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Female Radicalization in Pakistan – A Case Study of Jamia Hafsa

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Introduction

- ▶ Female-radicalization-terrorism equation in Pakistan remains either an ‘exaggerated fact’ or a ‘conveniently ignored reality’.
- ▶ One line of reasoning perceives female religious seminaries estimated to be almost 2000, mentoring 236,000 girls, as a bedrock of Islamic radicalism leading to violent extremism and terrorism. While the other side, dismisses the undercurrents of female radicalism altogether.
- ▶ My argument is, reality is much more complex and contextual realities ranging from patriarchal culture, economic, educational and legal discrimination and exploitation of female agency needs to be registered.
- ▶ One needs to deconstruct this nexus from an ‘inside-out and outside-in’ approach focusing on the case of the *Jamia Hafsa* (a female seminary affiliated with the *Lal Masjid*) in Islamabad.

Jamia Hafsa Students (2007), Islamabad



Female Madrassa- Jamia Hafsa as a case study?

- ▶ *Jamia Hafsa* (a female seminary affiliated with the *Lal Masjid*) saw military action, 'Operation Silence' July 2007 - to restore the writ of the state in the heart of Islamabad.
- ▶ The stride of the female Islamic seminary, *Jamia Hafsa*, questioning the writ of the state on the ideational and institutional decisions following 9/11, is a reality.
- ▶ The imprint of the male counterpart, Maulana Abdul Aziz, and deployment of women including students as human shields and guards of the religion substantiates that: women are at times willing and unwilling agents of violence in the name of religion and ideology.
- ▶ It remains a vivid example of cracks within the state and society. The distrust between the vocal and aggressive minority (female madrassa students along with adjacent male *Lal Masjid* students) and the determined yet silent majority - remain to date.

Key Takeaways

- ▶ In Pakistan, female radicalization trends are manifest in their roles as ‘facilitator, fundraiser, instituter, silent spectator’ and an agent of moderating extremism and societal peace’.
- ▶ The central finding of this study is that female radicalization is a complex problem presenting many intricacies.
- ▶ The task of the national security managers is to tap the potential of women to reclaim a moderate and progressive Pakistan: Invest in female education & economic empowerment to build an equitable and secure eco-system





**Thank
You!!!**