



BENAZIR BHUTTO: DEMOCRACY AN ANTITHESIS TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Pakistan's political leaders tend to understand the urgency to undo the menace of internal cleavages in the name of religion, sectarianism, and ethnicity - often manipulated by external elements. In her book "Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy, and the West," (Benazir, 2008) written just before her assassination and published shortly after, the late Benazir Bhutto argues that Pakistan under military dictatorship had become an epicenter of an international terrorist movement that had two primary aims: "First, the extremists aim to reconstitute the concept of the caliphate, a political state encompassing the great Ummah (Muslim community) populations of the world," and the second aim of the militants was "to provoke a clash of civilisations between the West and an interpretation of Islam that rejects pluralism and modernity (Benazir, 2008). "This statement underscores the depth of the Late Benazir Bhutto's understanding of the religious extremism and terrorism that Pakistan continues to face to date. To dwell more deeply into the subject, multi-layered queries are discussed: What are the definitional imperatives of an extremist? What ecosystem is conducive to nurturing violent radicals or extremists, and how does ideology impact politically violent organizations or individuals? Finally, how to reign in the tide of violent extremism that curtails democracy to a great extent? All these questions will be anchored in the thought pattern of the late Benazir Bhutto, that met with partial success during her two stints in power. The thrust of the present research study is to highlight the perception of the political leader who professed in her writings and public appearances at the national, regional or global forums stressing an intricate linkage between Islam and democracy as a most plausible way for global peace and security on the sustainable grounds. That is, Pakistan's future is based on embracing democracy in letter and spirit. Methodologically, a discourse analysis approach is adopted which is a branch of linguistics that focuses on studying language, communication and social interactions within specific contexts. This approach highlights the delicacies of reconcilability between Islam and Democracy, by taking on the following mold.



Key Words: Violent Extremism, Democracy, Islam, Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan.

Definitional Imperatives of Violent Extremism in Pakistan?

It is integral to grasp the semantics of the term “extremism” to understand the nuances of violent extremism in Pakistan. Due to its negative connotation in relation to people's beliefs and actions, the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary outlines three key elements within the lexical paradigm of "extreme." As an adjective, extreme denotes "beliefs and political parties which most people consider unreasonable and unacceptable"; in terms of the noun, extremism stands for "political extremism (in terms of extreme political opinions)"; and the noun extremist can denote a "group of extremists (in term of people with extreme opinions)" while the adjective extremist can represent a group of people with "extremist tendencies." (Sotlar, 2004).

Given that extremism is a relational concept, addressing the question "What is extreme?" necessitates a point of reference - something more commonplace and mainstream in contrast to the (extreme) political fringes. In their explanation, Roger Eatwell and Matthew J. Goodwin introduce the notion of "extremism" as having dual dimensions: action-based and value-based. This framework defines the dynamic nature of conceptualisation and its evolution within society.

Similarly, scholar Ronald Wibtrope offers an alternative perspective by classifying three types of extremists, systematically highlighting the patterns of extremism. First, there is the aspect of being extreme by method but not by goal. Second, the classification of being extreme by both goal and method. Lastly, there is the condition of being extreme by goal but not method. (Fellow & Schmid)“ These dimensions encapsulate the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon and underscore its broader implications for social stability.

Benazir Bhutto had a clear stance aimed at catering to Pakistan's extremist and militant groups, guided by her vision to forge a peaceful and prosperous nation. Bhutto recognised that certain extremist Muslims harbored resentment and hostility towards America, mainly stemming from various localized problems. The overarching transnational concern was the Middle Eastern conflict, which significantly exacerbated tensions and hostility. It is vital to understand that most Pakistanis opposed the Taliban regime and religious parties. Despite this, the Taliban wielded significant influence and sympathy among the military and intelligence (Fellow & Schmid). Bhutto’s views centered around the belief that a true Muslim could not be an extremist. She firmly believed that Islam promotes diversity; therefore, every Muslim should act according to the true teachings of Islam. Steadfast in her stance against militancy and terrorism, Bhutto was acutely aware that the Pakistani populace endorsed democracy and aspired to break free from the grip of terrorism. Her confidence in the people's support underscored her unwavering determination. Bhutto's approach reflects a strategic attempt to engage with these groups, emphasizing the importance of understanding their motivations and grievances. By acknowledging the hostility harbored by certain extremist Muslims towards



America, she recognised the need to address the local problems that contributed to such hostile sentiments. She adds a layer of geopolitical context by mentioning the middle eastern conflict and its impact on exacerbating tensions. Bhutto's belief that a true Muslim could not be an extremist reflects her attempt to counter extremist ideologies from within the framework of Islam itself. Her emphasis on Islam's promotion of diversity and adherence to true teachings echoes her aspiration to guide the nation away from radicalism. Bhutto's firm commitment to combating militancy and terrorism showcases her awareness of Pakistanis' desire for democracy and stability. Hence, her confidence in the people's support underscores her resilience and conviction, ultimately linking her personal determination to the broader narrative of Pakistan's struggle against extremism and its pursuit of democratic ideals.

The assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto triggered a transformative wave that reshaped public opinions against extremism and terrorism. The shift in societal perception regarding suicide bombing and other violent methods surged significantly, rising from 35% to 72% in opposition to such attacks. According to the Pew Global Attitudes Survey, the Muslim world, specifically Pakistan, experienced a stark decline in support for terrorism. (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2007). Moreover, Bhutto's assassination led to a decline in the extremist narrative propagated by militant groups such as TTP. This pivotal moment prompted the Musharraf government to recognise the vulnerability and potential repercussions of prolonging non-democratic governance. The outcome materialized in the establishment of a democratic government, spurred by Benazir Bhutto's sacrifice – a poignant testament to her unwavering commitment to the Pakistani people and the cause of democracy. The mention of the 2007 Pew Global Attitudes survey adds credibility to the argument, providing empirical evidence of the broader trend of declining support for terrorism within the Muslim world, particularly in Pakistan. This insight underscores the global reverberations of Bhutto's assassination and its role in shaping perceptions beyond national borders. The ripple effect of Bhutto's assassination on the public, militant groups and political parties highlights the enduring legacy of her vision and principles. This analysis points to the power of Bhutto's commitment to democracy and her role in catalyzing political change in Pakistan, even through her death, as the ultimate sacrifice.

Ecosystem and ideological standpoints that nurture violent religious extremists?

The definition of religious extremists differs from that of radicals and, in certain aspects, from secular concepts such as right-wing extremism. Numerous factors contribute to the nurturing and emergence of these ideologies. In this context, Charles Kimball has identified five warning signs that are not limited exclusively to individuals, as they may also pertain to entire groups or theocratic regimes.

1. Absolute Truth Claims
2. Blind Obedience
3. Establishing the "Ideal" Time
4. The End Justifies Any Means



5. Declaring Holy War.

The factors of religious extremism are applicable to a broad canvas, such as society-wide, macro-level root causes. It covers from minor to major levels in its implication. First, the populations or areas that experience these alleged root causes are massive in number. This issue follows no boundaries. Secondly, it proves highly challenging to make broad generalizations spanning various regions, nations, and historical eras regarding the foundational factors that lead to the emergence of the Violent Extremist ideology. This is because these occurrences have arisen within diverse social, political, and economic contexts. When considering solely social and economic circumstances, it's essential to recognize that instances of violent religious extremism have materialized across a spectrum of socioeconomic conditions, encompassing both impoverished societies and highly developed industrial nations.

Religious extremist approach refers to the fact revoking or symbolising concepts from Islamic texts, practices, or history, in order to articulate political agenda and make justification of their actions. The extremist approach is not restricted to Islamist or non-Islamist but is being manipulated for political interests. Similar exploitations of religious imagery and traditions can also be found in other cultures. Third, through the lens of social and economic conditions assessing religious extremism is critical. The apparent signals that are observed include concerns related to poverty, joblessness, and economic prospects. However, these factors do not hold the central focus within a violent extremist group. They do not originate or take shape, as frequently proposed by explanations centered on social and economic foundational causes, due to feelings of resentment or offense stemming from an inability to reap the rewards of globalization. Instead, they stem from a deep-seated antagonism toward globalization, values emerging from the post-enlightenment era, and the principles of secular humanism. (Oru, Hans, and Neil 1994)

Another key work of Guilain Denoex with Lynn Carter observes that violent extremists despise the spiritual void, unrestrained individualism, rigidity in moral relativism and materialism, which they understand as intrinsic to modernity and globalisation. Hoffman (1998) outlined a series of five primary goals within the focus of extremist terrorists. These objectives involve directing attention towards their underlying cause as the initial step, followed by seeking recognition or possibly generating empathy for the cause. In their third step they aim to secure validation for the legitimacy of their cause, then strive to attain the power to implement the advocated changes, and ultimately work towards solidifying dominion over a populace, territory, or nation. (Saucier, Laura, Seraphine, Goran and Lazar 2008)

As per Reuters, Benazir Bhutto critically examined the violent extremism in Pakistani society during her address. Bhutto stated, "Extremism is getting strong in our tribal areas, and lawlessness is spreading throughout the country,". Moreover, she critiqued President Musharraf's government for its failure to take action against extremists and terrorists, noting its persistent attempts to suppress democratic forces. (Faisal, 2007). Her stance on religious extremism and militancy was clear; she



held military leaders accountable for promoting religious extremism to serve their political agenda against democratic forces. Bhutto's criticism of both the military establishment and militant groups, particularly the TTP, had serious consequences. She became the target of two fatal attacks. The first attack occurred in Karachi on October 18, 2007, when a bomb detonated near her car along the Karsaz intersection route. The wave of terror attacks including her assassination attempt did not discourage Bhutto from returning to her homeland. Her determination to restore democracy served as a key driving factor in her return. Unfortunately, on 27th December 2007, two months after the first attempt Bhutto was assassinated in Karachi. Whereby proving that Benazir Bhutto was a true leader who selflessly sacrificed her life to combat extremism and terrorism in her plea for democracy. Therefore, her legacy serves as a reminder of Pakistan's complex challenges in extremism, democracy, and governance.

President Bush strongly condemned this heinous act carried out by murderous extremists who sought to undermine Pakistan's democratic progress. He declared, "Laura and I extend our deepest condolences to the family of Benazir Bhutto, to her friends, to her supporters. The United States strongly condemns this cowardly act by murderous extremists who are trying to undermine Pakistan's democracy. He emphasized that the perpetrators must face justice for this crime against a Prime Minister who risked her life for her country and that USA must support Pakistan's fight against terror and extremism, honoring Bhutto's legacy by upholding democracy." (Bush condemns those killed Pakistan's Bhutto 2007) This event marked a somber and poignant reminder of Bhutto's unwavering commitment to democracy and her enduring love for the people of Pakistan.

Bhutto's assassination highlighted the alarming rise of terrorism in Pakistan. Yasir Hussain advanced this idea in his book "The Assassination of Benazir Bhutto". Hussain argued that terrorism, suicide bombings, extremism and militancy have gripped Pakistan since 1996 and have carried forward to the 21st century (Hussain, 2008) . This analysis unveils the motivating factors behind her endeavors and policies aimed at curtailing religious extremism. Despite these efforts, religious extremism and militancy had already deeply penetrated Pakistani society due to Afghan jihad. Addressing and controlling such entrenched extremism presented a formidable challenge for individuals and governmental entities.

In fact, Pakistan faced a series of violent and extremism-related incidents even during Benazir Bhutto's rule. The Egyptian Embassy bomb blast in Islamabad on April 10th, 1995, marked a crucial incident of terrorism in Pakistani history. This blast resulted in 16 casualties and injuries to over 60 people. (Jahan, 2017). This attack was carried out by Harkat-ul-Ansar, a militant group in Pakistan. Again, on 5th November 1995, another terrorist attack was carried out in Karachi by Lashkar – e – Jhangvi. This bombing targeted the Karachi Stock Exchange and resulted in the death of 2 individuals while many more sustained serious injuries. (Khan, 2015). Therefore we can notice the prevailing atmosphere of violent extremism during Bhutto's tenure. These incidents illustrate the deep-seated presence of terrorist organizations within the country, emphasizing the complexity and seriousness of the extremist threat Bhutto anticipated. Showcasing the difficulties faced in countering these threats



despite the efforts of leaders like Benazir Bhutto suggests that tackling religious extremism requires a comprehensive approach that considers historical, societal, and political factors.

Extremism is directly related to the ideology that one possesses. Whereas a strict set of negative beliefs and values like (a) advocacy of measures beyond the norm (i.e., extremism) and (b) intention and willingness to resort to violence (i.e., militancy) leads to militant extremism. Most notably, violent militant extremism includes not just intended but actual violence, violence that is arguably without sufficient long-term redeeming value, which actually is a violation of human moral codes in multiple ways by imposing harm, violating human rights, causing chaos, and stimulating a reaction of shock and disgust. (Saucier, Laura, Seraphine, Goran and Lazar, 2008)

Put differently, the definitions of radicalization commonly revolve around two distinct focal points:

1. In instances of violent radicalization, the spotlight is placed on the active pursuit or endorsement of employing violence to achieve the specified objective.
2. In a broader context of radicalization, the emphasis lies in the active pursuit or acceptance of sweeping societal transformations, which might or might not pose a risk to democracy and may or may not incorporate the potential for, or actual use of, violence to accomplish the stated aims. (Shalev, 2010)

Benazir Bhutto's ideology echoed the fact that democracy is the best revenge for the political violence perpetuated by radicals and extremists. This sentiment resonates with her son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's statement, "My mother always said democracy is the best revenge." (My Mother Said Democracy Is Best Revenge - Bhutto Son, 2017) Benazir Bhutto made the ultimate sacrifice, giving her life to pursue democracy. Her name would be remembered in history because she had lived her life as a lady who mobilized world opinion and fought for the people of Pakistan through the Democratic Movements". In reference to her fight for democracy, Bhutto stated, "Just as a flower cannot bloom in a desert, so political parties cannot flourish in a dictatorship." (Bhutto, 1988). This analysis emphasizes Bhutto's unwavering belief in democracy as the only solution for the betterment of the people of Pakistan.

Additionally, the Bhutto political dynasty is the only family in Pakistan, which has sacrificed their family members for the establishment of the democratic system in Pakistan, "Goher Jamal argued that "no ideology could succeed without sacrifices, and the Bhutto family had given historic sacrifices for democracy, and they all would be long remembered". In fact, while leading the funeral prayers for his wife Zardari shouted "How many Bhutto's will you kill? We are all ready to die.". This statement is a powerful testament of the Bhutto legacy and their willingness to sacrifice their blood for the people of Pakistan and democracy. (Khuhro, 2014). In hindsight, her convictions have been vindicated, proving their validity, wisdom, and alignment with the best interests of the Pakistani populace.



Benazir Bhutto was a true leader who sacrificed her life advocating democracy and fighting for her people till her last breath. In fact, the Bhutto legacy is being carried forward by Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto. Therefore, this analysis underscores the remarkable sacrifices made by the Bhutto family and portrays Benazir Bhutto as a visionary leader whose commitment to democracy was unyielding and profoundly impactful in shaping the course of Pakistani history.

How to reign in religious extremism and terrorism?

In today's world terrorism is recognized as the gravest threat to national security and all government policies revolve around curbing this menace in society (Borum, 2004). A focus on security and law enforcement have been at the forefront in countering violent extremism in Pakistan. Nonetheless, studies have demonstrated that the mere elimination of violent extremists, whether through actions such as killing, imprisonment, or relocation, proves ineffective, as the influx of new recruits will far surpass the count of those removed. Furthermore, civilian casualties resulting from security or military operations yield comparable outcomes on recruitment and the process of radicalization. Violence and extremism is clearly linked to a certain type of ideology and the goal is to target that the root cause of this extremist ideology in order to prevent individuals from joining violent extremist organizations. Hence, addressing the ideology underpinning this extremism stands as a pivotal component within the broader endeavor to avert acts of violent extremism. Despite this growing awareness, formulating a precise approach to effectively counter extremism and empower mainstream alternatives has presented difficulties.

Outlining the issue of Violent Extremism in our country's evolution of the conceptual framework, it is important to consider the prevailing trends related to extremism. In theory, countering terrorism is part of national policy. All countering extremism initiatives are context specific. Pakistan's complicated local environment is problematic. Increasing religiosity has been deemed as an indicator of extremism in Pakistan according to the West. Violent extremism in Pakistan is a multifaceted phenomenon that exists in the form of sectarianism, Shariah (Islamization) movements, Talibanization and a multitude of Jihadist organizations. (Basit, 2015) As per the concept of extremism, it involves the forceful repudiation of current avenues for political engagement and the endeavor to formulate novel ideologies and narratives in order to instigate comprehensive transformations across various aspects of existence (including social, political, economic, or ethnic dimensions) by contesting the legitimacy of established institutional systems. (Basit, 2015)

The evolution of a conceptual framework to counter violent extremism in Pakistan's complex context is crucial, as highlighted by Benazir Bhutto's strategy linking democratic restoration, countering extremist funding, and tackling drug trafficking to address the multifaceted manifestations of extremism in Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto articulated her aim to prevent violent extremism during a 2007 interview with the Council of Foreign Relations. She argued that the plan to return to Pakistan facilitated a democratic movement to restore democracy. Emphasising a democratic policy to curb



violent extremism and terrorism, she advocated pursuing drug barons and dismantling the drug cartel that funded terrorism. (A Conversation with Benazir Bhutto.” 2007). As per analysis, Benazir Bhutto had a comprehensive strategy for countering terrorism. She believed that to end violent extremism and militant groups in Pakistan; the first step is a complete blockade of internal and external funding of terrorist groups. A significant initiative she undertook involved eradicating poppy cultivation and shutting down approximately 12 Heroin labs in Pakistan. Additionally, she introduced a new ministry for anti-narcotics and established nationwide recovery centers to provide care and rehabilitation for drug addicts.

Benazir’s bold decisions with relentless efforts led to a noteworthy decrease in drug smuggling within Pakistan. These decisions were instrumental in addressing the challenges posed by violent extremism and terrorism. (Tariq, Khalid and Hashmi). Benazir Bhutto's strategy reflects a comprehensive understanding of the connections between different facets of extremism. Bhutto emphasizes democratic restoration as a viable means to counter violent extremism, acknowledging the importance of an inclusive environment where rule of law was upheld alongside political participation. She followed a holistic approach to understand what provoked extremism taking into account economic, social and political factors. Moreover, she countered extremist funding by focusing on disassembling Pakistani drug traffickers and mafias, demonstrating an acute awareness about the financial infrastructure of terrorism. By disrupting these funding sources, her strategy seeks to undermine the operational capabilities of extremist groups and weaken their ability to carry out violent activities. The tangible impact of Bhutto's decisions is evident in the reduction of drug smuggling within Pakistan. This outcome is an example of how targeted policies can lead to positive changes on the ground, potentially undermining extremist groups' financial strength and ability to exert influence.

Moreover, Bhutto's strategic emphasis on countering extremist funding and reducing drug smuggling was complemented by her approach to eradicating terrorism through enhanced security measures. This approach facilitated economic investment, which in turn held the potential to alleviate rising poverty. Benazir Bhutto adopted such measures aimed at reviving the economy. Firstly, she actively pursued private sector investment and sought engagement with foreign investors. Secondly, she pursued peace initiatives with India to uplift Pakistan's economic prospects. Thirdly, her successful negotiations with the IMF led to various conditions, including loan payments and efforts to promote press freedom. These developments positively impacted Pakistan's national and international standing and led to significant economic gains. This positive impact on the national economy was seen through the Karachi Stock Exchange (KSE) growth. KSE experienced substantial growth during both of Benazir Bhutto's terms, exemplifying the positive influence of these actions on the national economy. As a result, these measures contributed to weakening the forces of militancy and extremism.

Benazir Bhutto's strategy to counter violent extremism was multi-dimensional. Her emphasis on disrupting extremist funding and reducing drug smuggling aligned with efforts to enhance security and spur economic growth. This approach recognised the symbiotic relationship between security and economic stability. Bhutto's measures, including private sector engagement, peace initiatives with



India, and successful negotiations with the IMF, improved national and international perceptions of Pakistan. The substantial growth of the Karachi Stock Exchange (KSE) further underscored the positive impact on the economy. In sum, Bhutto's comprehensive approach demonstrated the potential of addressing extremism through intertwined security, economic, and diplomatic efforts.

Pakistan is characterized by its heterogeneous society, comprising various ethnic communities and encompassing a range of Islamic denominations practiced across different regions of the country. The phenomenon of radicalisation operates at multiple societal levels, exhibiting both shared traits and distinctive features within the socioeconomic strata. This phenomenon is discernible across three tiers. Within the lower-income segments, radicalisation tends to be sectarian in nature. In the middle-income brackets, predominantly in urban and semi-urban locales, radicalisation assumes a primarily political character, stemming from factors such as terrorism incidents and US-led operations in the neighborhood. Meanwhile, the upper-middle class and the societal elite align themselves with pan-Islamist causes and approaches, advocating for concepts like caliphate or revival of Islamic laws and practices.

There is a pressing need for effective, result-oriented policy to address both the tangible and intangible aspects of terrorism and extremism. The primary purpose of having a countering violent extreme is to: a) stop terrorist organizations from growing; b) deprive them of social support base available in the form of supporters and apologists; c) build resilience in the community against extremist propaganda, especially in the vulnerable and at-risk segments of the population; d) and, stop youth recruitment by terrorists' outfits (Tariq, Khalid and Hashmi).. Balancing society is not possible without neutralizing extremism's ideological appeal in society's mindset. Hard power is not a viable option or way out of extremism control, leading to militancy. Hence a multipronged strategy is required.

Benazir Bhutto believed that to confront terrorism and violent extremism through democracy, inclusivity was crucial since democracy allows all voices to be heard, including the marginalized. According to Bhutto's ideology, political involvement is crucial to address the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism and military force exclusively cannot resolve such issues.

Bhutto urged international involvement in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. She believed that terrorism was a global problem requiring a comprehensive global response, and she emphasized that Pakistan should collaborate closely with other nations to address the issue effectively.

However, Bhutto's vision did have specific gaps and limitations. There were instances where the implementation of her ideas fell short, and her connections to certain militant groups raised concerns. In 1996, Bhutto's government was ousted due to claims of corruption and economic incompetence and mismanagement. (Khan, 2019). However, political analysts rebut those allegations disclosing that the true cause behind Bhutto's dismissal was her tense relationship with the military, particularly General Jehangir Karamat, the then Chief of Army staff. (Cheema, 2014). Moreover, Bhutto's



government was also in trouble because it failed to develop a clear and cohesive national security policy addressing the country's security challenges, particularly terrorism and extremism . (Tariq, 2018)

Bhutto's stance and involvement in the Afghan policy challenged the existing policy and power dynamics within Pakistan's fledgling democracy. This support for Afghan Mujahedeen's which later evolved into militant groups, reflected the pitfalls in her tenure and raised suspicions of her involvement with such groups. Therefore, her support for the Afghans and her involvement in the Afghan conflict carried significant risks to her government's stability, unresolved conflict dynamics and concerns about the role of military intelligence. (Weintraub, 1989). In this context, the Taliban emerged in Afghanistan in 1994 during Bhutto's tenure and served Pakistan's interest in Afghanistan. Pakistan's continued support of the Taliban was taking Pakistan towards international and regional isolation, which led to a gradual contradiction between the external and internal inputs into Pakistan's foreign policy, which had significant consequences for the future of Pakistan. (Khan, 2007)

At a certain stage, the state may consider a political settlement while countering terrorism and extremist mindsets. According to research, not all terrorists are motivated purely by ideology. A discernible discourse exists regarding extremism and terrorism, encompassing both active and passive supporters. The motivations of individuals in middle and lower ranks within these groups differ from those of entrenched hard-core militants. Paradoxically, the demands articulated by hard-core militants often lack tangibility, in contrast to the tangible demands of the soft-core militants. By effectively addressing or managing the layer of passive extremists, it becomes possible to weaken the social support foundation that bolsters terrorist groups. Subsequently, the remaining hard-core elements can be identified and contained in subsequent phases by implementing hard power.

Bhutto takes a holistic approach by acknowledging that while ideology is a major contributing factor to terrorist mindsets, economic, societal and political aspects play a pivotal role in creating extremists. Her stance on militant groups encapsulated the geopolitical context by acknowledging how localized and transnational conflicts impact extremist behavior. Moreover, Bhutto highlights how significant political events such as assassination and leadership changes lead to shifts in societal perception and the support for extremism. She also highlights the increased terrorist activity in low-income tribal areas. Therefore, the root causes of ideology cannot be seen in isolation but must take into account various economic, political and societal factors.

Conclusion

The paper's key argument is to reign in terrorism and religious fundamentalism/extremism in our country; we need to have an indigenous approach to counter this malaise. And there is no dearth of ideas, policy plans, and manpower to implement sustainable counter-extremism policy. What is lacking is the lack of committed and clear-headed political/democratic leadership to put words into deeds. In the intricate landscape of extremism and terrorism, the legacy of Benazir Bhutto shines



brightly as a guiding beacon towards a more secure, democratic, and peaceful future for Pakistan. Bhutto's profound understanding of extremism's multidimensional nature, as evidenced by her identification of its absolute truth claims, blind obedience, timing idealization, justifiable means, and declaration of holy war, underscores her awareness of the complex roots that feed the scourge. Her assassination in 2007, a heart-wrenching sacrifice for her vision, ignited a transformative wave across Pakistan. This wave brought about a decline in support for terrorism and a profound shift towards democratic values, reflecting the resilience of a nation against extremist ideologies. Bhutto's courage and sacrifice exemplified the unwavering determination needed to confront extremism head-on. However, Bhutto's endeavors also exposed the formidable challenges entrenched in historical associations with Afghan jihad and societal vulnerabilities. The pervasive nature of extremism demanded a comprehensive and sustained effort, as her engagement with extremist groups and her critique of the military's role demonstrated. By striving to address local issues contributing to hostility while acknowledging the broader geopolitical context, Bhutto painted a holistic picture of the struggle against extremism. Her multi-faceted approach encompassed addressing socio-economic conditions, countering extremist ideologies through genuine religious interpretations, and advocating for international cooperation. Her vision of a democratic Pakistan firmly rooted in the tenets of Islam and pluralism remains as pertinent today as it was during her lifetime. Bhutto's legacy, characterized by her resilience and unwavering commitment to democracy, illuminates Pakistan's path forward for a successful future. In the face of complexity, her life and sacrifice serve as a testament to the enduring strength required to confront extremism. As Pakistan treads the path towards a more secure and peaceful future, it can draw inspiration from Bhutto's vision, her unyielding courage, and her unshakeable belief that democracy is the "best revenge for political violence". Just as a flower can bloom even in a desert, democracy can thrive in the most challenging environments, sustained by the legacy of leaders like Benazir Bhutto

Recommendations

To navigate these limitations and advance our understanding of this topic, future researchers should approach this topic with a multifaceted strategy. During the analysis process, they must maintain a heightened awareness of personal biases and assumptions, such as political affiliations and preferences. Engaging in a collaborative discourse analysis involving analysis from diverse backgrounds and perspectives can mitigate the impact of individual bias. Additionally, researchers must adopt a competitive lens, examining the phenomena of extremism and terrorism across varied contexts to distill universal patterns to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Finally, employing a triangulation approach where quantitative and qualitative data complement the discourse analysis can yield a more well-rounded and holistic perspective of the interplay of terrorism and extremism in Pakistan.



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