

## PERCEPTIONS OF VIOLENCE AND VICTIMIZATION AMONG HAZARAS IN PAKISTAN

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***Abstract:** It has now been more than a decade that the incidents of violence related to Hazara community have come into limelight. A whole new generation of Hazaras is out there whose childhood has been marred with violence. Imagine the fate of progeny growing up in such an environment! This paper aims at finding out the probable causes and impact of the ongoing wave of violence – especially among youth. The paper endeavors to find out how Hazaras perceive violence done to them and whether or not this violence has affected their sectarian or ethnic orientations. The research also strives to identify the impact of this violence on the identity and religious associations of Hazaras along with the probable responses that can be expected from Hazaras, if the ongoing violence does not come to an end. Moreover, the role of state and its institutions in this regard has also been discussed.*

**Keywords:** Hazara, Baluchistan, sectarianism, extremism, perceptions, violence, victimization

### **Introduction:**

Hazaras – previously famous for their poetry, literature, art, and academic excellence in Baluchistan – have now been reduced to an ethnic and sectarian minority in the country. It all began with migration from Afghanistan with a desire to find a peaceful and secure abode in Pakistan. But the historic burden of their Shiite identity and their conspicuous facial features also migrated with them

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and continued to write the same story of violence and victimization in their new homeland – Pakistan.

What does Hazaras have to do with sectarian strife and violence in Pakistan is a question that needs to be answered for proper understanding of Hazara's perception of violence and victimization. In order to find out answers to this query, it is necessary to turn the pages of history and develop an insight into who they are, how did they come to Pakistan, and why are they being killed.

Hazaras are said to be third largest ethnic group in Afghanistan comprising 20–25 percent of country's population. Three popular theories about their origin are: a) they may belong to Turko-Mongol ancestry; b) have a historical lineage with the Kushan Dynasty, living two millennia back in history in Bamiyan – the centre of the then Buddhist Civilization; or c) they are Mongloid – a mixture of different ethnic races of eastern Persia, today's Afghanistan, and Mongol tribes. "Hazaras are pre-dominantly Shiite Muslims, but a minority of them is Ismailis and Sunni Muslims."<sup>1</sup> "Most Hazaras speak Hazargi, a variant of more widely used trade language, Dari."<sup>2</sup> It is yet to be known how Hazaras converted to Islam and what were the underlying reasons behind choosing Shiite ideology.

The settlements of Hazaras in Baluchistan can be divided into different phases:

**1878–91:** It was the urge of employment that caused the first inflow of Hazaras in Baluchistan after the second Anglo-Afghan War. A few hundreds of Hazaras came to this region as labors and helped building Bolan Pass Railways.

**1891–901:** It was due their sectarian linkages that Hazaras were brutally persecuted at the orders of Amir Abdur Rehman, the then Afghan ruler; and the persecution caused their migration to Turkestan, Khurasan, and Baluchistan during this phase.

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<sup>1</sup> "Who are Hazaras," *World Hazara Council*, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://worldhazaracouncil.org/en/who-are-the-hazaras/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Who are the Hazaras," *Hazara Net*, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://www.hazaranet.com/who.html>.

**1901–33:** When Amir Habibullah, the son of Amir Abdur-Rehman, became the leader he granted amnesty to the Hazaras and stopped the carnage carried out by his father. Yet, very little was done to promise economic stability and socially accepted future for Hazaras in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, “in 1904, 106<sup>th</sup> Pioneers, a separate regiment for the Hazaras, was formed by the British that offered greater career prospects, social recognition, and economic progress.”<sup>3</sup> Hazaras migrated to this region to become part of this regiment and to ensure a safer and stable future.

**1933–98:** Due to dispersal of Hazaras’ regiment, a significant number of Hazaras migrated to Baluchistan. The drought of 1971 also caused Hazaras to settle in Baluchistan or Iran for employment. Moreover, during 1973–78, “the tensions over Pushtunistan issue between the Daud Government and Pakistan government was an additional factor for migration.”<sup>4</sup> It was in 1982 that a person named Haji Ali Ahmad, an ethnic Hazara, established a housing scheme in the outskirts of Quetta. This place is called Hazara Town. It is a lower-to-middle-income area, comprising of nine blocks; and the majority of the houses are made up of concrete. The cheaper prices and security scheme were the biggest incentives that lured the people to settle in town. Hazaras of Quetta have mostly concentrated in Hazara Town to ensure their safety and security. “Out of 70,000 people (mostly Hazara Shias) living in Hazara Town, one-third are Afghan Hazaras.”<sup>5</sup> The Mizaar-e-Sharif incident in 1998, in which Hazaras were ruthlessly persecuted by Taliban, caused the biggest migration of Hazaras to Quetta.

Hazaras in Baluchistan – that are half a million in number – perceive serious life threats. Recent Hazara killings in Pakistan started with the attack on Provincial Education Minister, Nisar Ali Hazara, on October 06, 1999, and have accelerated with time since then. The roots of these killings are considered to be sectarian and are

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<sup>3</sup> Khaled Ahmed, *Sectarian War-Pakistan’s Sunni-Shia Violence and its links to the Middle East*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 204.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

generally traced back to General Zia's Islamization policies and subsequent involvement of Saudi Arabia and Iran in support of Sunni and Shia outfits respectively.<sup>6</sup> Shia-Sunni conflict intermittently keeps surfacing in Pakistan; the paper attempts to find out why for approximately two decades, it is Hazara community in Baluchistan that is being attacked for frequently than any other community. "Approximately one-quarter of the Shia killed in sectarian violence across Pakistan in 2012 belonged to the Hazara community in Baluchistan. In 2013, nearly half of Shias killed in Pakistan were Hazaras."<sup>7</sup>

This paper aims at finding out the probable causes and impact of the ongoing wave of violence – especially among Hazara youth; how do they perceive violence done to them; and whether or not this violence has affected their sectarian or ethnic orientations – narrating the story from Hazaras' point of view. The research also strives to identify the impact of this violence on the identity and religious associations of Hazaras along with the probable responses that can be expected from Hazaras if the ongoing violence does not come to an end. Paper highlights new trends developed among the community due to protracted exposure to violence. Moreover, a shift from horizontal to vertical application of violence, taking Hazaras as a case study, was also observed in the findings.

## **Research Methodology**

The research is based on qualitative methodology using a mixture of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Iterative Analysis of semi-structured interviews of the people of Hazara community who are directly or indirectly affected through this violence. The study revolves around the essence of the lived

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<sup>6</sup> Sunni organizations include *Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan* (SSP) and *Lashkar-i-Jhangvi* (LJ), and Shia organizations include *Tehrik Nifaz-i-Fiqah Jafaria* (TNFJ) and *Sipah-e-Muhammad*. For details, see Ahmed, *Sectarian War*. Also see "Pakistan bans 25 militant organizations," *Dawn* (Lahore), August 06, 2009, <http://www.dawn.com/news/963704/pakistan-bans-25-militant-organisations>.

<sup>7</sup> Human Rights Watch, *"We Are The Walking Dead": Killings of Shia Hazaras in Baluchistan* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2014), 2.

experiences of Hazara people (i.e., of personal and social world). The interpretation process is of two tiers (i.e., the participants individually tried to make sense of their world, while the researcher has tried to make sense of the all participants' world collectively). Iterative Analysis of the data alternates between emergent themes of the data and the use of existing theories, models, and explanations. "Rather than grounding the meaning solely in the emergent data, an iterative approach also encourages reflection upon the active interests, current literature, granted priorities, and various theories the researcher brings to the data."<sup>8</sup>

**Sampling:** IPA involves in-depth and repetitive study of the transcripts to look for the essence of lived experiences, whereas iterative analysis requires continuous switching between the data and theory; therefore, the sample taken is purposive and small in size consisting of ten participants. Although all the people of Hazara community are related to the research problem in one way or the other, but special efforts were made to involve people who have been more directly involved with our research problem. The sample included educated and uneducated participants (both male and female), ranging from 16 to 40 years of age. The educated participants varied from those who were doing matriculation to those who had acquired their professional degrees. Moreover, undergraduate students, both studying outside Baluchistan and within Baluchistan – specifically Quetta, were included in the sample. The uneducated sample included laborers, shop owners, and small business entrepreneurs.

**Semi-Structured interviews:** In order to make sure the research to incorporate the variations encountered during collection of data, semi-structured interviews were conducted. These interviews revolve around some basic ideas that the interviewer aims to inquire about, but the kind of questions that are put forth vary from respondent to respondent – keeping in view the respondent's intellectual understanding of the issue and his willingness to respond back. It is due to this fact that the duration of the interviews also

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<sup>8</sup> Sara J. Tracy, *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 184.

varies from person to person. But the average interview lasted for half an hour. Depending upon the convenience of the participants, the interviews were conducted in person, via Skype, or through telephone calls. With the consent of the interviewee, the interviews were recorded. In cases where interviewee did not allow recording the interview, it was written down word to word as much as possible. The limitations of this research include a feeling of insecurity and fear among the interviewees. There was reluctance in most of the people to become a participant of the research. Moreover, at some points where the nature of questions dealt with sensitive notions of religiosity or the role of state and institutions in resolving the matter, it was evident that it required more than courage and bravery to express their feelings. Due to their willingness to speak on the condition of anonymity and because of the security concerns, fake names have been assigned to all the participants while carrying out an analysis on their interviews.

**Data Analysis**

<b>Superordinate Themes</b>	<b>Themes</b>
<b>General Perception of Violence</b>	Violence is not giving someone’s due right
	Intimidation or Fear
	Victimization on the basis of sect, race, or ethnicity
	Going against law
	To hurt or damage someone physically or mentally
<b>Reasons for Violence related to Hazara Community</b>	Sectarian basis
	Ethnic Grounds
	Genocide by state
	An Amalgam of these all
<b>What makes Hazara Killings Different from other Target Killings across the Country</b>	Their distinct features
	Greater killing to population ratio
	Their issue is solely humanitarian in nature and involves no political agenda
<b>Actors Involved in this Violence</b>	Sunni sectarian outfits
	State and it’s institutions
	Involvement of foreign hands
<b>Reasons for Perception of State</b>	Persecution of not a single culprit so far

<b>Involvement</b>	Day by day increasing attacks and deteriorating security conditions of Hazaras
	Soft corner for the militants shown especially by the Punjab Government
	State perceives militants as ‘assets’
	This issue would help mitigating other nationalist issues of Baluchistan
<b>Psychological Coping Strategies</b>	Opting for Sabr
	Hope to leave for abroad
	Pursuance of education for a promising future
	Joining armed forces to ensure security
<b>Given the Impunity, Hazaras’ Responses towards Perpetrators of Violence</b>	Return the ‘favor’
	Ensuring education & human rights
	Let law decide their fate
<b>Effects of Protracted Violence on the Sense of Belonging to their Community</b>	Enhanced sentiment of association
	The onset of an apathetic environment
	Growing Xenophobia for other communities
	Perpetual feeling of fear within community
<b>The Impacts of the Violence on Youth</b>	Decreased perceived significance of education
	An increased desire to manage to go abroad
	Enhanced psychological distress
	Enhanced perception of state involvement
	New form of art and literature
	Violent games among community children
<b>Impact of Prevalent Situation on the Community as a Whole</b>	More intolerance towards each other
	Patriotism being replaced by antagonism
	Gun culture penetrating in youth
	Ethnically and religiously strict grand norms
<b>Role of Religion</b>	Martyrdom’s psychological soothing factor
	Provide understanding of the whole issue
	Self-guilt: God retributive justice
<b>Hazara Diaspora’s Contribution in this Situation</b>	Helpful with economic needs of the people
	Dependence: a disadvantage of foreign money
<b>Suggested Solutions</b>	Right to Life: state’s responsibility
	Post Trauma therapies to minimize frustration
	Expedient criminal justice system
	Religious extremism to be discouraged

## **Interpretation and Discussion**

**General Perception of Violence:** Prudence required initiating the research by seeking an insight of the pre-conceived notions of Hazaras about violence and victimization. Most of the respondents described violence as a condition when someone's right is snatched. Abdullah, an engineer from Hazara community, described violence as "intimidation or fear on the basis of sectarian affiliations."<sup>9</sup> While some of the respondents attributed undue victimization on the basis of race or ethnicity as violence.

Moreover, violence was also described as breaching the law or exceeding the limits set forth by it. This transgression from the governmental laws or the social norms amounted for violence for some of the respondents. "For me, when a person is hurt or damaged either mentally and physically, it is violence,"<sup>10</sup> said Aiman – a 16 years old studying at Quetta. In short, the general perception of violence among Hazara community revolves around snatched rights, unjust practices, and the damages beyond reason – both mental and physical.

**Reasons for Violence related to Hazara Community:** One of the main reasons highlighted by the respondents for their targeted killings is their sectarian identity – the escalating situation of Sunni-Shia stride across the country, and their easily identifiable facial features. In the words of Abid, who owns a shop in Hazara Town, "our faces have become the reason of trouble for us."<sup>11</sup> Adding further, he said, "those who kill us (state in this case), find us to be more loyal to Iran than Pakistan, due to our Afghan or non-Pakistani origin for that matter."<sup>12</sup> When inquired why he thought loyalty to Iran would be considered as a threat by the state of Pakistan, he was unable to answer it.

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Abdullah (An engineer, working in Lahore), July 5, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Aiman (A student of matriculation, currently living in Hazara Town), July 11, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Abid (Owner of a shoe shop in Hazara Town), July 9, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

This shows that there is a growing confusion among the masses regarding who is the culprit behind the atrocities that are committed against their community. The obscurity of minds is further manifested when most of the people accused state for their genocide and yet failed to provide a substantial reasoning for their claim. Perhaps the failure of the government to discern the sensitivity of this issue and to check this propensity for loathing that is leading towards sectarian and ethnic conflict is what they refer to as state sponsorship.

**What makes Hazara Killings Different from other Target Killings across the Country:** “It is even evident in the news; when the television announces the killings of Hazaras, they mention our ethnicity, not our sect,”<sup>13</sup> said one of the respondents. This shows that while their sectarian association is one of the reasons for the atrocities committed against Hazaras, it cannot be termed as the only cause for it. Moreover, another reason that makes Hazaras’ issue distinct from that of Pakistan in general and Baluchistan in specific is the fact that their problem is solely humanitarian in nature. In words of Sadiq, an engineer, “the issue of Hazaras is different from those of rest of Baluchistan because it is not secessionist in nature. Neither do we have any political association nor do we possess any revolutionary agenda. In fact, ours is the issue that is totally humanitarian in nature, where we only want respect and safety for our lives.”<sup>14</sup>

**Actors Involved in this Violence:** Almost all the respondents were of the view that it is Lashkr-e-Jhangvi (LEJ) that is involved in this violence, as it publically takes the responsibility of targeting Hazaras. “These are the same people who had persecuted us then in Afghanistan, and are killing us now in Pakistan as well,”<sup>15</sup> said Raza. Other than this militant group, some people mentioned that the state is involved in one way or the other in Hazara killings. In the words of Maryam, “If state is not supervising these groups, how the people of LEJ manage to enter our areas through Alamdar road. The road

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Abdullah.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Sadiq (An engineering student, Studying in Lahore), July 3, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Raza (A student of Social Sciences at Lahore) July 1, 2015.

passes through military cantonment area. This shows that state is involved and is one of the perpetrators of violence against us.”<sup>16</sup>

Some respondents mentioned that it may be due to the involvement of foreign hands like Iran, India, and other countries that are not in favor of a stable Pakistan. “When land mafia penetrated its root in the area, the border situations with Iran became complicated,”<sup>17</sup> said Taimoor, who is an artist. Some of the respondents pointed out that the ongoing violence may be attributed to foreign involvement to hinder the progress of projects like CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor).

**Reasons for Perception of State Involvement:** The first reason pointed out by the respondents in this regard was that not a single person has ever been prosecuted for the Hazara killings. “The impunity with which members of terrorist organizations operate in our areas depicts that they have the patronage of state,”<sup>18</sup> said Ali.

Another reason for this perception of state involvement is escalating security conditions depicted in more frequent and intensified attacks. The government has increased the security of Hazara Town, but the respondents were of the view that it is not sufficient. “This has only lead towards further ghettoization of the community and ghettoization is never a solution,”<sup>19</sup> said one of the respondents.

The sense that who rules Punjab, rules the centre of Pakistan’s politics has always been there. Most of our respondents were of the view that as N-league is in power, both in Punjab and the centre, these terrorist organizations are more reckless towards Hazaras than ever. Though the steps taken against LEJ during this regime are unprecedented – numerous police encounters of members of LEJ including that of their leader, Malik Ishaq along with his sons – the

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Maryam (Student of University at Quetta), July 10, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Taimoor (An artist who currently works in Lahore), July 1, 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Ali (A laborer, and a resident of Hazara Town), July 10, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Sadiq.

respondents were not reluctant to point out the possibility of government supporting LEJ to carry out Shia cleansing to please Saudis. Current government's refusal to send ground troops as part of Saudi-led military alliance in January 2016 also goes against popular belief among our respondents.

The reasons for perception of state sponsorship of the violence include famous doctrine of using terrorists as strategic assets. One of the respondent said, "I am not claiming that the state is asking these militants to kill us. Our killings are a by-product of what our state wants these militants to do across the border and in turn grants them a free hand to indulge themselves in sectarian and ethnic rift against us."<sup>20</sup> Some of the respondents were of the view that this violence has helped government divert attention from nationalist issues of Baluchistan, while others said that government's efforts to keep us from talking about the issue openly makes us suspicious of government. According to Maryam, "If we have an unknown enemy then those who keeps us from talking about the enemy, are the enemies for us, because they are causing greater damage by not letting us speak our hearts out."<sup>21</sup>

**Psychological Coping Strategies:** People of Hazara community say that they find solace in *Sabr* – a religious doctrine that promotes endurance and patience in hard times with faith that these predicaments are nothing but a test from God. "The concept of *Sabr* has always been prevalent among Shi'ites,"<sup>22</sup> said Taimoor. *Sabr* is associated with the idea of *Shahadat* (martyrdom). In the words of Muhammad Sadiq, "in order to provide satisfaction to the families, it is important for them to know that their loved ones are martyrs. This helps mitigate intensity of their plight."<sup>23</sup> The idea of their loved ones being in a better place (Heaven) can act as a pain relieving and psychologically alleviating factor for the families. Therefore, the notion of *Shahadat* associated with the deceased augments the pacifying effect provided by *Sabr*.

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Abdullah.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Taimoor.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Sadiq.

It was repeatedly stated in interviews that due to ghettoization in Hazara Town an enhanced sense of cultural, social, and economic marginalization is being felt among the residents; and therefore, people are leaving for abroad. Education is another ray of hope among Hazaras. The idea behind is to find certainty of a better future among the uncertainties of death and chaos. "If you will ask me about future, the thousands of students who are enrolled in matriculation and intermediate every year depict the path we are heading,"<sup>24</sup> said one of the respondents.

Like rest of the country, the popularity of Pakistan's armed forces has not been alien to the residents of Hazara town. General Musa Khan, a famous Hazara, left his mark well in the ranks of Pakistan Army. It may be due to his influence that Hazaras had always looked towards joining the armed forces. Time and circumstances have left their desire to join army unaffected but have changed their motives to do so. "We cannot afford a lot of enemies at the same time. That is the reason why I want my people to remain pro-military and to join the armed forces. It is better for our individual and collective survival,"<sup>25</sup> said Abdullah. This answers why Hazaras still have a desire to join Pak Army. Another interviewee said, "The reason why people are still joining army is that through army they can take their revenge from those who are killing them."<sup>26</sup>

**Given the Impunity, Hazaras' Responses towards Perpetrators of Violence:** As the saying goes, violence begets violence; it was evident from what the respondents said that they would return the 'favor' if given chance. A growing sense of antagonism and frustration coupled with the unfaltering belief that peace is not imminent is causing violent tendencies among the masses. "Even in Islam, justice is taking a life for a life, and we will do the same," said one of the respondents."<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, some respondents were also of the view that violence is not going to be a

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Maryam.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Abdullah.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Maryam.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Faisal (A Shop owner at Hazara Town), July 9, 2015.

long term solution. They suggested that viable long term solutions could be a greater emphasis on understanding the importance of acquiring education; the better understanding of their rights as citizens; and the way through which the availability of these rights could be made sure. For some interviewees even the thought of violating the law was inadmissible. For them, law deciding the fate of their murderers would be the best response.

**Effects of Protracted Violence on the Sense of Belonging to their Community:** According to respondents, an enhanced sentiment of association with the community is being developed. They said that in hard times when people have no one but each other, there is a general bonding that holds them together. “As a result of these troubles, people have become more contributing. Greater numbers of youth conferences are now being organized for proper understanding and to find solution to our problems,”<sup>28</sup> were the words of Sadiq. At the same time, apathy has also been developed among some quarters of the community as a response to this protracted violence. Some of the respondents were of the view that with the passage of time people had become desensitized to the problem and now only a sizeable number of the loss of lives can stir a response among the masses; otherwise the loss of one or two lives does not even qualify for news now. Now this is common observation even among rest of the Pakistani population that on hearing about some terrorist attack people ask about number of people died and behave as if nothing has happened if death toll is in single digit. Terrorist activities claiming 2 or 3 lives do not qualify for more than a minute of coverage on our busy electronic media.

Growing xenophobia was observed among Hazaras during field work. Xenophobia is a condition where a person or a community develops a fear and hatred for those who are not of their kin. The prolonged marginalization and now ghettoization of Hazaras have lessened their interactions with other communities (Pashtuns, Baluchs, Turis, etc.) living in Quetta. This has led towards feeling of animosity towards each other because it has awakened the dormant conscience of being different from each other. According to Taimoor, “Hazaras used to be less racist. But with time, we have developed a

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Sadiq.

sense of being used by other communities like Baluchs and Pashtuns. That may be due to fewer interactions that have highlighted our differences or due to the narrative that everyone else is safer, merrier, and prosperous than us.”<sup>29</sup>

**Impact of Violence on Youth:** Since their arrival in Pakistan, Hazaras have left their mark well in the field of education. But the recent series of violence has changed many things. The minds of young children, who have the genes of diligence and intelligence, no longer aspire to get education – for what use it is after all? A belief in the futility of education is causing a great number of school dropouts. “The depression amongst the youth is causing them to leave schools; they need motivation from the state in this regard,”<sup>30</sup> said one of the respondents. The deteriorating security conditions are also compelling people to leave schools. Most of the respondents pointed out that the quality of education in the schools at Hazara Town is not very fascinating. People are reluctant to send their children to the schools of Quetta because it involves life risk. As a corollary, the youth has developed a strong desire to go abroad. “For most of the young children, going abroad is a way out,”<sup>31</sup> said Abdullah. “You would see many of the young children wearing cotton clothes or their best dresses while sitting at the corner of the streets whole day long. The only effort they are making for the community is wishing to go abroad. You would see a pattern in things here; Pakistan is like a platform for them where you wait for another train to arrive, so that you may leave that place,”<sup>32</sup> he further added.

The minds in which the vividness of peace is distorted by the opaqueness of the memories of violence and chaos, the birth of depression and distress should not be surprising. It was mentioned by almost all the respondents that the nascent minds of the youth that have witnessed death, uncertainty, and violence are much affected by the circumstances.

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Taimoor.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Abdullah.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

The Hazara youth is not willing to delude themselves by the ideas of helplessness of state in this matter. In fact, they do find state more responsible for their problems than any other factors. “You are in my house, and if anything bad happens to you, I am going to be held responsible for that,”<sup>33</sup> said Raza. “Likewise, we live in Pakistan and who else is responsible for all our calamities if not the state?”<sup>34</sup> he asked.

Hazaras have always been famous for their talent with creative arts like painting, poetry, and music. But this prolonged wave of violence has marred the aestheticism within the community. A newer form of art is now being produced that is violent rather than aesthetically pleasing in nature. A young girl who aspires to be a photographer said, “I would like to capture the scenes after a bomb blast. This is what people want to see, and this is what I have been seeing throughout my life, and one can only capture that is prevalent around them.”<sup>35</sup> Taimoor, an artist, said, “Pen of an artist is writing and painting death and violence. It has killed the creativity we once used to have.”<sup>36</sup> Another girl said, “The young artist is painting about his grief so that he may share it to the world.”<sup>37</sup> Development of such works of art and poetry depicts how the narrative of being victimized is deep rooted in the young minds. Most of the respondents pointed out that kids play more violent games than they used to play in their childhood. “The famous game among street boys includes killing each other or being killed in return,”<sup>38</sup> said a respondent.

**Impact of Prevalent Situation on the Community as a Whole:** Due to security concerns, Hazaras, who were previously scattered all over Baluchistan, started to live together in Hazara Town. Minorities are now being formed within the Hazara community. “Turi and Bangash tribes are treated as a minority within

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Raza.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Aiman.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Taimoor.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Maryam.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Aiman.

Hazara Town,”<sup>39</sup> said one of the interviewees. A respondent claimed that since Hazaras are more educated than other ethnicities present in Baluchistan, there is a general sentiment of hatred towards them. The Pushtun and Baluchs think that Hazaras are progressing at their cost, while Hazaras think that they are being marginalized due to Pashtuns and Baluchs. According to a respondent, “If we side with Baluchs, the Army is annoyed, and if we are with Army so are Baluchs.”<sup>40</sup> This sentiment of being selected, tested, and rejected by others is leading towards a collective hatred for all those who are using but not helping them. “Those who side with Pashtuns are considered *Kha’een* (dishonest) by rest of the community,”<sup>41</sup> said another respondent. Moreover the political affairs in the community are still revolving around petty issues of caste, community and ethnicity. There was an urge in the respondents that somehow the dimension of political arena should change and evolve for the betterment of the community.

A grand norm is the basic value around which the whole interaction, customs, rules, and traditions of a community revolve. The prolonged wave of violence has given way to new trends and customs within Hazara community. “One of the new grand norms includes the revival of definition of Hazaras: only those who have the same sect, speak same language, and do look like rest of us, are now considered Hazaras. By virtue of this definition, Syeds are now considered a minority within Hazara. And there are sentiments that if given a chance, some people of our community will kill Syeds, because they are different from us,”<sup>42</sup> said one of the respondents. Unlike other areas of Pakistan that are witnessing insurgency and chaos (Karachi, FATA, KPK, etc.), Hazaras do not have a history of gun culture. But now the young people are reported to possess guns. “Last year, during a fight in a graveyard, some young boys opened fire on another young lad,”<sup>43</sup> said one of the respondents.

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Abdullah.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Taimoor.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Abdullah.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Aiman.

**Role of Religion:** It is the want of the peace of mind and heart that has led towards a significant role of religion throughout this process. Every killing is considered a *Shahadat*. The notion – *Shahadat tau sa'aadat hay* (martyrdom is a blessing) – is very popular among the community. People also used to relate the situation with the concept of virtues and sins and the principle of reward and punishment by God in this world. Respondents were of the view that their people believe that some of them were being killed due to their sins, whereas some were alive because they were better and pious than others. It befell as a tragic reality to most of the respondents that in spite of having such high literacy rate the majority of the people were still driven by *Mullahs* and were willing to oblige them at any cost. “It is especially famous in women, the *mullah* and his narrative,”<sup>44</sup> said one of the respondents.

Apart from it, religion provides Hazaras a plausible understanding of the whole issue and helps them make sense of international politics behind it. They think Iran-Saudi Arabia proxy war is one of the reasons of sectarian conflict in Pakistan. “Iranians want us to be with them; and the state is killing us because they think we are with Iran, when in fact we are not,”<sup>45</sup> said Abid. He had not much to explain when was asked why Iran had a desire that Hazaras should side with it, but it can be assumed that he was referring to the Iranian wish to win its proxy war over Saudi Arabia on the soil of Pakistan.

**Hazara Diaspora’s contribution in the situation:** The members of the Hazara community who live across the world are termed as the Hazara Diaspora. Majority of the members of Hazara Diaspora of Pakistani origin are living in Australia. They help people with their economic needs and by sending in money for community mobilization activities. While sharing the services of the Diaspora, one of the respondents said, “It is due to the efforts of the Diaspora that we are managing to organize more youth conferences and other community mobilization programs. Such activities help in attenuate violent tendencies and frustration among the youth to a great

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Abdullah.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Abid.

extent.”<sup>46</sup> “Right now, no one is helping the Hazaras. We are helping each other out, especially the Diaspora is helping us a lot, in a number of the matters,”<sup>47</sup> said another.

“The Diaspora has caused the real damage. It is due to them that the majority of the youth aspires to go abroad. It is more like running away from the trouble instead of facing it,”<sup>48</sup> said one of the respondents. The Diaspora, at the same time, has increased the dependency of the youth on foreign money. One of the reasons why students drop out from schools was because they had money coming in from abroad.

**Suggested Solutions:** Some of the solutions that can be recommended after conducting the survey are as follows:

- ✓ State to provide life protection to Hazaras
- ✓ Religious extremism to be discouraged at all levels
- ✓ Post Trauma Therapies to be conducted to minimize the growing frustration of the youth
- ✓ Expedient indiscriminate criminal justice for perpetrators of violence
- ✓ Promotion of peace through education
- ✓ Promotion of alternate discourse to terrorism from within religion

## **Conclusion**

It was Hazaras’ dream for peace and a prosperous future that compelled them to migrate to this Pakistan. But unfortunately, a stark difference, alien to their dreams and well known to reality, awaited them in Pakistan. Stepping in this region was like entering the realm of realism, where war, with its inevitability hanged upon everyone’s head, including them.

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<sup>46</sup> Interview with Sadiq.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Maryam.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Abdullah.

Protracted violence prevalent around Hazara community coupled with the uncertainty of who is going to be lucky enough to witness the dawn of tomorrow have developed new trends like intense desire among the youth to go abroad and ever increasing distrust towards the state. The paper has tried to identify and highlight the development of self-identity among the Hazaras along the following lines:

- ✓ Sense of belonging to the community
- ✓ Sense of association with the sect
- ✓ Trends towards education
- ✓ Attitudes towards other communities
- ✓ New form of art and literature
- ✓ Increased use of weapons against each other
- ✓ Division of group within the community
- ✓ Formation of new grand norms

It is evident from the analysis and discussion that there has been an increased sense of belonging to their community and their sect among Hazaras. Although some people mentioned that there is a growing sense of indifference within the community, it must be noted that even this indifference has an enhanced ‘conscience’ of their sectarian or ethnic identity involved in it. Moreover, it can be comprehended that Hazaras have started to take solace in their victim-hood. Being killed in the name of religion is equivalent to martyrdom for them, when in fact it is totally unjust to attribute all the killings to be a synonym for martyrdom. This indicates an infatuation with the idea of being victimized; who won’t desire for *Shahadat* and the consequential paradise after all?

The growing xenophobia for other communities; the production of caustic art and literature where violence has replaced aestheticism; the increased loathe for one another; and appliance of weapons within the community are some of the factors that suggest the formulation of a new form of identity among Hazaras. This newer identity has violence deeply rooted within it illustrating violence too can create an identity as identity can create violence.

It does not take an act of intellectual acrobatics to find out that whenever oppressed will return violence it will always be against the oppressor. This idea was initially promulgated by Frantz Fanon in his

book, *The Wretched of the earth*. He explained it with the example of colonizer and colonized. According to him, violence had to have a horizontal direction: from the oppressed towards the oppressor in order to fully liberate the oppressed. But in case of Hazaras, when incidents of use of violence within the community were quoted by the respondents, it could be deduced that violence might have vertical dimensions as well. In this case, frustration of the oppressed that they fail to take out on the oppressor is being expressed against the same or the other oppressed communities; thus generating a vertical appliance of force and violence.

State has not been able to provide security to the people of Hazara community. In this situation, they believe that it has become difficult for them to separate law abiders from law offenders, protectors from perpetrators, and custodians from killers. Hazaras must have been through this confusion. The need of the hour is to have a shift in the attitude of the state towards its citizen. The state needs to take up the issues seriously. A mixture of universal and specific policies is to be adopted to minimize, and ultimately, to end ethnic and sectarian conflicts going on in the country. A universal policy of not tolerating any kind of terrorism in the country should be implemented in true letter and spirit. For this, we need to develop a definition of terrorism – anybody taking up arms against state and targeting its citizens should be dealt with iron hands. The policy of pick and choose would further deteriorate the situation as it would create more terrorists than state can handle.

Religious extremism prevalent in the country needs long term solutions along with the abovementioned policy of dealing the perpetrator of violence with iron hands. An alternate discourse is to be developed to counter the extremism in the country. This counter narrative cannot be based on the negation of religion – as that would help the extremists convince their pawns that there are infidels out there who do not believe in religion. We need to develop an alternate discourse from within the teachings of Islam clearly negating extremism and terrorism so that we can convince their prospect recruits not to join them or their pawns to abandon them. With these universal steps, every conflict need specific policies of conflict management and resolution – the government should employ its human and material resources to develop and apply them.

The state has to be caring, loving, and responsive towards its citizens. The state should be an epitome of justice and peace, and not an ally of one party or the other. If a state fails to provide both peace and security to its citizens, why would people want to live in the state? Is the state lacking the ability to cope up with these militants or what it lacks is the will to do so, is a question that points all the fingers towards the state. Moreover, it can be taken the other way around as well. Like state, Hazaras do need to change their attitude towards the problem as well. What has stopped Hazaras to come up with a political leadership that would be willing to highlight their cause at national level? It is true that the state of Pakistan is not ideal to dwell in for a number of reasons, but why this urgency to leave for abroad? Is it not like becoming the part of blame-shame-justify-game where the other party is always wrong, and we are right? Where efforts are not made for betterment but to shy away from the problem; therefore, it is needed that both sides own each other for a better future.

