

Radicalization: A Case Study of Youth in Pakistan

By

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Abstract:

Radicalism is a process of adherence to radical view and principles on political, social or religious issues which mean favoring orthodoxy and opposing revolutionary changes in society. Historically, the word “radical” has remained associated with fundamentalism, extremism and absolutist approaches in politics, although the word radicalization could be used otherwise. Since the catastrophic event of September 11, 2001, this word of radicalization has gained considerable usage in media, academics and policy-making circles. This paper attempts to judge the level of radicalization in Pakistan among the students of Quai-i-Azam University Islamabad as a sample. The level of radicalization has been studied among the youth of Balochistan, KPK, Punjab, Sindh and FATA (now part of the KPK after the 25th constitutional amendment).

Keywords: Radicalization, Extremism, Terrorism, Nizam-i-Mustafa, De-radicalization, Enlightened Moderation, 9/11 Attacks and War against Terrorism, Etc.

Introduction:

In literature, different terms have evolved like political Islam, moderate Islam, militant Islam, radical Islam fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism. Three stages of terrorism have been identified, first stage is radicalization in which an individual group, society or a nation supports a fundamental political change but that individual or nation is not involved in

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direct violent activities but its mind support that change. The second stage is extremism and the last is terrorism where it involves in violent activities. Radicalization is the initial stage of terrorism. Extremism and radicalization are different from each other but related phenomena. In most cases, the term radicalization is defined in terms of supporting terrorism and other forms of violence. It can be defined as the willingness to use of justified violence to attain political objective.

The event of 9/11 has directly affected the Muslims all over the world and has resulted into an action-reaction cycle within the Muslim world. The US attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq have generated ferocious frustration among the Muslim including the youth of Pakistan. Radicalization in the Pakistani youth has been a direct result of these international events and the militancy in Afghanistan, former Federally Administrative Tribal Areas (FATA), Khyber Pashtunkhwa (KPK), Balochistan and other parts of Pakistan. Radicalization is one of the major problems especially in Muslim world where the youth is more radicalized. The root causes of radicalizations are still unknown which can be multidimensional and the government, except for Counter Terrorism Department, has still not taken any serious policy to find out the causes and to response them in a peaceful manner. Change of mind toward anything drags the society into a complete change because the radical society provides hot-bed to the extremists and terrorists. The purpose of the study is to understand the phenomenon of radicalization in Pakistani youth. Various approaches have been used to explore the causes of radicalization in the youth of Pakistan. The area of study needs to explore the reason without biasness and focusing the both sides of the picture.

Zia's Policy of Islamization:

After dismissing the elected government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on the grounds of fraudulent election charges, General Zia ul-Haq, Chief of the Army Staff, became Chief Martial Law Administrator in July 1977 and President in September 1978 until his death in a mysterious plane crash in August 1998. During 11-years of rule, Zia pursued an official policy that Pakistan's survival and progress were dependent on building an Islamic state. A number of measures were taken to implement this policy, including the introduction of the Federal Shariat Court. A referendum held in 1984 confirmed Zia's policy of Islamization. In this referendum, a "yes" vote

agreeing with Zia's Islamization policy was also to be interpreted as a vote for Zia to remain in office as president for another five years. After assuming power, the task that the government set to was its public commitment to enforce *Nizam-e-Mustafa* (Islamic System). Following major steps were taken to implement Islamic fundamental laws in Pakistan.

- Hudood Ordinance
- Reforms of Madressahs (religious schools)
- Reforms of the Educational Syllabuses
- Islamization of Economy

All steps taken by Zia-ul-Haq regarding the implementation of the Islamic laws were basically to provide a political base to the military dictator and by doing this Zia-ul-Haq used the name of Islam for his political objectives. (Emmerson, November 2004). “Under Zia, religious institutes increased from around 890 in 1971 to almost 3,000 by the end of the 1980s” (International Crisis Group, 2005). Literatures which were about radicalization were massively disseminated throughout the educational institutions of Pakistan in general and KPK, former FATA and Balochistan in particular.

The radical religious schools were funded by the American intelligence agency CIA to radicalize a generation of Afghan and Pakistani boys for their strategic objectives against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The Jihadi textbooks created by the University of Nebraska Omaha, under the cover of USAID were to promote a jihadi culture in Pakistan and Afghanistan. A CIA-backed US oil company UNOCAL donated US\$900,000 to the Center of Afghanistan Studies at the University of Omaha Nebraska for its business interests in Afghanistan. (Rashid, 2009) Islamization was sometimes used as a political process which has contributed to the rise of fundamentalism, obscurantism and retrogression. Now, the secular and even elite educational institutes are no guarantee against radical ideologies. (Dawn editorial, 2017) In a population of more than 120 million people, about 85 million are 24 years or below the formative period of life when a person's worldview is shaped. With a population growth rate of almost two per cent, the coming years will see

youth numbers grow. It will be an explosive situation if the currently poor socio-economic conditions remain stagnant or decline further. (International Crisis Group, 2002)

Musharraf's Policy of Enlightened Moderation:

Enlightened moderation was coined by former potentate General Pervez Musharraf, which calls for practicing Islam moderately, oppose to practicing the Islamization of General Zia-ul-Haq. To think properly as to rationalize thoughts, be on the positive side of life, to prefer optimism, and the theory is against extremism. Enlightened moderation calls for the Muslim world to eschew violence and Western powers to “seek to resolve all political disputes with justice” and assist Muslim countries' development. In Pakistan it meant to stop funding to religious centers, madressah reform with scientific education, ban of the hate-mongering literature and women rights but the practice of the politics of enlightened moderation was based on personal need for another military dictator to remain in power. (Friday Times editorial, 2004) Inspired from Ata Turk model, Muharraf's policy of enlightened moderation was an attempt to counter the Zia s policy Islamization which is considered to be defining factor for the current radicalization in the youth of Pakistan. The Zia s policy of Islamzation had caused extremism in earlier generations and that has been transferred to the existing generation from the previous generation in shape of radicalization which is the initial stage of extremism and terrorism. Musharraf during his government tried his best to spread the liberal ideas to counter violence extremism and militancy. Unlike the previous dictator who carried out oppressive and misogynist Islamization project between 1977 and 88, the incumbent dictator espoused modern, secular, and liberal credential between 1999-08. (Zia Aria, 2009) But he could not succeed to promote his ideas of enlightened moderation in Pakistan because of Afghan and Iraq which were deemed to be U.S. wars against Muslims as Musharraf was a close ally of USA and a friend of President Bush.

Another reason for its failure was an undeclared ban on the political activities of liberal and secular political parties in Pakistan. Musharraf neutralized the main democratic parties, the PML-N, and the PPP. Almost 40 percent of these parties' nominees were barred by new graduate degree rule to take part in 2002 elections. The only political party allowed to

campaign freely was the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), an alliance of six Islamist parties. The electoral success of the MMA in 2002 elections enabled Musharraf to portray himself a secular bulwark against a greater Islamic radicalization. (Lutz Kleveman, 2004) For over 60 years Pakistan has hovered on the cusp of two worlds: The Islamist and the liberal democratic. Musharraf has attempted to reconcile these two demands through "Enlightened Moderation, which has yet to prove itself fully as a viable option for Pakistan since it does not seem to offer one concrete solution for the different actors operating in the country. (Musharraf, 2004) President Pervez Musharraf's policy of proclaimed 'enlightened moderation' has come under attack when internal evidence mounted regarding the continued activities of Islamist extremists, and the gradual consolidation of many areas, including the tribal areas, KPK and Balochistan where religious forces have electoral constituencies.

Analyses of the Data Collected from the Surveys:

A survey conducted by the researchers in the Department of Anthropology in Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad (QAU) to judge the level of radicalization in the youth regarding Musharraf policy of Enlightened Moderation and its impact on the youth. 53 per cent respondents understand that the Musharraf Policy has been one of the major factor for the radicalization of the youth because his policy of Enlightened Moderation has been considered as contrary to the Islam values and the respondents are of the opinion that this policy was totally Western oriented and this was an attempt by the USA and West to transfer the Pakistani society from Islamic code of life to the Western style of life. According to the respondents this policy has back fired because the most of the youth have understood this as a promoter of Western culture and the youth have strongly rejected this by countering this in shape of radicalization. They further argue that Musharraf has used the tactics of promoting the liberal ideas only for his political objectives and political existence. Out of this 53 per cent, 70 per cent of the respondents are from former FATA and KPK, 15 per cent are from Punjab, 8 per cent are from Balochistan and 7 per cent are from Sindh.

Other 42 per cent respondents have favored the policy of enlightened moderation as a promoter of liberal ideas. They are of the opinion that liberal ideas can be major weapon to fight against radicalization, extremism

and violence in the youth. They understand that the policy of enlightened moderation has overcome the level of radicalization in youth to a high degree. Out of these 42 per cent 40 per cent respondent are from Punjab, 45 per cent are from Sindh, 10 per cent are from Balochistan and only 5 per cent are from KPK and former FATA. They have also suggested that such policy of liberal ideas would be possible if they are based according to the culture and traditions of the Pakistani society, not Western oriented. The remaining 5 per cent respondents have not responded this question because they understand that there are other factors which are responsible for the radicalization of the youth.

From the analyses of the data collected from the surveys shows that the Musharraf policy of enlightened moderation has directly or indirectly contributed to the emergence of the radical thinking in the youth as a reaction to the frustration aroused due to the Musharraf Western style of liberal ideas and moderation coupled with his undemocratic practices like hybrid regime and 17th constitutional amendment. Youth who either support the policy of enlightened moderation or oppose it have opposed the US lobby for promoting Western style of liberal ideas especially through reform in educational syllabuses. Herald, a monthly magazine has reported that many of the militant groups have regrouped due to the Musharraf's new policies regarding the support of USA and West. (Lakshman, The Darkness of 'Enlightened Moderation, 2005).

Level of Radicalization in Youth:

Radicalization is mostly used in the international politics in the terms of extremism and terrorism because it is the initial stage of extremism and terrorism. Level of radicalization in youth refers to the intensity of the radicalization in youth, how much radicalized are the youth? How much they favor any political change? How much they response to any change in the national society and global society? And what are their views regarding any historical tragedy, event and political change? To analyze the level of radicalization in the youth of Pakistan, the researchers have conducted a survey based on fundamental questions about the radicalization, extremism and terrorism in the Department of Anthropology in QAU Islamabad. The respondents are from former FATA, KPK, Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab and all are the student of M.Sc. and their age range from 23-30.

The questions asked to the respondents and their answers are:

- **Do you listen to music?**

85 per cent respondents have said yes and 15 per cent have said no. Out of 85 per cent, 30 per cent are from Punjab, 30 per cent are from Sindh, 25 per cent are from Balochistan, 20 per cent are from KPK and 5 per cent are from former FATA.

Out of 15 per cent, 70 per cent are from former FATA and KPK and 30 per cent are from Balochistan and other parts of the country.

- **Do you understand that Western dressing has any link with religion and it keeps away from religion?**

90 per cent respondents are of the opinion that Western dressing has no link with religion and it will not keep any one from religion. Out of 90 per cent 25 per cent are from Punjab, 23 per cent are from Sindh, 22 per cent are Balochistan, 20 per cent are KPK and 10 per cent are from former FATA. The remaining 10 per cent respondents are of the opinion that Western dressing has link with religion and it keeps away from religion. Out of 10 per cent 80 per cent are from KPK and former FATA while 20 per cent are from Balochistan, Sindh and Punjab.

- **Where you have gained basic religious education?**

Around 35 per cent respondents have gained basic religious education from madrasses, 60 per cent have gained from school and 5 per cent have gained from their parents. Out of 35 per cent 60 per cent are from KPK and from FATA, 15 per cent are from Punjab, 15 per cent are from Balochistan and 10 per cent are from Sindh. Out of 60 percent, 35 per cent are from Punjab, 30 per cent are from Sindh, 20 per cent are from Balochistan, 10 per cent are from KPK and 5 per cent are from former FATA.

- **Who is serving Islam properly in our society, either politicians, mullah or religious scholars?**

63 per cent respondents are of the opinion that religious scholars are serving Islam properly in our society. Out of 63 per cent 31 per cent are from Punjab, 28 per cent are from Sindh, 25 per cent are from Balochistan and 16 per cent are from KPK and former FATA. 30 per cent respondents understand that mullah is serving Islam properly. Out of this 30 per cent, 62 per cent are from KPK and former FATA, 20 per cent are from Balochistan, 10 per cent are from Punjab and 8 per cent are from Sindh. The remaining

8 per cent are of the opinion that politicians are serving Islam. Almost 80 per cent out of this 8 per cent are from Punjab and Sindh while 20 per cent are from KPK and Balochistan.

- **What are the main reasons of the backwardness of the Muslim in the world according to your opinion, either due to lack of scientific knowledge, US and Western dominancy?**

65 per cent respondents say that main reason is lack of scientific knowledge in Muslims. Out of these 42 per cent 30 per cent are from Punjab, 28 per cent are from Sindh, 22 per cent are from KPK and former FATA while 20 per cent are from Balochistan. 35 per cent respondents are of the opinion that the main reason is the US and Western dominancy over the Muslims of the world. Out of these 35 per cent, 36 per cent are from KPK and former FATA, 22 per cent are from Balochistan, 22 per cent are from Punjab and 20 per cent are from Sindh.

- **Do you understand that any one cannot be a good Muslim without praying five times a day?**

70 per cent respondent have said yes to above question. Out of this 70 per cent, 40 per cent are from KPK and former FATA, 24 per cent are from Balochistan, 22 per cent are from Punjab and 14 per cent are from Sindh. The remaining 30 per cent respondents have said no to above question. Out of this 30 per cent, 42 per cent are from Sindh, 33 per cent are from Punjab, 17 per cent are from Balochistan and 8 per cent are from KPK and former FATA.

- **What do you mean by Jihad?**

60 per cent respondents have said that jihad means to fight against cruelty. Out of this 60 per cent 30 per cent are from Punjab, 28 per cent are from Sindh, 25 per cent are from Balochistan and 18 per cent are from KPK and former FATA. The remaining 40 per cent are of the opinion that jihad means to fight against the enemies of Islam. Out of this 40 per cent 40 per cent are from KPK and former FATA, 30 per cent are from Balochistan, 17 per cent are from Punjab and 13 per cent are from Sindh.

- **Do you understand that Pakistan s support to US on war against terrorism is a right policy?**

66 per cent respondents are of the opinion that war against terrorism is not our war and Pakistan must review its policy regarding war against terrorism.

Out of this 66 per cent, 36 per cent are from KPK and former FATA, 23 per cent are from Balochistan, 21 per cent are from Punjab and 20 per cent are from Sindh. The remaining 34 per cent respondents have favored Pakistan support to USA. Out of this 34 per cent 35 per cent are from Sindh, 32 per cent are from Punjab, 23 per cent are from Balochistan and 10 per cent are from KPK and former FATA.

- **What do you think that the education is necessary for girls or not?**

80 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that female education is very necessary. Out of this 72 per cent, 40 per cent are from Punjab, 21 per cent are from Sindh, 19 per cent are from Balochistan and 21 per cent are from KPK while the respondents from former FATA are just 5 per cent. The remaining 20 per cent respondents understand that girl education is not necessary. Out of this 28 per cent, 55 per cent are from former FATA and KPK. 20 per cent are from Balochistan, 20 per cent are from Balochistan and only 5 per cent are from Punjab.

- **Which of the following incidents have hearted your feelings and emotions?**

- **Lal Masjid Operation**
- **Military Operation in Tribal Areas**
- **Insurgency in Balochistan**
- **The assassination of Benazir Bhutto**

40 per cent respondents have been emotionally hearted due to the Lal Masjid operation out of which 40 per cent are from Punjab, 30 per cent are from KPK and former FATA, 17 per cent are from Balochistan and 13 per cent are from Sindh. 25 per cent respondents' feelings have been hearted due to the military operation in tribal areas out of which 60 per cent are from KPK and former FATA, 22 per cent are from Balochistan, 18 per cent are from Sindh and 10 per cent are from Punjab. 10 per cent respondents have expressed their resentment against the alleged military operation in Balochistan out of which 50 per cent are from Balochistan, 20 per cent are from Sindh, 18 per cent are from KPK and former FATA and 12 per cent are from Punjab. The remaining 25 per cent have expressed their anger over the assassination of Benazir Bhutto out of which 50 per cent are from Sindh, 35 per cent are from Punjab, 10 per cent are from KPK and former FATA and 5 per cent are from Balochistan.

- **Should the religious parties be given the chance to make government in Pakistan?**

71 per cent respondents have opposed any government of the religious parties in Pakistan out of which 28 per cent are from Sindh, 28 per cent are from Punjab, 24 per cent are from Balochistan and 20 per cent are from KPK and former FATA. The remaining 29 per cent respondents have favored the rule of religious parties out of which 35 per cent are from KPK and former, 30 per cent are from Balochistan, 18 per cent are from Punjab and 17 per cent are from Sindh.

- **Do you have any affiliation with any religious political party?**

75 per cent respondents have not affiliation with any religious parties out of which 29 per cent are from Sindh, 27 are from Punjab, 26 per cent are from Balochistan and 18 per cent are from KPK and former FATA. The remaining 25 per cent respondents have affiliation with religious political parties out of which 55 per cents are from KPK and former FATA, 19 per cents are from Balochistan, 17 per cents are from Punjab and 9 per cents are from Sindh.

Conclusion

Dealing with the menace of militancy requires multipronged efforts. After the far-reaching event of 9/11, more than 70 thousand people have been killed in the name of war against terrorism in Pakistan with an economic loss of around US\$118 billion. Pervez Musharraf's policy of supporting US unconditionally in war against terrorism and his policies of enlightened moderation have fueled the dead fire. In the research paper the all phenomenon has been discussed. The most radicalized youth are from former FATA, followed by KPK, Balochistan, Punjab and lastly Sindh. The reasons in former FATA and KPK are that these areas have been the center of Islamic movement of Mujahideen against the Soviet Union and then Islamic agenda of Taliban against the US from 1980s till to date. The mujahideen were trained with the U.S. support and funding against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan during the Cold War which resulted to influx of more than 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan. These refugees are a major source of radicalization in the country. Lack of education, low literacy rate and bad socio-economic conditions are also the root causes of the radicalization. The alarming decline in socio-economic conditions

continues unabated giving rise to new frustrations every day. Threat of youth radicalization must be warded off through official de-radicalization efforts. The key lies in greater employment opportunities and poverty reduction. However, most important is better scientific education. In the recent days, media is one of the important factor in term of escalating or de-escalating the radicalization in the youth of Pakistan because all youth are directly or indirectly attracted by the media. Social media is the most powerful tool for de-radicalization phenomenon.

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