party(News 18, 2019)These all actions are not good for India as one of the largest democracies of the world. This can lead to further hate, uncertainty and division of the society that may ultimately push the country to breakup points due to internal rifts.

Comparison of Fascism with Hindutva

Hindutva seems to be a new shape and manifestation of Fascism. Hindutva can be defined as an abstract noun adding to it a masculine of Sanskrit ‘*tva*’ to widely used word Hindu. In simple term, it can be translated as Hinduness or Hinduism (Rambachan, 2019).

Fascism can be defined as extreme form of nationalism where it is expected that entire society shall be moving in a singular direction. It can be termed far right-wing authoritarian, ultranationalist with characteristics of dictatorial power. It believes in suppression of all opposing views, ideas, feelings and voices. It lays emphasis on regimentation of the society. Centralization of the economy is also considered essential component of authority. It came into existence in early 1900 hours where in WW1, it was considered essential to have element of nationalism deeply embedded into society for a wholesome and dedicated response to any outside elements. Some of the major characteristics of Fascism and Hindutva are listed below: -

Fascism	Hindutva
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State should have absolute power with an authoritarian leader • Nationalism should be leading narrative and in its ultimate form. • A clear laid down social order that is mandatory to be followed by entire nation • No sympathies for those people who are critics of either the government or given social order • Unflinching sense of national pride 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BJP also believes in absolute power with Modi at its helm of affairs as an authoritarian leader. • Hindutva has to be a leading narrative and it has worked very successfully in 2014 and 2019 elections in India. In elections of 2019, BJP was able to secure 303 seats as a party and 353 seats along with its coalition partners as National Democratic alliance (Dale, 2019). • Anyone living in India has to follow Hindutva in all its forms and manifestation. • Majority Hindus are not willing to listen anything either against Narendra Modi or policies of BJP (manifestation of teaching of M.S. Golwaker and Savarkar) • Hindus are trying to gain an unflinching national pride by lynching, declaring minorities as non-citizen, attacking religious sites of Muslims and partially Christians in an effort to restore confidence of Hindus and revenge centuries old inferiority complex.

Kashmir Crisis

As mentioned earlier, Kashmir has always been on agenda of RSS and BJP. Elimination of special status granted through article 370 had always been a major policy agenda of BJP. Mr. Modi, second term Prime Minister of India, in their party manifesto of 2019, had made commitments to their voters to eliminate these special provisions and make Jammu and Kashmir, a complete part of India. Before undertaking action of revoking on August 5, 2019, Modi government deployed thousands of additional troops in Jammu and Kashmir to ensure imposing of long term curfews and suppress all voices that could possibly protest after the incident. Situation developing in Kashmir after August 5, 2019 is highly explosive and uncertain. Majority of Hindu population in India is feeling happy and accomplished as Modi government has fulfilled its election promise without getting into its fallout and implications. Area remains under curfew till September 10, 2019 with virtually all communication closed down. Education institutions closed, markets closed and people are not allowed to move out of their houses with almost 800,000 soldiers deployed while beefing up with another 38,000 soldiers (Sandhu, 2019).

It has been on the agenda of RSS and later BJP to finally take over this sole majority Muslim state. It was very evident once Modi government started deploying additional troops in J & K and asked all visitors and *Yatrees* (pilgrims) to leave the area. A vague message of possible terrorists' activity was made the basis of pushing non-Kashmiris out of the area. These indicators if studied and analyzed carefully can indicate that Modi government was possibly planning to fulfill its one of the major promise of election 2019. Unilateral action of August 5, 2019 should have not been surprise for Pakistan and many people were already hinting at these possibilities. However, it still carried some element of surprise for some quarters in the government and Pakistani society.

Modi has been working on this agenda for many years since he joined RSS in 1970. He organized a *Dharna* (Sit in) during the *Ekta Yatra* of 1991-92 to force the government of that time for revoking of article 370 (Deodia, 2019). Modi has always been anti Muslims and who can forget the communal bloodshed of 2002, where over 1000 Muslims were massacred. Modi despite being Chief Minister of the State did not take enough measures to stop this massive killing. Due to his serious breach of trust of his office and abetting criminal activities, USA refused to grant him visa to visit (Mann, 2014). Playing for the majority Hindu sentiments of inferiority and hate for Muslim role of hundreds of years, Modi became a local hero. He never condemns this atrocity which took place under his administration till date.

Article 370 had been the basis of limited autonomy for people of Jammu and Kashmir. It gave them certain exclusive rights from residency to property as well as a separate flag. All major political leaders' pro like Umar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti and against Indian government like Ali Gilani, Mir Waiz Umar Farooq etc. were all put under house arrest immediately after revoking the article, all connectivity to the valley from landlines to cell phones to internet and cable TV etc. were cut off thus going for entire blackout in Jammu and Kashmir. Yasin Malik, a prominent leader of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation front was already under arrest and was shifted to Tihar Jail. Jammu and Kashmir was also divided into portions as Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir. Ladakh with no constituent assembly while Jammu and

Kashmir will have its assembly. Thereafter, Indian media has been making some all-out efforts to portray to rest of the world that everything is good and people are quite happy with the decision. Police, Para military and Military forces started enforcing curfew in major cities as well as certain rural areas. Prime Minister Modi in his radio address on August 8, 2019, tried to allay fears of the Kashmiris that main reason behind converting Kashmir in to Union Territory was to ensure its development and progress at par with rest of the country. It will also help in removal of government of few family as well as corruption in various departments and political levels.

Many people in India may not be ignorant about its context. An atmosphere has been created where anything against the government, army and its ongoing narrative is considered as anti-state and is not tolerable.

Kashmir crisis is actually not about the territory. There are many more states in India with such special status (Singh, 2018), are listed below: -

- Arunachal Pradesh
- Assam
- Himachel Pradesh
- Jammu and Kashmir
- Manipur
- Meghalaya
- Nagaland
- Sikkim
- Tripura
- Uttarkhand

Taking over of Jammu and Kashmir state as Union territory is considered as a Hindu victory over Islam. It was only Muslim majority state which has been turned in to non-state, divided into two union territories. BJP had clearly mentioned in its manifesto of elections (Sankalap Patra, 2019).

Implications and Lessons Learnt

India is one of the largest country on the world map. It holds large interests for many countries around the world due to its consumer market and a center of weapons and ammunition purchase for its military forces. Major world powers and Muslim Ummah were not forceful enough due to their various political and economic interests attached to India. Pakistan being another party to the conflict has been trying to apprise the world about atrocities of modern day being committed on Kashmiris. An emergency session of UN Security Council was called to discuss situation in Jammu and Kashmir immediately after the lockdown. Five permanent and 10 non-permanent members showed their concerns and urged both the parties to exercise restraint and solve the issue bilaterally through peaceful means. Apparently, it seems quite difficult as Pakistan and India have been trying to resolve the issue since its inception in 1947 but no major breakthrough has been achieved till date. Pakistan believes that issue can only be settled through third party intervention. India, on the other hand, had been trying to avoid it through various political means as it never wanted to live with its commitment made by its founding father Jawaharlal Nehru in United Nations. Some of the major lesson learnt are listed below: -

Role of Muslim Ummah and World Powers: Response of Ummah became a little surprise for many stakeholders in Pakistan. Ummah has turned almost a deaf ear towards crisis of Kashmir. It was unexpected for the Pakistani government that even some of its closest allies like Saudi Arabia and UAE will even drift once direly needed. Even once foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and UAE were invited to Islamabad after the crisis, failed to give any clear and concrete statement on Kashmir supporting Pakistani position. Pakistani foreign minister in face saving effort highlighted that “both countries have listened to our point of view and we are expecting that our close allies are not going to disappoint us” (Jamal, 2019). Unfortunately, many Muslim countries are either too weak at international level, embroiled in its own issues or have some serious business interests with the India. UAE and Saudi Arabia being ruled by autocrats and Monarchs are not willing to give any statement in favor of Kashmiris as people at home may ask for democratic rights as well. It could be self-destructive situation. UAE ambassador to India claimed that revoking of article 370 is an internal matter of India and may be essential for peace and development of the area” (Hoodbhoy, 2019). Turkey and Malaysia were the only two countries from the Muslim world that showed solidarity with Pakistan (Hoodbhoy, 2019). However, opposite side of the coin that seems positive for Pakistan would be to learn to survive without moral or diplomatic support of so-called Arabs. The bubble of Ummah is no more there and it has already burst. Pakistan should have realized it earlier to avoid any disappointment. One major reason of disappointing approach from UAE and Saudi Arabia could be Pakistani response to avoid sending troops to fight for them in Yemen. Rather than taking any side and start handling new crisis at home, it was highly considered opinion not to send our troops for fighting.

Rise of Violent Extremism in India: RSS and its affiliated organizations are treading a very dangerous path of violent extremism. India being a multi-cultural and multi ethnic country, needs liberal and secular policies that can accommodate a composite and diverse community together. An aggressive Hindutva approach may be serving short term political interest of BJP to stay in power. However, it is likely to turn out extremely harmful for national fabric of the society in longer term. While continuous pushing of minorities against the wall can generate a forceful response and lead to centrifugal forces exerting pressures outside that could ultimately lead to further breakup of India.

Indian Violent Extremism vs Muslim Extremism: Muslims’ violent extremism has always been a reaction to some occupation forces that seems quite logical and justified. Occupation forces with strategic aims of political interests and resources have always been resisted by inhabitants of native lands. However, in India, violent extremism is aimed against helpless, poor, discriminated and marginalized minorities that have been living for hundreds of years. Hindu being in majority in India can always form the government and run it as per aspiration of people but minorities have also rights to live and prosper in the same country. Diversification has always been strength of cohesiveness of any society. On contrary, it seems that BJP government is bent up deflecting people’s attention from other major issues like

slowing down economy, unemployment, farmers conditions, poverty, hunger, clean drinking water, health and education facilities.

Options available for Pakistan: Pakistan being next door neighbor and intimately involved in Kashmir issue cannot remain aloof out of these developments. After a muted response from rest of the world on one sided action of Indian government, it is now only Pakistan that is raising voices of Kashmiris in all corners of the world. Since war is not an option for time being, issue has to be resolved through some peaceful means and involvement of world's major powers. It can avoid possibility of any conventional war escalating into nuclear flash point over Kashmir issue.

- **Diplomatic offensive:** Pakistan launched an all diplomatic offensive to apprise the world about ongoing atrocities in Kashmir. It has been successful to get the case heard at UN security council emergency session. However, as expected, no joint statement was announced at the end of session putting India under pressure for moving towards the solution. Pakistan has been running around to convince the world that there is situation in Kashmir where 8 million people have been put in open jail under a continuous curfew. So far, no positive outcome is visible and it is likely to remain same in near future.
- **Political and Moral support:** Pakistan can continue providing political and moral support while holding its stance of over 70 years of support. It can highlight to rest of the world that all trade, education and health of Kashmiris under occupation of India have been seriously affected. There is shortage of foods and medicines that is affecting health and creating serious health issues.
- **Indigenous movement and uprising:** Kashmir is not going to get any serious attention until it gets on fire through an internal uprising and a large-scale insurgency. One of the major reason remains economic interests and large size Indian markets for the outside world. An offensive movement is likely to gain momentum once curfew is lifted and life is allowed to move towards normalcy. It has been experienced in last 72 years that Kashmir can never be liberated through strikes, closure of markets, schools and colleges. It will also not be given any relief through placards and by converting social media DP as black. Existing AJK and GB were also not liberated through peaceful protests. It would need an active movement that can fight like Afghans, use of weapons, various types of IEDs, suicide bombers, ambush and raids (including fire and physical)raids. Such an offensive posturing and aggressive approach will definitely work. Kashmiri terrain is also ideally suited for such insurgency operations.

Conclusion

Kashmir despite having been on agenda of UN remained unresolved till date. Indian unilateral action of annexation of state territory should not go unnoticed. Pakistan has been fighting case of Kashmiris since last 70 years and fought three major wars with India. Kashmir could turn out to be a nuclear flash point if not taken seriously by the world powers to find an amicable solution. The world major powers, United Nations, Human Rights organizations and other stakeholders needs to focus violent extremist ideologies being allowed to flourish under state sponsorship in India. This rise of extremism may be serving short term interests of Modi government

but will become ultimately drag for the entire country. This trend is not only dangerous internally for India but can also have its implications in neighboring countries. It seems these under current, unrest and uneasiness within Indian society is brewing up for some larger disaster.

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ⁱ **Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Awan** has done his PhD from Peace and Conflict Department of National Defense University, Islamabad. His areas of interests include Extremism, Radicalization, Counter Terrorism, India, Afghanistan and regional security.

ⁱⁱ **Rooh Ul Amin** is a PhD scholar at department of Peace and Conflict, National Defense University, Islamabad. His interests includes extremism, war on terrorism, US interests in the region, Afghanistan and India.