

IMPACT OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM ON GIRLS' SCHOOLS IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

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Abstract

All over the world, terrorist attacks on places of learning are increasing. These attacks are different in types, including armed assaults, bombings and hostage taking. In Pakistan, these attacks began in 2009 and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), with its conservative culture was the worst affected area, where mainly girls' schools were the targets of militants. Women in a conservative society are already marginalized and the extremist elements have further constrained their rights. According to the extremist's viewpoint, a woman's life is limited to the traditional roles where education is unnecessary and counterproductive. The customary norms also discourage female education and interpret it as a 'futile pastime.' The existing literature, focusing on gender disparity in the low enrolment of girls in schools, points out three main causes: tradition, poverty and extremism as hurdles in women's path to education. The religious extremists are deliberately keeping girls/women away from education. The paper explores the impact of violent extremism on educational facilities and a look into how it impedes the path of girls going to school.

Key Words: *Girls' schools, Extremism, Terrorist attacks, Traditional roles, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*

Introduction

In the contemporary world, rising waves of extremism and terrorism, with diverse dimensions, pose the biggest threat to mankind. The worldwide proliferation of terrorist attacks motivated by religious extremism, are raising concerns across all segments of society as a threat to human security. The War on Terror once again brought Pakistan at the forefront (Pakistan was the front-line state in the Afghan war) and it became an American ally in the US-led coalition for counter terrorism. Apart from the loss of human lives and economic resources, the war caused enormous damage to the social and cultural fabric of Pakistan and enhanced religious extremism, militancy and

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violence in the society. The socio-religious milieu of Northern Pakistan was directly influenced by extremism and terrorism, and no sphere of life was free from its impact. Women, a relegated gender in the patriarchal setting of the area, became victims to the prevailing circumstances. The war also led to the proliferation of *Jihadi* organizations, controlled by the Islamist militias, which directly controlled the region under their influence. It was reported that women employees of international NGO's were forced to wear the veil (*burqa*) and were prohibited or discouraged from working away from their homes. Girls' schools were under direct threat from militants who threatened female teachers as well. Video/music shops and barbershops were either closed or destroyed, showing an extremist approach.¹

Female literacy rate in Pakistan is still quite low, ranking it in the bottom ten countries of the world and such practices have further worsened the ranking. Above it, poverty has kept 5.4 million children (aged 7-12) out of schools; girls constituting 62 percent compared to boys who are five percent.² According to a report of the UN, about two third of girls have not been enrolled in any school, whereas 55 percent of adults are unable to read or write, thus increasing the illiterate population. The overall female literacy rate is 25 percent.³

Definitions of Extremism

Extremism and militancy are two inseparable terms. However, it is pertinent to differentiate between the two. Terrorism is a physical act while extremism is related to a mindset. Terrorism resorts to violence or threat of violence in order to accomplish religious, political or ideological objectives. Extremism means having beliefs and support for ideas that are considered unreasonable and unacceptable by most people. Extremists forcefully preach and convince others to follow their thoughts. The term extreme is taken from the Latin words *extremus*, which means far from the centre. Metaphorically, an extreme meant behaviour and ideas, which are not in conformity with the mainstream, particularly in the political arena.⁴ A study by Kornilov (2011) explained that the first use of this term was found in the statements related to theory of the state. In the middle of the 19th century, the terms extremism and extremist began to be used extensively by the press in England. The Civil War

¹ Magnus Marsden, "Women, Politics and Islamism in Northern Pakistan," *Modern Asian Studies* 42, no. 23 (2008): 405.

² "If You're a Girl in Pakistan: What are Your Chances of going to school," *ABC NEWS*, October 7, 2013. <https://abcnews.go.com/International/girl-pakistan-chances-school/story?id=20475108>.

³ "Nearly three quarters of Pakistani girls not in school," *Dawn*, December 12, 2012.

⁴ Josie Ryan, "What language tells us about changing attitudes to extremism," *The Conversation*, August 31, 2017. <https://theconversation.com/what-language-tells-us-about-changing-attitudes-to-extremism-80789>.

(1861-1865) in the USA introduced these concepts as the hardliners in warring parties (Northern and Southern States) called each other extremists. In France, the term extremism began to be used during the World War I (1914 - 1918) when the confrontation started between the left-wing and the right-wing political forces, which continued for several decades.⁵ The Macmillan English Dictionary defines an extremist as one who "tend to have political or religious ideas that are considered extremely unreasonable by the most of the people."⁶ According to another definition, extremism is a commitment to extreme views and actions usually political.⁷ Merriam-Webster dictionary defines extremism as "the quality or state of being extreme."⁸ The Greenwood Encyclopaedia of International Relations defines extremism as "immoderation in policy or in one's intellectual political or social opinions and judgments."⁹ Oxford English Dictionary defines extremism "opposed to moderate."¹⁰ Shanghai Convention called extremism "an act, aimed at the forcible seizure of power or forcible retention of power, as well as a violent change of the constitutional system of the state and a violent encroachment upon public security...as well as illegal armed formations and participation in them."¹¹ After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the UN Security Council's Resolution 1373 (September 28, 2001) stated, "the Security Council ... is deeply concerned that in the various regions of the world, the acts of terrorism are more likely to occur, motivated by intolerance or extremism."¹²

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the terms terrorism and extremism have become abused terms and are associated with Islamic *jihad*. No doubt, religious extremism has existed throughout the human history, but it appears to have become surprisingly strong at the end of the last millennium.¹³ Viewing the current scenario, it seems that extremist groups have no concern for Islam and its fundamental teachings. Quite the contrary, they are working with their

⁵ Diana B. Baisagatova, Saken T. Kemelbekovb, Diana A. Smagulovaa and Aigul S. Kozhamberdiyeva, "Correlation of Concepts 'Extremism' and 'Terrorism' in countering the financing of Terrorism and Extremism," *International Journal of Environmental and Science Education*, 11, no. 13 (2016), 5908. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1115522.pdf>(accessed January 10, 2017).

⁶ *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2nd, ed., (Oxford: Macmillan Edition, 2007).

⁷ Baisagatova et. al., "Correlation of Concepts," 5908.

⁸ *Merriam Webster Online Dictionary*, s. v. " Extremism, "http://www.merriam-webster.

⁹ *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of International Relations*, Vol:1. "Cathal J. Nolan."

¹⁰ *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹¹ Baisagatova et. al., "Correlation of Concepts," 5909.

¹² UN Security Council Resolution 1373, September 28, 2001, www.un.org/.../United%20Nations%20Security%20Council%20Resolution%201373.

¹³ Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (London: Blackwell, 1997), 13.

own perspective, ignoring religious teachings and are deviating from it. It appears that mostly these people have reverted to the pre-Islamic darkness of ignorance in applying extreme ways towards their loyalty to groups, clans and tribes.

Linking extremism with religion has become common and supporters of such views and ideas have existed throughout human history. In conservative societies, diverse restrictions are imposed in the name of religion. Many Christian communities, Zionist groups, orthodox Buddhist associations, Hindu extremists and radical elements in Muslim societies made religion an instrument for achieving their specific objectives, which would have otherwise been difficult to gain. Looking at such manifestations, a few commonalities are visible among these elements like the opposition of liberalism, claim of purity and intermingling state authority with the religious one for occupation of political power. Maltreatment of weaker segments of society and prejudices against other creeds and beliefs are also their common feature. Religious extremists and fundamentalists maintain hierarchical order where decisions are made by perceived authority, which are in the form of sacred messages that are not challenged.¹⁴

In September 2007, the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) conducted a survey and inquired about the meaning of religious fundamentalism (extremism) from more than 1,600 gender activists. The survey revealed that 49 percent were either uncertain or rejected the phrase for different reasons including feeling that it emphasized negative stereotypes and 'targets Muslims in particular or it is too jargonistic' while 51 per cent of the respondents opined positively, taking it as useful in their work.¹⁵

Claudio, a philosopher and gender activist, mentioned that religious extremism poses a threat to gender rights and women's 'physical integrity' as they are physically tortured for control of their bodies. In several Asian societies, women are granted a broad range of rights through domestic and international laws, but they are on paper and scarcely fully exercised. The traditional settings of these societies keep women away from the decision-making process, restricting their roles and curtailing their emancipation in comparison to their male counterparts.¹⁶ For example, during the Taliban era in Afghanistan, extremist policies were enforced in the name of religion and

¹⁴ David Domke, *God Willing?: Political Fundamentalism in the White House, the 'War on Terror' and the Echoing Press* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 119.

¹⁵ Cassandra Balchin, *Exposed: Ten Myths about Religious Fundamentalism* (Toronto: AWID, 2008). <http://www.awid.org/Library/Exposed-Ten-myths-about-religious-fundamentalisms>.

¹⁶ Sylvia Estrada Claudio, "Sanctifying Moral Tyranny: Religious Fundamentalisms and the Political Disempowerment of Women," in *Religious Fundamentalism and their Gendered Impacts in Asia*, ed. Andrea Fleschenberg and Sylvia Estrada Claudio (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2010).

these policies not only restricted women movements, but also denied them freedom, suppressing their role in society through draconian laws. It is ironic that reassertion of an ideology of past is nothing, but to marginalise women and as it occurs in all conservative societies from Kabul to Cambridge.¹⁷ Keeping in view the phenomena of extremism, it is difficult to construct a shared definition of extremism. A more useful approach can be looking at the practices of the religious extremists rather than finding a clear-cut definition.

Religious extremism encircles every sphere of a woman's domestic and social life, including education. Constraining women's role, denying identities, depriving them of rights, creating insecurity, harassing sexually and controlling them physically remain central to pseudo religious extremist practices. Analysis of power relations between men and women at the micro level of society indicates that women are being victimized at domestic level as well as facing certain barriers at global level, due to prevailing notion of masculinity. Imbalance in relations arises due to inequality of power, particularly in a gender-based conflict. In such a situation, males attempt to subdue females either in groups or as individuals. Their aim is to govern their actions and control their decisions. Women are taken as the 'weaker sex' in the hierarchy of power relations. The 'powerful sex' enjoys more freedom of action as compared to those whose options and opportunities are limited and social norms and culture weakens them further. Due to these practices, women have to face socioeconomic problems, labour exploitation, gender discrimination, honour killings, acid attacks and above all extremism in developing societies.¹⁸

Culture of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

KPK is the third largest province of Pakistan in terms of population. It is located in the northwestern region of Pakistan. Its former name was the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), commonly known as *Sarhad* (frontier). It shares an international border with Afghanistan and the people living on both sides of the border belong to the same tribes, living on one side while having relatives and jobs on the other side. This affinity has brought KPK under direct influence of the Afghan culture. These cultural similarities have denied empowerment to women in the tribal setting where the society is conservative. Impacts of cultural traditions, religious teaching and gender prejudices have reduced the women's status, generating gender discrimination. Tracing the link between extremism and culture, Elaine Pressman explores "extremism to be a culturally relative term in that extremist beliefs are dependent on the cultural perspective since the person who holds views which (have been) considered to

¹⁷ Kavita Ramdas, "Feminists and Fundamentalists," *Current History*, 105, no. 689 (March 2006).

¹⁸ Laura Christina Macedo Piosiadlo, Rosa Maria Godoy Serpa da Fonseca and Rafaela Gessner, "Subordination of Gender: Reflecting on the Vulnerability to Domestic Violence against Women," October-December, 2014. <http://www.redalyc.org/pdf/1277/127732789026.pdf>.

be extreme within another cultural context or time may not be considered to hold extremist beliefs within another cultural context or time.”¹⁹

Furthermore, economic underdevelopment and poverty have reduced a woman's position. Besides, the patriarchal setting has given control to men for administrating women's roles. Interpretation of familial relations is often derived from the Holy Quran, strengthening it with tribal code '*Pakhtunwali*',²⁰ which is a hybridized compromise of religion and a tribal code of masculinity. It mostly negates female rights.²¹ This prevailing cultural environment has made women exceptionally vulnerable to abuse, exposing state's failure to ensure their rights. Islam delivers a message that seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim, but in conservative societies, it is being denied to women by cultural laws.

In the 1980s, Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan gave birth to extremism in the region, which was due to a process, encompassing socio-political change under the influence of jihadi culture and transformation in the perception of the people, considering war against the Soviets as a religious duty. Pakistan, being a front-line state in the Afghan war, was equally affected by it. The war gave birth to a generation of 'Jihadists' in Pakistan and Afghanistan, propagating religious extremism. Moreover, Islamization by General M. Zia-ul-Haq, the former president of Pakistan, strengthened this affect. The Afghan Jihad brought enforcement of rigid policies, particularly regarding women's freedom. The *Mujahideen* (warriors of faith) paved the path for the emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan. After consolidating their power, the Taliban imposed draconian laws and curtailed women's role, denying rights to them. Limited access was given to women in different areas including education. Girls' schools were closed down in Kabul, which had been an area of liberal traditions and women were forced to wear a veil. After the fall of Taliban regime, the pictures of Afghan women celebrating their freedom by throwing their veils fascinated the West and the US, but more amazing was the role of those women who reopened schools amid the debris and started teaching children. Throwing away the veil is not a new phenomenon as Queen

¹⁹ Muhammad Feyyaz, "Youth Extremism in Pakistan – Magnitude Channels, Resident Spheres and Response," *Defense Against Terrorism Review* 6. no. 1 (Spring & Fall 2014): 65.

²⁰ Pashtunwali or Pakhtunwali is a non-written ethical code about tribal traditions, which is following by Pashtun people. It is a system of law and governance that began in prehistoric times is valid even today, especially in rural tribal areas. It is a set of customs and manners of the Afghan tribes. It was originated in the pre-Islamic era. Every Pashtun feels pride in following it either he lives in Afghanistan, Pakistan or any other place. Aftab Yasmeen Ali, "Understanding Pashtunwali," *The Nation*, August 6, 2013. <http://nation.com.pk/>.

²¹ H. Ahmed-Ghosh, "A History of Women in Afghanistan: Lessons learnt for the Future or Yesterdays and Tomorrow" *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 4, no. 3 (2013).

Soraya, wife of King Amanullah (1919-29), took a bold step to bring a revolutionary change in the country. She removed the veil from her face during a public speech and the wives of the officers followed her, taking away their veils. Later the queen used to wear a wide brimmed hat in public gatherings, promoting liberal traditions in the society. She opened the first girls' school and a hospital in Kabul, while her mother launched the first women's magazine in the country, which featured stories of brave and successful women from history and their elevated place in society. Soraya was also the minister of education. She managed to send a young woman of 18 years old to Turkey for higher education in 1928. This happened for the first time in the history of the country.²² This was a highly bold step in a traditional society with its conservative approach.

Militancy, Extremism and the Role of Sufi and Fazlullah regarding Girls' Education

Following Taliban's policies, the religious extremists in KPK publicly opposed girls' education. These elements looked down upon education, taking it as an intrigue of the West or state-led bodies. They not only threatened the female students by attacking their schools, but also prevented health workers from performing their duties. Observing this situation, a gender activist, Sudduth commented, "The fundamentalist elements launched campaigns against polio vaccination, and called girls' education as un-Islamic."²³ These observations surfaced when the terrorists attacked girls' schools and threatened female health workers in hospitals. Girls were prevented from going to schools in the areas under their control or influence. South Waziristan Agency was the first area where the militants destroyed a girls' school.²⁴ They had also blown up many girls' schools before the eruption of fighting with security forces. They were not hesitant to target the schools even during the fighting.

Sufi Mohammad, a Taliban leader and founder of the *Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi* (1992), was the first person who publicly called for the implementation of Sharia (Islamic) law in 1994. Sufi, along with his son-in-law Fazlullah, tried to enforce Sharia laws, restricting women's education and closing down the girls' schools. Fazlullah established 30 illegal FM radio stations to communicate his message to like minded groups and allies. He was known as 'Radio Mullah.' He used to broadcast extremist views from these

²² "Leading Lady Spraya Tarzi: The Afghan Queen," *Dawn*, January 29, 2012. <https://www.dawn.com/news/691638>.

²³ Jennifer Sudduth, "CEDAW's Flaws: A Critical Analysis of why CEDAW is Failing to Protect a Woman's Right to Education in Pakistan," *Journal of Law & Education*, 2009.

²⁴ Ali A. Naqvi, S. Z. Khan & Z. Ahmad, "The Impact of Militancy on Education in FATA," *Tigah, A Journal of Peace & Development*, 2(2012).

radio stations and also advocated a ban on female education. During July 2007, Fazlullah declared jihad against military forces of Pakistan to take revenge of the siege of the Red Mosque (*Lal Masjid*) in Islamabad.²⁵ His *Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi* (TNSM) was reported to be one of the founding groups of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), along with the other groups and at the time of its formation, Fazlullah, was formally appointed in Swat as the Taliban commander.²⁶ He motivated hundreds of people and acquired new recruits for enforcement of Sharia law forcefully. Doing all this, he followed Sufi Muhammad, who took ten thousand *jihadis* to Afghanistan to fight against the US-led forces in 2001.²⁷

Sufi was imprisoned when President Musharraf banned terrorist organizations in January 2002, criticizing religious extremism after the terrorist attacks on the Indian parliament in December 2001. Sufi was involved in acts of militancy and destroying girls' schools. However, he managed to come out of prison in April 2008, signing an agreement with the government on not engaging in the heinous act of schools' destruction and other violent activities. Sufi also promised to maintain peace in the militancy-hit areas. He also agreed to surrender, along with his militant allies, in lieu of acceptance of his terms and conditions for enforcement of *Shariah* law. For this purpose, an official deal was made with him on February 15, 2009, but he immediately rejected the deal and renounced it formally in April 2009. He accused the government of violation of the deal and not establishing for *Shariat* courts.²⁸

In December 2007, Fazlullah gained administrative control of Swat valley and established Islamic courts. He enforced his hard-line interpretation of Sharia law and launched a violent campaign against female education. On January 15, 2009, girls were banned from going to school out rightly through an edict. About 900 schools were either closed or stopped enrollment of

²⁵ The Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) was founded in 1965. During the Afghan war, the mosque was frequently used by the Pakistan military and government. Imam (leader) of the mosque and General Zia-ul-Haq were closed-friends. After the Afghan war, the mosque continued its working as a center for Islamic teaching and thousands of male and female students had been residing in neighbouring seminaries. It was reported that young students were being trained for jihad in Kashmir or any other area. Training camps were also established by the terrorist organisations like Al-Qaeda. In July 2007, Lal Masjid Operation was carried out by army, targeting clerics and students. Qandeel Siddique, "The Red Mosque Operation and its Impact on the Growth of the Pakistani Taliban," *Norwegian Defence Research Establishment*, October 8, 2008. <https://www.ffi.no/no/Rapporter/08-01915.pdf>.

²⁶ Q. Siddique, "The Red Mosque Operation".

²⁷ Rabia Zafar, "Development and the Battle for Swat, Alnakhlah," *The Fletcher School Online Journal for Issues Related to Southwest Asia and Islamic Civilization* (2011).

²⁸ HRCP Fact Finding Mission, "Swat: Paradise Regained?" (July 2010), 35-37. <http://www.hrcp-web.org/pdf/Swat-Paradise-Regained.pdf>.

female-students. This decree snatched the right of education from 120,000 girls and remaining were 40,000 only.²⁹ Moreover, closure of schools and the violent campaign against female education deprived 8,000 female teachers of their jobs in Swat Valley.³⁰ These events were protested nationwide. Under the pressure and protest of the people, he amended the edict, allowing girls to 'attend school up to grade five.'³¹ Over the following months, the military launched 'Operation Black Thunderstorm'. Its aim was to free the area from the militants' control. The operation started on April 26, 2009. In post-operation period, attempts were made by the military and the government to bring back girls to school, restoring the confidence of both teachers and parents. But a large number of female-students were not prepared to join the schools out of fear of terrorist attacks. A Fact-Finding team of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) portrayed the tragic situation, showing the dismal state of affairs in Taliban-controlled areas, which were the worst-hit zones. Access of girls to school was affected disproportionately and most girls' schools were either destroyed or damaged by the militants' bombing. If school-buildings remained intact, parents were doubtful about the safety of their daughters and were reluctant to send them back in their schools.³²

Destruction of Girls' Schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

From 1970 to 2013, about 3,400 educational institutions were attacked by terrorists in 110 countries. The ratio of these attacks was 2.7 percent of the total worldwide attacks in this period. In Pakistan, from 2009 to 2013, this ratio was higher than any other country of the world, and the north-western area was its main target.³³ Apart from Pakistan, educational institutions in Afghanistan, Colombia, Somalia, Sudan and Syria were also victim of terrorism.³⁴ These countries had experienced more than one thousand attacks on schools, universities, teachers and students. These attacks target the persons and facilities of the institutions, which were used for military

²⁹ "Taliban bans education for girls in Swat Valley," *The Washington Times*, January 5, 2009. <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jan/05/taliban-bans-education-for-girls-in-pakistans-swat/>.

³⁰ HRCP Fact Finding Mission, "Swat: Paradise Regained."

³¹ Baela Raza Jamil, "Girls Education in Swat," *South Asian Journal*, April-June 2009: 31.

³² HRCP Fact Finding Mission, "Swat : Paradise Regained," 24.

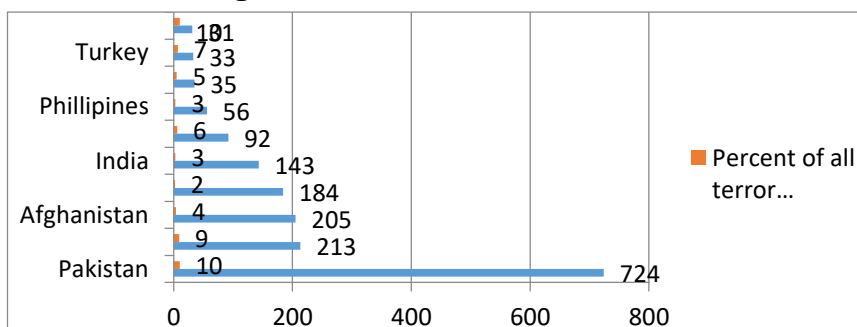
³³ Erin Miller, "Background Report : Terrorist Attacks on Educational Institution, *National Consortium Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism*, December, 2014. <https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/Peshawar%20School%20Background%20Report%20December%202014.pdf>.

³⁴ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attacks (GCPEA), *Country Profiles: Pakistan*, 2014. <http://www.protectingeducation.org/country-profile/pakistan>.

purposes. The most dangerous country was Colombia, where 140 teachers lost their lives and a thousand received death threats during 2009-2012. A report on the killing of teachers pointed out that in remote areas, teachers and schools were the only signs of state authority in the face of powerful armed non-state groups, who alleged them of collaboration with the enemy.”³⁵ In Swat, education was also the target of extremism, challenging the writ of the government.

³⁵ Sarah Marsh, “Targets for Terror : The Shocking Data on School and University Attacks,” *The Guardian*, April 30, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/datablog/2015/apr/30/terror-data-school-university-attacks-peshawar>.

Terrorism against Educational Institutions 2004-2013



Source: University of Maryland analyzed data of the Global Terrorism Database. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>

In Pakistan, terrorist attacks on educational institutions increased in the aftermath of the operations of the Red Mosque and Swat. *Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan* (TTP) was taken as the prime perpetrator in these attacks despite the fact that many attackers were unidentified and there were other sources of tension as well. In the beginning, these attacks mainly targeted educational institutions, destroying the infrastructure. These were non-lethal in nature as their primary objective appeared to be the disruption of education, particularly of girls. Mostly the buildings were vacant at the time of attack; therefore, no loss of life occurred.

According to a BBC Report, more than 500 schools were demolished by the TTP in the tribal areas from 2009 to 2013. This situation not only dissuaded half a million students from going to schools, but also took the lives of many teachers. It was also reported that more than 838 attacks were launched, which destroyed hundreds of schools from 2009 to 2012. This was a higher number than any other country of the world. In the same period, 15 teachers were shot dead and eight were injured while four female teachers became victim of acid attacks.³⁶

In January 2009, five schools of Mingora in Swat Valley were destroyed by the militants, which resulted in a worldwide protest, particularly in the Western world, which condemned the tragic event as subject to international law and demanded the safety of children and women. The French ministry took a hard stance and insisted that Islamabad take operative measures to secure gender rights in the region. It stated, "It is, however, by the acknowledgment of the dignity of women that this great country (Pakistan) will achieve peace and development. Pakistani authorities have to do everything they can to protect the fundamental rights of women and children as recognized by international

³⁶ GCPEA, "Country Profile : Pakistan,".

law.”³⁷ France supported Pakistan against the evils of fanaticism, terrorism, extremism and militancy.

Despite nationwide protest and condemnation at the international level, the militants continued their practices. Two female teachers were killed in Bajaur Agency on November 4, 2009, despite high security alert in the area.³⁸ Killing of females at the hands of militants seems to be motivated by their stance against education and women working outside their homes. However, other reasons were also there, including use of school buildings by the military as its base.

From 2009 to 2011, about 758 schools were destroyed by the militants in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and neighbouring tribal areas, including 640 schools in Malakand Division. Among these schools, 477 were partially damaged and 166 were totally destroyed. In addition, 36 schools in Peshawar, Hangu, Bannu, Lakki Marwat and other areas were destroyed while the number of damaged schools was 82.³⁹ Mushtaq Jadoon, Education Secretary of KPK, issued a statement while talking with the media, “Most of the damaged schools were rehabilitated by the Pakistan Army and different NGOs. However, the schools completely destroyed are still awaiting reconstruction. Unfortunately, when a school is rebuilt, it is destroyed again by militants. However, we will not lose hope and spread education to all corners of the province.”⁴⁰

In 2011, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Federal Administrative Tribal Areas (FATA) collectively lost 1,600 schools. These schools were either demolished or partially damaged. This devastation affected 3, 71,604 girls out of 7, 21,392 students.⁴¹ According to another report of FATA Directorate of Education (2011), 505 schools were demolished or devastated, while 108 girls’ schools and 542 boys’ primary schools became dysfunctional due to militancy and the threat of terrorism.⁴² In the same year, Pakistan saw more than 135 attacks at

³⁷ France in Pakistan, “Destruction of five Schools in Swat Valley: Statement by the Foreign Minister for European Affairs,” January 20, 2009. <https://pk.ambafrance.org/Pakistan-destruction-of-five>.

³⁸ Anwarullah Khan, “Militants kill Two Women Teachers in Bajaur,” *Dawn*, November 5, 2005.

³⁹ Naveed Ahsan, “Schools vs Militants: An Overview of the Situation in KPK and FATA,” *Conflict Monitoring Centre*, January, 20, 2013. <https://cmcpk.wordpress.com/2013/01/20/schools-vs-militants-an-overview-of-the-situation-in-kpk-and-fata>.

⁴⁰ Islamuddin Sajid, “Over 3000 Schools were destroyed in Militancy, Disasters: Official,” *The Express Tribune*, June 15, 2012. <https://tribune.com.pk>.

⁴¹ S. Younis, “Militancy Fallout: 7 Lakh Students deprived of Education in KP, 2011.” *Associated Press of Pakistan*. http://www.app.com.pk/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=134087&Itemid=200. (accessed, January 15, 2014).

⁴² Islamuddin Sajid, “The Woeful State of Education in KPK, Fata,” *The Express Tribune*, May, 3, 2011. <https://tribune.com.pk>.

different educational institutions. Out of 76 attacks, 53 took place in FATA and KPK.⁴³ In Charsaddah and Peshawar districts, ten and seventeen public schools were destroyed respectively. Many girls' schools remained closed due to threats. On March 09, 2011, a school was blown up in Darra Adam Khel while another school was destroyed in Nowshera. A girls' school of Mardan was also bombed in November 2011. All such attacks did nothing but deprive children of their places of learning, as hundreds of schools became non-functional. Moreover, school children and madrassa students were recruited by the militants for suicide bombings. There were also targeted killings of teachers and academics.⁴⁴

In July 2012, a newly constructed school was attacked while another girls' school became the target of militants in Swabi district in August. In Swat, a school girl named Malala Yousafzai became the target of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) on October 9, 2012. She was accompanied by two school girls on her way to school in her school pick-up van. Ehsanullah Ehsan, a TTP spokesman, took responsibility for this attack as he himself admitted and alleged Malala was working against the Taliban and propagating secular values. Malala was identified by a gunman before being shot in the head and neck.⁴⁵ She was a 15-year-old school girl of Swat Valley, who raised her voice against the atrocities of the militants, highlighting their heinous character and contempt towards girls' education. The militants alleged Malala was writing an anonymous blog for the BBC against the Taliban, highlighting the life of a school girl under their control. She was also blamed for launching a campaign for female education, which aroused TTP's anger against her. Afterwards, the military ousted this group from the valley. All this made Malala an icon of education worldwide. The UN General Assembly invited her to New York and she addressed the Assembly as the representative of youth in July 2013. In her address to the UN, she advocated the need of education for the poor school girls of Pakistan and asked for "free, mandatory education around the world." She also stated that her goal was to educate females "because they are suffering the most."⁴⁶

⁴³ GCPEA, Country Profile: Pakistan.

⁴⁴ Ludovica Iaccino, "Peshawar School Massacre: Girls-hating Taliban Attacks 1,000 'Un-Islamic' Pakistan Schools in last five years," *International Business Times*, December 16, 2014. <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/peshawar-school-massacre-girl-hating-taliban-attack-1000-un-islamic-pakistan-schools-last-1479821>.

⁴⁵ Fazal Khaliq, "Malala Attack: Government finally realizes there were two other victims," *The Express Tribune*, October, 14, 2012. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/451332/malala-attack-govt-finally-realises-there-were-two-other-victims/>.

⁴⁶ Valerie Strauss, "The Amazing Thing Malala Plans to say if a Taliban Gunman Approaches her Again," *Washington Post*, October 10, 2014. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answersheet/wp/2014/10/10/the->

The annual report of Conflict Monitoring Centre (CMC) (2012) highlighted that 81 schools were blown up by the militants and mainly girls' schools were their target in the area. In FATA, 29 schools were destroyed, whereas 52 schools were attacked in KPK. The worst-hit districts were Charsadda and Swabi where militants destroyed 10 and 13 schools respectively. Nowshera and Mardan districts were the next victim as eight and five school-buildings were destroyed respectively. In Tank district, one school was destroyed while in Hangu and Dera Ismail Khan each, two schools were demolished. Kohat and Laki Marwat were equal targets, where eight (four in each) schools were destroyed. Mohmand Agency and Khyber agency of FATA were the worst affected parts where sixteen and nine schools were destroyed respectively. Bajour Agency, North Waziristan Agency and South Waziristan Agency each lost one school to extremism.⁴⁷

The situation did not change and militants continued their attacks on schools. In March 2013, a girls' school was blown up in Lakki Marwat while a boys' school was attacked in Mohmand Agency in June. A girls' school of Bannu was blown up in July 2013 with a 10-kg explosive device and in August, another school was attacked in Mohmand Agency. Hussaini Madrassa in Peshawar was also attacked in this year. On January 2014, a school in Hangu was attacked by a suicide bomber, countered by a brave student named Aitzaz Hasan, who lost his life but saved the school by killing the attacker. However, the militants did not stop their atrocious act and only after one month burnt down another school. In Bajaur agency, a girls' school was again destroyed on September 8, 2014, after its reconstruction. It was first destroyed on International Literacy Day in 2010. In Bara, a girls' school was attacked in October 2014.⁴⁸ While a girls' school was blown up in Charsada on November 14, 2014, in the same city, an NGO school was attacked on December 15, 2014.⁴⁹

The most heinous event happened on December 16, 2014 when the school children of Army Public School, Peshawar became the victim of terrorism. The militants attacked the school and opened fire, which killed 134 children and nine staff members. This attack left 118 students injured along

amazing-thing-malala-plans-to-say-if-a-taliban-gunman-approaches-her-again/?utm_term=f193cd1ac1b7.

⁴⁷ Naveed Ahsan, "Schools vs Militants: An Overview of the Situation in KPK and FATA," *Conflict Monitoring Centre*, January 20, 2013. <https://cmcpk.wordpress.com/2013/01/20/schools-vs-militants-an-overview-of-the-situation-in-kpk-fata>.

⁴⁸ "Militant Attacks on School in Pakistan," *The Tribune Express*, December 16, 2014. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/807617/timeline-militant-attacks-on-schools-in-pakistan/>.

⁴⁹ Rana Muhammad Usman, "Will Pakistan see more School Attacks?" *Dawn*, May 12, 2016.

with three teachers.⁵⁰ Prior to this event, the average death ratio of lethal attacks on educational institutions was 0.8 percent as compared to 2.3 percent for all other types of attacks.⁵¹ Previously, school buildings were the target of militants at the time when they were unoccupied and the number of casualties was low.

Responding to this fatal attack, the government launched the 20-point National Action Plan in December 2014. The plan underlined the need to adopt a political discourse to counter religious militancy. The government took different initiatives to control the situation, but destruction of schools did not stop. On the first anniversary of the martyrs of APS, Peshawar, the parliament was informed that 360 schools were destroyed in FATA, 166 in North Waziristan Agency, 139 in Khyber Agency and 55 in South Waziristan Agency during 2015.⁵²

In January 2015, two girls' primary schools in Swabi were attacked while two boys' schools were blown up by the militants in Bajur Agency on June 17 and July 5, 2015 respectively. On October 29, 2015, an aerial firing was opened on two girls' schools in Charsada and Shabqadar separately. The most recent event of students' killing was not against a school, but Bacha Khan University in Charsadda became the target of militancy. On January 20, 2016, four terrorists killed 21 people, including students and teachers. These people were gathered for a poetry recital to commemorate the death anniversary of Bacha Khan, the leader of KPK whom the university is named after. It was reported that the mastermind of APS attack, Khalifa Omar Mansoor, commander of banned TTP (Geedar Group), was the person who planned this attack, while based in Achin district of Afghanistan.⁵³ Later he was killed in a drone strike in Afghanistan. Both attacks (APS and Bachah Khan University) caused a huge cost in terms of human lives. During this period, 450 persons were killed in Pakistan, which was the highest number, while the next was Russia with 361 casualties.⁵⁴

Across the Swat Valley, the militants' campaign of pulverizing the education system began in 2008 and forced the government to step in to continue education in the affected region. In spite of the combined efforts of

⁵⁰ Rameesha Qurashi, A. Gulraiz and Z. Shahzad, "An Analysis of Media's Role: Case Study of Army Public School (APS) Peshawar Attack," *Social Communication* 2 (2016), file:///C:/Users/HPGv66/Downloads/An_Analysis_of_Medias_Role_Case_Study_of_Army_Pub.pdf.

⁵¹ Erin Miller, "Terrorist Attacks on Educational Institutions" December, 2014. <https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/Peshawar%20School%20Background%20Report%20December%202014.pdf>.

⁵² Azam Khan, "360 Schools were Destroyed in 2015," *Express Tribune*, December 17, 2015, <https://tribune.com.pk>.

⁵³ Ismail Khan, "APS massacre mastermind killed in US drone strike," *Dawn*, July 12, 2016.

⁵⁴ Usman, "Will Pakistan See More School Attacks?" *Dawn*, May 14, 2016.

the military and civilian government, it still appears that the radical and violent interpretation of religious teachings has not yet stopped.

In KPK, there are many 'tented schools,' as their buildings have been destroyed. These schools are uncomfortable and hardly keep out the whips of the cold winds of winter. The little girls of the valley shared their feelings about the cold weather, sitting on the debris of their school, which was now situated in a tent and unable to compete the severe weather. The tented school setup was established on a temporary basis due to lack of time and funding, but severe weather conditions foiled it. Besides the 'tented schools,' double shifts were also introduced in schools to continue education. The government worked for the repair of schools and tried to continue the system without interruption. However the attendance remained poor as many schools were still under the threat due to continued danger of returning of the Taliban laws. The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (Peshawar) estimated in its preliminary damage assessment report that US\$ 68.1 million were required to reconstruct the schools.⁵⁵

Causes of Low Enrollment in KPK and FATA

Enrollment in girls' schools is discouraging in KPK and FATA. A high drop-out rate exists between grade one and two and overall ratio of drop outs is 70 percent in girls as compared to boys, which is 43 percent. Dropout rate varies from one area to another. Those areas that are rural or more exposed to the TTP have low enrollment with high dropout. The dropout rate of school girls of the age 6-14 years of poor families is 76 percent as compared to boys of 46 percent. In 2011, net enrollment in primary education was 72 percent, secondary education had 35 percent and tertiary institutions had eight percent.⁵⁶ It also pointed out that young Pakistani girls have not been enrolled in schools for the last three quarters. The dropout ratio is quite depressing in rural areas where the average education that a girl receives in schools is one year as compared to boys of wealthy families living in urban areas, who attend school for ten years.⁵⁷ Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2012) pointed out that 5.1 million Pakistani children were not enrolled in any school.⁵⁸ This number is alarming and ranking of Pakistan is the second highest

⁵⁵ I. Khattak, "Pakistan Struggles to keep Education System Intact amid Militants' Bombings," *Central Asia Online*, (February 25, 2010), centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/.../pakistan/.../feature-03?

⁵⁶ GCPEA, "Education Under Attack 2014, Country Profiles: Pakistan." <http://www.protectingeducation.org/country-profile/pakistan>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Aroosa Shaukat, "Despite having Second Worst Record for Children out of School, UNESCO Optimistic," *The Express Tribune*, October 24, 2012. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/456334/despite-having-second-worst-record-for-children-out-of-school-unesco-optimistic/>.

country in the world, where children are away from schools. In terms of population, Pakistan is at sixth number in the most populated countries facing the problem of illiteracy.⁵⁹

Apart from extremism, several other factors are keeping a large number of children out of schools. These include poverty (cost), social attitudes, poor teaching, unavailability of female teachers, corporal punishment, location of schools, domestic duties, lack of mobility and unavailability of accommodation. Poverty and environmental hurdles lead the majority of the enrolled students to leave school without completing the full course of study while teachers' unavailability and poor infrastructure equally impinge upon the quality of education. The nature of the curriculum and division of school systems in private, public and madrassa system are also affecting the education. The cost of education for poor families is un-affordable even in public schools. It is observed by many studies that female education has suffered sometimes due to perceived opportunity cost. Increase in fee and other expenditures cause dropouts among girls as their chances of future earning are nominal while boys are not affected.⁶⁰ There is great disparity in the number of schools for boys and girls and lower number of girls' schools is a big cause of low enrolment. The heavy dropout rate at primary level discourages higher education and in the absence of advanced degrees, there is a shortage of female teachers. The traditional environment does not encourage teachers from settled areas to serve in schools located in remote areas. Other social factors like early marriage, tribal hostilities, travelling hazards and cultural taboos are equally impeding the path of female education.

A report by UNESCO about the education of girls of poor families ranked Pakistan as the least developed country of the region. It stated, "the poor girls in Pakistan are twice as likely to be out of school as the poorest girls in India, almost three times as likely as the poorest girls in Nepal and around six times as likely as the poorest girls in Bangladesh."⁶¹

A college teacher of Mingora (Swat Valley) shared that the majority of students were male and out of 1000, only 300 were girls. The major reason of girls' are being deprived of education is poverty and conflict. Moreover, cultural norms are also a hurdle in their path due to societal biasness against educated and independent women. The tradition and practice of early

⁵⁹ U. Manzoor, "Over 800 Schools blown up in KPK & Fata," *Dawn*, January 27, 2013.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth M. King and Rebecca Winthrop, "Today's Challenges for Girls' Education," *Working Paper 90* (Brookings : Global Economy & Development, June 2015). <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Todays-Challenges-Girls-Educationv6.pdf>.

⁶¹ UNESCO, 'Global Monitoring Report', *Education For All*, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002325/232565e.pdf>.

marriages mar the prospects of girls' education and restrict their learning period.⁶²

Several studies have observed that attendance in schools is highly gender-imbalanced. The ratio of girls is only three percent among 5-9 years old while boys' ratio is 26 percent, several times higher. It is a known fact that four out of ten girls, at the age of 15 years, can read and write while this ratio in men is 70 percent. The reason for this disparity is an unsupportive atmosphere for girls' education and the patriarchal values of society. However, improvement is visible in girls' enrolment, but only at the primary level. At the secondary and higher level, the position is quite disappointing and girls' enrolment is only 29 percent.⁶³

Proliferation of *Deeni Madaris* (religious schools) is also one reason of low enrollment as they fulfil the need of boys' education. Majority of these boys are orphans, who have lost their parents and homes in conflict. The people of the area deliberately ignore the necessity of girls' educational institutions in the presence of these madrassas due to societal pressure amongst other restraints. NGOs are also discouraged from opening any girls' school, particularly foreign NGOs since there is a perception of distrustfulness attached to them. *Khwendo Kor* NGO became militants' target allegedly for educating and empowering females through opening community-based girls' schools. The NGO staff was not only threatened, but was also attacked and even grenades attack with.⁶⁴ This hostile environment finally forced them to close their services in the area.⁶⁵ The other NGOs working in the area also faced security threats and hindered from carrying out their task of educating females. Another reason was the uncooperative attitude of tribal elders, which was a continuous source of tension and fear for services and lives of NGO workers.⁶⁶ Mostly these NGOs engaged women either as employees or students

⁶² International Crisis Group, "Education Reform in Pakistan," *Asia Report No. 257*, (Brussels (Belgium): Crisis, June 23, 2014). <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/116000/asa330062002en.pdf>.

⁶³ Alexandra Raphael, "Gender Equality, Education, and Economic Development in Pakistan," *Journalist's Resource*, July 22, 2013. <http://journalistsresource.org/studies/international/human-rights/pakistan-women-equality-education-economic-development-research-roundup>.

⁶⁴ Riaz Ahmad, "Aid Workers Targeted?: Armed men Storm Khwendo Kor Office," *The Tribune*, April 21, 2013. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/538420/aid-workers-targeted-armed-men-storm-khwendo-kor-office/>.

⁶⁵ Jocelyn Richard, "Women in Northern Pakistan: Protected by Tribe, Territory or Taliban?," *UCL Human Rights Review* 3, 2010, 242. <http://www.heritage-science.ac.uk/human-rights/research/ucl-hrr/docs/hrreviewissue3/richard>.

⁶⁶ Amnesty International, "Pakistan: Insufficient Protection of Women," April 15, 2002, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/116000/asa330062002en.pdf>.

to improve their education and economic status. All this was conceived as opposite to prevailing conservative and cultural norms. This attitude does no good and is counterproductive as it slows down women's access to education and work.

Conclusion

Education is the basic need of a civilized society. It is essential for all human beings to acquire it irrespective of gender and identity, but unfortunately, girls' education is the prime target of militants in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The attacks on schools are even destroying the available infrastructure and forcefully depriving girls of education. The process of education has been disrupted by the destruction of schools as reconstruction of buildings takes time and enrolled students rarely return. In the traditional society of KPK, women's education is already a victim of traditional norms and countless issues. The militants are not only discouraging females from getting educated, but also preventing the teachers from educating them. Due to the prevailing environment, NGOs workers engaged in the education sector are facing threats. No doubt, arms make a nation victorious, but they cannot safeguard gender rights. However, force is useful for improving the plight of women. Change in societies occurs with the support of the people and the government, which is often tentative and slow. The tribal values adhered to by the people must maintain the standard of human rights as depriving women of their basic rights is not endorsed by any convention and charter. The traditions which the tribal people hold dear should be held up to the standard of human rights.

The government and the military need to work in a close relationship with tribal leaders to discover a solution to this 'non-negotiable issue.' No doubt, the state is already doing much against militancy and insurgency, but the rights of individuals cannot be sidelined in the interest of the state security. The end goal must be to improve the status of women and education achieved through a peaceful society. To get rid of terrorism and extremism requires a change in the workings and beliefs of the society, leading to a discourse that works for women's inclusion in decision-making. There is also need to change public and private policies, laws and ideas that affect women's position. A change in those norms that delegate women to a position of inferiority is essential, as moderation and rationality require practical efforts; merely rhetoric cannot dispose of them. Here are a few recommendations to improve the situation:

- Political reforms are required to improve the situation of law and order in the area.
- Education must be a priority of the government and people to change the mindset.

- The allocation of huge funds is required to repair and rebuild the schools, but ensuring their security is more important to avoid further destruction.
- Construction of new schools is the need of the hour and the government should provide a budget for new schools.
- Most of the schools do not have sufficient staff as per the need of students and the government must fulfill this deficiency.
- Female teachers demand to be posted near their home and in case of remote areas; accommodation and transport should be provided.
- Civil society, NGOs and tribal elders should step ahead and contribute to the local administration in their efforts to secure schools from militancy and promote education in tribal areas.
- The role of parents is important and they should be encouraged to send their daughters to school and help them in getting rid of the fear of militancy.

