

**What makes Pakistan Vulnerable to Violence? Analyzing the Determinants
(2001-2016)**

by

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Abstract

Violence or as termed in this study as Violent Extremism (VE) covers all forms of violence including terrorism (Extreme Violence, EV), political violence and religious and sectarian violence. Violence in any society is an indication of intolerance on the one hand and some systematic grievances on the other; including lack of education, low income and wide spread poverty and a broad range of political factors and events including type of government (civil or military), law and order and security situation, on-going military operations against militants, number of drone strikes on militants on their hide-outs and camps. In this research, while it is recognised that it is not always possible to clearly differentiate between the three different forms of violence, data are collected for the period 2001-16 from the most reliable existing sources, national and international, on the total number of violence related incidents and deaths and injuries resulting from the three main types of violent related acts and activities namely terrorism (EV), religious and sectarian and political causes.

Drawing on a careful yet detailed review of the literature, in which there are conflicting views and differences in opinion on the causes of violence in different countries and regions, we identify and collect data on the key social, economic and political factors that have been associated with acts of violence in the different studies.

After a detailed historical account of the rise of violent activities in Pakistan since independence in 1947 to place the issue in perspective, we analyse time series data for the period 2001-16 to track changes in the number of violence incidents and resulting casualties as well as the main explanatory variables (education, economic and political) to establish if an association between changes in trends in both set of variables can be discerned. This exercise is then extended to test

more rigorously this association through regression analysis. Both these exercise are also conducted at the district level separately to investigate further if a relationship exists between HDI levels in different districts and number of violence and resulting casualties in these districts.

While one must be careful to infer causality in relationships between the key variables given the period covered our results do show that it is possible with a fair degree of confidence to identify some of the key factors that played an important role in explaining the rise in violence during the period 2001-09 and the relative decline during 2010-16. Our main finding based on national data is that political factors broadly defined were an important contributory factor. However, educational levels or changes in these levels and economic factors including decline in economic growth were not significant causes for the changes in violent incidents during this period. However, when we conduct the exercise at the district level there is evidence that many of the districts, which witnessed high degree of violence, also had relatively very low HDI indicators.

We therefore conclude that Pakistan's vulnerability to violence during 2001-2016 was mainly driven mainly by political developments including foreign powers interventions that caused instability and worsened the law and order and security situation in the country rather than the educational and economic factors. However, the very low levels of HDI of some districts, which witnessed high degrees of violence, could have also been a contributory factor.

We would in the end also like to reiterate the need for more studies and analysis on this difficult yet challenging field so as to not only identify in greater detail the factors that are responsible for Pakistan's vulnerability to violence but also the interaction between the key variables including at the province, division, district and local level.