

An Assessment on Security Challenges Posed by Muslim and Sinhala Buddhist in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This study was conducted with the aim of addressing the dearth of comprehensive research on the internal and external factors driving violent extremism in Muslim enclaves in majority Sinhala Buddhists regions of the country. The main types of data collected for the study was qualitative data. Qualitative data from the study was collected from in-depth interviews with the selected sample. Sample participants selected for the study consisted of religious and community leaders in Muslim enclaves in Mawanalla, Sample size was limited to ten religious and community leaders living in Muslim enclaves in Mawanella. Data collected from the sample participant was analyzed using thematic analysis. Analysis of participants responses to questions relating to internal factors driving Muslim enclaves in Buddhist majority areas to violent extremism revealed several themes. These themes are namely political factors, lack of trust between Sinhala and Muslim communities, activities of extremist religions groups, religious teaching, culture and religious differences, law enforcement, leadership failure, land and other resource disputes, economic issues, majority/minority concerns, and demographic factors. Based on the analysis of data from participant responses to questions relating to the external factors driving Muslim enclaves in Sinhala Buddhist majority areas to violent extremism several themes were identified by the researcher. These themes were international support, international influence, and teaching of foreign ideologies.

Keywords: *Muslim and Sinhala Extremism, Enclaves, Internal factors and External factors*