

Emerging tendencies of radicalization in Pakistan: a proposed counter-radicalization strategy

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Extract

The radical/extremism tendencies in Pakistan are the product of interlocking capitalist, imperial, national and local factors. Global and transnational factors have a direct relevance, specifically in the case of religious violence. Pakistan's ruling classes, including those involved in its birth, made alliances with retrogressive forces to achieve their political objectives by seeking the help of global and imperial powers, such as Saudi Arabia and the U.S. In return, Iran could not resist balancing Saudi influence in Pakistan. Instead of focusing on the core causes which encourage radicalism/extremism, unfortunately, the ruling political classes of Pakistan have invariably been more than happy to oblige the imperial project, in return for stints in power.

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While the impact of global and regional factors cannot be understated, the real concerns and challenges are home-grown which include social insecurities, religious disharmony, fragmented and unjust society, failing economy, directionless education system, political turmoil and a dysfunctional government that set the pace for extremism/radicalism. It is important to highlight that while the challenges are home-grown, the solution to address such challenges also lies within. Finally, it may be said that it is vital to understand the political economy of religious violence, instead of explaining it by recourse to some essential ideological characteristics of the actors involved.

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Preface

The societal transformational process is continuous and does not depend on any single factor. The phenomenon is linked with both external and internal factors. Internally, it is the education system, religious disharmony, social insecurities, failing economy, political disorder and a dysfunctional government. Externally, the potential clash of civilizations, generation of anti-West sentiments, especially against the U.S., in Pakistan and the Islamic world in general because of their perceived anti-Islam policies and compounded by deteriorating socioeconomic conditions. Unless such trends are checked and contained well in time, the end result is likely to be very perilous not only for the country itself but also for the region as a whole.

While extremism and radicalism does exist even in the most advanced societies including the West, regrettably, this phenomenon is more pronounced in South Asia in addition to the Central Asian States, parts of Africa and the Arab Peninsula. Today, a developing nexus of terrorism is based on al Qaida and Taliban in Afghanistan, Taliban in the Federally Administrative Tribal Areas (FATA), extremists in parts of Pakistani society, Mujahedeen in Indian-held Kashmir, rising extremism in Muslim youth in India and in the West, and Xinxiang in China.¹

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In this global village, nothing can survive in isolation. Globalization means that no nation can completely exclude itself from the influence of another. Globalization has so eroded the effects of distance that any established theme propagated by one group in one part of the world can reach targets over intercontinental distances.² Since the world is divided between the haves and have-nots, society is also divided between liberal, moderate and extremists, irrespective of their faith and religious background. Since this gap is more obvious in Pakistan that is also reinforced by a number of other factors, the tendency of extremism is unfortunately escalating here at a much faster pace than in other regional countries.

Pakistan's support to the U.S. proxy war against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan adversely affected the country's cultural and social fabric. By the time the U.S. left Afghanistan in early 1990, Pakistan government had lost control over Jihadist groups operating in Afghanistan from across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The incidents of 9/11, the resultant actions in Afghanistan by the U.S. and its allies, and the U-turn taken by Pakistan, have led to radicalization

of Afghan and parts of Pakistani societies. The world cannot afford to let Pakistan drift towards this dangerous tendency. Losing at the centre of gravity that is Afghanistan means defeat at all the periphery. Such an upheaval would certainly contribute towards radicalization in Muslim communities in Europe and the US though this might not be the only contributing factor.

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The need to understand and explain the phenomena referred to as extremism and radicalization is becoming increasingly urgent, given the massive humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Pakistan and elsewhere, accompanied by a pervasive sense of fear and foreboding. The tendencies of extremism/terrorism are further growing and it is difficult to explore or analyze such transformations. However, the core causes and indicators are written on the wall which need the attention of the policy-makers on a priority basis.

Instead of characterizing the perceived extremism and violence as some kind of inherent flaw within a particular people, religion, culture or belief system, it is more fruitful to explore the political economy of radicalization, in order to lay bare the material basis that may have helped generating radicalism. It is essentially not an ideological characteristic of the actors involved. It seems to be more useful to examine the conflicts between competing social classes attempting to establish their hegemony and deploying religion, or a specific form of it, to justify their position in the social and economic hierarchies.³ We firmly believe that it is the economy that is central to all problems, other factors only reinforce them.

Once we talk about Pakistan exclusively, beside other issues, it is also confronted with a challenge as to how its youth be converted into a productive force without letting it being a national liability. A large section of youth is sitting on the fence ready to fall this way or the other that needs to be brought back in national main stream. That is only possible by investing on human development at every stage.

In this backdrop, paper focuses on the dynamics leading to radicalism and extremism in Pakistan and makes an attempt to propose a counter-radicalization strategy. With a view to achieving desirable results, deliberation on the following aspects has been made:

First, introduction followed by explaining/defining the term ‘radicalization’. Second, the core causes leading to radicalization in Pakistan. Third, the proposed counter-radicalization strategy for Pakistan, and finally a conclusion. The opinions expressed in this paper are solely those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the governmental or institutional stance.

Explaining/understanding radicalization

There is always a difficulty in achieving consensus definitions for social phenomena. Like terrorism, there is no consensus definition and single explanation for radicalization. The causes of radicalization are as diverse as they are abundant (for overviews, see Hudson, 1999; Borum, 2004; Nesser, 2004; Bjorgo, 2005; Victoroff, 2005; Slooman and Tillie, 2006; Loza, 2007; Silber and Bhatt, 2007; and EU-Commission Expert Group, 2008). This implies that independent factors are insufficient to result in radicalization and that radicalization can only be the outcome of a complex interaction between various factors.⁴

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There is a general consensus that radicalization is not necessarily a religious phenomenon. Extremism is a state of mind that focuses on bringing radical changes in the existing social and political order. Radicalization and extremism could be used interchangeably. Radicalization is a characteristic that challenges the fundamental nature of the existing social system, thus advocating progressive and thorough political/social reforms. The terms ‘radicalization’ and ‘talibanization’ are being employed to refer to the increasing tendency to use a peculiar brand of religion as the justification for conquest and control over territory, populations and resources, and the establishment of specific forms of judicial and social systems by the use of force.⁵

Rasul Bakhsh Rais holds the view that radicalism popularizes new ideologies questions, the legitimacy and relevance of the old ones, and believes that the existing ideologies have no answer to contemporary problems. One must note that the terrorists do not simply ‘arrive’ as terrorists; there is a process by which an individual or group becomes radicalized. Thus, the danger lies in the fact that an extremist can be indoctrinated to become a terrorist. Therefore, controlling extremism strikes at the root of terrorism.⁶ Ahmer Bilal Sufi, an expert in international law, sheds light on the legal aspects of the phenomenon. He opines

that radicalization is a mindset, which may be called religious aggression or violation of religion. In fact, it is a mindset of deviation from law. In his opinion, when someone deviates from law, he behaves as a radical. Law is not a metaphor but a symbol of the expression of state's authority.⁷

Muhammad Islam, a professor of political science, argues that radicalization is a group phenomenon where views and actions become violent in a comparative perspective. Radicalization is generally described as a situation in which groups, or society as a whole, resort to violent tactics. But, according to him, it is an incomplete definition. He further explains that radicalization actually occurs at the level of perceptions/ideas – or ideology – before the action or strategy level. And, all this happens in a 'comparative perspective' where a group compares its values, notions and perspectives with those of another group and tries to achieve parity by applying different tactic and resorting to violence rather than getting into negotiations.⁸

Most of the definitions come from Western sources which project that the tendency of radicalization is common in the Muslim world. However, other religions and ideologies are not excluded. McCauley and Moskaleiko (2008) define radicalization as a change in belief, feeling, or behaviour toward increased support for intergroup conflict, while the definition used by Netherland's intelligence service focuses on the pursuit and support of changes in society that harm the functioning of the democratic legal order.⁹

A frequently used definition is the one given by the Dutch intelligence services AIVD: "The (active) pursuit of and/or support to far-reaching changes in society which may constitute a danger to (the continued existence of) the democratic legal order (aim), which may involve the use of undemocratic methods (means) that may harm the functioning of the democratic legal order (effect)." Supplemented by: "a person's (growing) willingness to pursue and/or support such changes himself (in an undemocratic way or otherwise), or his encouraging others to do so." (AIVD, 2004, pp. 13-14)¹⁰

Communism or Marxism is considered a radical ideology because it questions the legitimacy and advocacy of existing institutions. Marxism and anarchism justify violent means to topple the existing system. Radical groups always have a radical ideology or agenda. The post-colonial Muslim States failed to perform their fundamental functions, that is, ensuring justice, social development, rule of law, security and safety of individuals, human freedoms and constitutional values and institutions, thus leading to radicalism.¹¹

Another important point for radicalization research is the relationship between behaviours, attitudes and beliefs. The key question for radicalization researchers and security personnel is the extent to which an individual engages in

violent behaviour and what predicts that behaviour. One question thus arises whether radicalization is about beliefs, subscribing to radical thoughts, about actions, or engaging in radical behaviour. It seems obvious that individuals who engage in radical behaviour hold radical beliefs, but, in fact, it is not entirely clear that one's attitudes or beliefs necessarily underlie their behaviour. Thus, radical attitudes may not be a good indicator of radicalization.¹²

Further, subscribing to a radical belief does not necessitate engaging in radical actions, and civil liberties dictate that private beliefs should be free from public scrutiny. The situation here appears to be that radical beliefs might be a good way of identifying those who are at risk of engaging in radical actions. However, individuals should not be targeted as suspicious on the basis of their beliefs. In addition, we know that there are many individuals who possess beliefs that would be considered radical, but who never engage in illegal or violent behaviour. Thus, the relationship between radical beliefs and radical actions needs to be studied carefully.¹³

In our considered opinion, unfortunately, Pakistan is one of the few countries in the world where practically nothing is in order. Therefore, the question of bringing changes in the existing social order is not fully applicable while defining trends leading to radicalization/extremism. The emerging trends in Pakistan are more dangerous because unlike other countries, the forces involved in this particular phenomenon may not necessarily focus on common agenda in this polarized society. Thus, extremist elements might pull society in divergent directions to achieve their respective objectives. That would be a serious challenge because the government would need to evolve different strategies to tackle extremist groups serving the interests of various visible/ invisible actors.

Finally, radical/extremist groups can engage in nonviolent behavior without any intent to become a terrorist. Although not every radical becomes a terrorist, every terrorist has gone through a radicalization process. This indicates that terrorism could be the worst possible outcome of the radicalization process.¹⁴ This tendency could be purely indigenous because of failed expectation from the successive regimes or it could be fully engineered by foreign powers with a specific agenda. There is also a possibility that emerging trends could be the result of both, the government's failure to fulfill its obligation reinforced by foreign hands. Unfortunately, Pakistan is trapped both ways.

Core causes leading to radicalization- global perspective

External factors manifest themselves independently of the individual. They shape and constrain people's environment, whereas individuals have only a minor influence on their environment. Since 9/11, Muslim organizations have been the focus of suspicion, and governments pressurized to crackdown on

terrorist financing. Thus, blacklisting of organizations was done outside of a clear legal and policy framework based on an organization's associations rather than its own actions. The U.S. strategy of using the stick against all Muslim charity organizations, whether or not they were involved in radical activities, proved counterproductive across the globe.¹⁵ Thus, even many of the common Muslims who are fully prepared to live side-by-side with other communities, seem frustrated. The steps taken against charities by various governments, especially Pakistan, offended a large segment of society and went a long way to changing their behaviour into extremism. This factor, reinforced by others, has caused a serious impact, especially on the younger generation of Pakistan.

Because of globalization, international linkages around the world are available through latest communication networks, including the internet. Thus, radical thinking can be promoted through online training manuals, audio and video recordings, without even meeting the other party. Intelligence officials are increasingly finding evidence of these online networks in Europe and North America. Thus, oppressed societies and communities across the world could be found anywhere as catalysts to energize the tendencies of radicalism. International networking is an important factor that helps various extremists organization across the globe promote a common agenda.

In the broader context, the Western social structure is collapsing w. The Western culture has lost balance because it has gone to one extreme and seems unable to revert back to regain the balance. The collapsing social structure, therefore, brings frustration leading to extremism in society. Like Pakistan, the Western youth is becoming a challenge to the existing social order. The recent violent action undertaken by the youth in UK and elsewhere is a testimony that the Western society is also heading towards extremism/radicalism. However, in Pakistani context, the causes are more intricate and multifaceted.

Additionally, the global economy is melting down and is battling for life. It is inviting serious challenges to world stability. Who could imagine a decade ago, at the time of Western invasion of Afghanistan and later Iraq, that the rich European Union and Euro would be faced with the kind of calamity they are facing today?¹⁶ If the security and political objectives are not redefined by the U.S. and other Western countries and the military expenditures are not curtailed, the situation can get worse. Greece and Italy in the European Union are already struggling, and the U.S. economic indicators are also not very encouraging.

The negative impact of the global economic situation was realized when people came to the street in large numbers streets in many of the cities including New York. The global economic meltdown would definitely have serious repercussion on the developing and underdeveloped countries which are dependent on the World Bank and the IMF. An increased graph of the

unemployed youth across the globe would add to the problem of radicalization and extremism.

Nevertheless, the causes of frustration and radical behaviour of the Muslim communalities residing in Europe and the U.S. are different which needs a separate study. While the Muslim communities of Europe and America have by and large remained neglected, the incidents of 9/11 have further alienated many of them. The incidents have further polarized society

Causes specific to Pakistan

Historical legacy

Extremism and radicalism have roots in Pakistani society that needs to be understood. It is quite difficult to quantify or analyze such transformations which have a psychological angle as well. In the Pakistani context, the core causes/indicators are written on the wall. The latest UN report on human development has revealed alarming figures where Pakistan stands at 145th in the overall Human Development Index in 2011 as compared to 125th last year with almost 50 per cent of the population deprived of basic necessities of education and health.¹⁷ Pakistan's history leading to radicalism can be divided into four distinct eras starting from 1947 as follows:

The first era starts from 1947 and covers up to 1977. The Quaid's famous presidential address to the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947 was sufficient to establish that religion and the two nation theory that remained central to the creation of Pakistan, were no more valid as the basis of nationhood. He said, "You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place or worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of the State ... We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State."¹⁸

In contrast to this speech, however, in 1940 he declared that the Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs and literatures. They belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. They are not religious in the strict sense of the word, but are, in fact, different and distinct social orders, and it is a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality.¹⁹

Nonetheless, the impact of Jinnah's address to the Constituent Assembly could not be felt because it ran against the spirit on the basis of which Pakistan was created. Therefore, later in the Objectives Resolution passed by the House in 1950,, the first and main clause was the affirmation that Sovereignty over the

entire universe belongs to Allah. The third clause further reinforced the power of one religion over the others by stating that “the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice, as enunciated by Islam, shall be fully observed.” That, therefore, became the basis of religious nationalism.²⁰ The non-Muslim members objected to the novel idea of Sovereignty of Allah, and argued that this would militate against the equality of all citizens. Thus, that was the beginning of the clash between the majority Muslims and the minorities.

In our view, there was nothing wrong with the clause that Pakistan’s social system be governed as enunciated in Islam. However, things went wrong because successive regimes could not implement the philosophy in true spirit and society remained divided on ethnic/sectarian lines. Nonetheless, while Islam was never practiced in true spirit as State religion, a brief examination of the post-partition history of Pakistan reveals that virtually every ruler, whether civil or military, religious or liberal groups, used religion as an instrument of the attainment, maintenance and perpetuation of power.²¹

In turn, this deployment of religion in the politics of power strengthened and reinforced religious ideologies as also created enormous sectarian, ideological and, ultimately violent conflicts over the version of religion that would define the State in Pakistan. Even Bhutto could not bring drastic changes, and besides other important clauses, the name “Islamic Republic of Pakistan” was given to the State and Islam was declared the State religion of Pakistan.²² The religious lobbies could even succeed to get Ahmadies declared as non-Muslims during the Bhutto era.

The second era starts from 1977 and goes up to 1999. Pakistan started to witness the impact of polarization when General Zia-ul-Haq imposed Martial Law in 1977. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a blessing in disguise for Zia to stay in power for a prolonged period. He used religion for political purposes intelligently and effectively. He extended his support to the U.S. against the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and helped America raise Jihadists in collaboration with some other Muslim countries. The most devastating effect of Zia’s reign of terror was the massive rise of fundamentalist and sectarian parties that gave rise to enormous sectarian conflict and violence. And, the decades following Zia’s Islamization drive saw an exponential rise in sectarian strife.²³

The U.S. and Saudi Arabia provided \$3.5 billion to the Zia regime for the funding of madrassahs (seminaries) for Afghan Jihad. By the end of the Zia era, there were as many as 8,000 registered and as many as 25,000 unregistered madaris. Parallel to these madaris, Zia’s Islamization project impacted public education, political setup, institutional framework, financial system and legal imperatives which created voids and fissures within the State and society. He

considered the introduction of the Islamic system as an essential prerequisite for the country.

According to a study, it is estimated that there are between 18,000 and 22,000 madrassahs operating in Pakistan, teaching over 1.5 million children who have become a serious threat to Pakistan's stability internally as well as externally.²⁴ Consequently, massive proliferation of militant and sectarian outfits has taken place, including the Jaish-e-Muhammad, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Islam, Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Harkat-ul-Jihad-ul-Islami, Al-Badr Mujahideen, Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi, Sipah-e-Sahaba-e-Pakistan and so on (Rashid, 1997; Rana, 2002).²⁵

Even after the death of General Zia, a decade of civilian democratic governments led by Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, alternatively, could not distance themselves from religious lobbies to retain political power despite claiming to be secular and liberal in outlook. It was during Benazir's second tenure that the Taliban raised to power in Kabul and her Minister of Interior, Naseerullah Babar, described them as "our children". Nawaz Sharif was even closer with religious lobby.²⁶

The third era starts from 2000 and goes up to 2008, another long phase of martial law, during which General Musharraf became an absolute ruler by centralizing all power in his own person. He was no different from the past rulers and continued to sponsor the Jihadist groups and other parochial groups to maintain his position. After the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks of 9/11, he was forced to take a U-turn on the Afghan policy. But, there was widespread suspicion as also evidence that he continued to maintain the extremist outfits as "strategic assets", against India.

While General Musharraf did make some efforts to moderate religion-oriented trends and check militancy, he maintained his alliance with the Muttahida-Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) that helped him getting the 17th Amendment passed to save his skin.²⁷ His policy shift proved counterproductive and brought tremendous pressure on Pakistan. By the time he was forced to leave the Presidency, the country was already in very bad shape from all angles.

Nonetheless, following the incident of 9/11, the Musharraf-led government attempted to introduce education reforms duly supported by the U.S. The objective was to increase the national literacy rate, provide universal education, improve education quality and initiate national curriculum reform. In order to bring madaris in national mainstream education, English and science subjects were to be introduced in madaris' curriculums. During 2002-2003, sufficient funds were allocated to assist registered seminaries by paying the salaries to those teachers who would teach non-religious subjects.²⁸

The process could not make a dent in the existing parallel education system because of lack of commitment and capacity, following the launch of the initial plan. The plan also became a casualty to the involvement of the U.S. interest and the failure of the government to adopt an even-handed stance in making changes in the existing education policy, besides other factors, including the military surge in Afghanistan, involvement of Pakistan army against the Taliban, drone attacks by the U.S. in FATA and a long-drawn-out war of attrition in Swat and elsewhere against militants/terrorists.

The current and projected challenges related to radicalism/extremism are more pronounced and need immediate attention. The present regime has been unable to distance itself from the legacy of Mushrraf's policies that continues to help extremists/terrorists to promote their agendas. However, it has been able to develop a national consensus, especially in the context of operations against militants in Swat, Malakand and South Waziristan.²⁹ But, unfortunately, it has been unable to not build on what it had achieved in the context of pursuing a moderate vision of Islam because of its inefficiency and changing priorities.

We must be mindful of the fact that the mere presence of radicalism /violence cannot be attributed to ideology only. Such an approach ignores historical, economic and material factors in producing the phenomenon such as radicalism/extremism. Thus, besides the religious factor, the emerging trends of radicalism in Pakistan can be attributed to the following factors:

Global and regional influences

Because of globalization as highlighted earlier, Pakistani society is equally affected and the youth seem more vulnerable. The conduct of the West led by the U.S. serves as a catalyst to encouraging and promoting radical tendencies against the West, especially in the younger generation, and helps al Qaeda and other organizations promote their agenda. If the West is sincere in eliminating the menace of terrorism across the globe, they would need to change their attitude towards Pakistan in particular and the Muslims world in general.

Regionally, too, we have problems. There is a common saying that we can change friends but not neighbours. Unfortunately, we are living in a region where we have serious problems with our neighbors, especially India, and to some extent Afghanistan. India's hegemonic designs have forced Pakistan to adopt India-centric security policies. The perceived threat from India to the very existence of Pakistan's together with the long outstanding issue of Jammu and Kashmir do influence common people towards extremism, especially in the context of Jihad against India.

Similarly, the situation in Afghanistan also plays a role in promoting extremism not only in Afghanistan but also in Pakistan. At the same time, Pakistan's relations with Iran too remain below the comfort zone due to many factors, including U.S. military presence in our common neighbourhood. Occasionally, the temperature on both sides goes high that causes frustration even at the level of common people. Shia-Sunni issues also remain central to Pakistan-Iran relations.

Domestic challenges: current and projected

The current and projected challenges cannot be narrated in isolation; they are part of the legacy of the past sixty-five years. At the time of partition of the subcontinent, the best thing that India did was to do away with the feudal system to a large extent, but we failed due to a number of factors. Rubina Saigol has highlighted that the movement for Pakistan was initiated by rich landlords threatened by the demand for land reforms on the Indian National Congress agenda.³⁰ Thus, a major part of our rural population still remains divided between landlords and tenants. Feudal families have dominated Pakistani politics for decades. Industrialist families like that of t Nawaz Sharif are newcomers, but their political support derives from feudal families.³¹ Thus, unless there is a change in the system, the middle class would stand no chance of becoming a part of the governing system.

The incidents of 9/11 and the consequent actions in Afghanistan by the U.S. and its allies have resulted in radicalization of Afghan and part of Pakistani society. As pointed out earlier, Muslim organizations all over the world became target and blacklisted, irrespective of whether or not they were involved in terrorism. Nine of them are Pakistani organizations out of which some are still effective because the public has not rejected them.

Religio-political parties like Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam and Jamat-e-Islami are very close to some of these groups, and they are not prepared to contribute to education reforms desperately needed to create a level playing field for their progress and prosperity. Thus, these extremist groups are still working on agendas different from government policy. Surely, they are prepared to push society towards their respective brands of Islam. Consequently, Pakistan is one of the most volatile countries where.

It may suffice to say that because of inconsistent economic policies of successive regimes, Pakistan's economy is at the verge of collapse. Since 9/11, as Pakistan became part of the war on terror, the ground situation has gone from bad to worst. Ninety per cent population has been put under tremendous economic pressure due to Pakistan's flawed economic policies linked with the World Bank (WB) and the IMF which have taken over the decision-making policies of

Pakistan in economic matters.³² Therefore, in the absence of economic depth, Pakistan is unable to address the core causes. Thus, society is expected to be driven towards extremism and radicalism unless drastic steps are taken to revive the economy.

Class differences like backward versus modern and illiterate versus civilized and staunch religious versus open minded serve to complicate the issue that contributes to polarization of society and help promote extremism. As pointed out earlier, it is the economy that is central to all problems; other factors only reinforce them.

The fact that not every poor person radicalizes indicates that other factors intervene in the relationship between economic deprivation and radicalization. As a consequence, several authors have focused on relative rather than absolute deprivation as a possible cause for radicalism. In Pakistani context, one may describe it as difference between the haves and the have-nots". Many scholars have provided support for the hypothesis that relative deprivation can trigger violent, collective action, even for people who are not personally deprived but act on behalf of the group.

Gurr's *Why men Rebel* (1970) is a well known publication in which he defines relative deprivation as "actors' perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and the goods and their value capabilities." (p. 24) Thus, relative deprivation refers to a subjective perception of being unfairly disadvantaged in relation to reference groups.³³ The privileged class in Pakistan is vulnerable to violent steps from those who are deprived. The recent wave of thefts, robberies and abductions for ransom is an indicator of the real possibility of open violence in the days ahead. .

Though there is a general impression promoted especially by the West that radicalization is solely linked with religion; in reality, that is not correct. Religion is one factor that may or may not contribute to radicalization. Rather, the problems that Pakistan is confronted with arise from fundamental socio-economic and class inequalities. According to the latest UN report on human development, 49.4 per cent of Pakistan's population is living in multidimensional poverty, and 53.4 per cent is witnessing intense deprivation.³⁴

Pakistani society is characterized by its multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic and class-divided texture. In the past, we have seen serious clashes between various linguistics groups in Karachi. Karachi city accounts for of over 13 million people coming from various linguistic and ethnic groups, and is thus prone to such threats. The killing of over 1,400 innocent people in the recent past is an example as to how this city can be inflamed within minutes due to internal and external factors.

Emerging tendencies of radicalization in Pakistan: a proposed counter-radicalization strategy

In general, till late 1970s, there were two clearly identifiable groups of Muslims, Sunni and Shia, but of late, Pakistan has come to have a mushroom of sectarian groups from within the two main sects. While the two main sects may cause a threat to each other, there is a growing threat that each group may fight with sub groups of the same sect. As pointed out by the former president, General Musharraf,

“How does the world judge our claim? It looks upon us as terrorists. We have been killing each other. ... Our claim of tolerance is phony. ---What about mutual tolerance? It exists nowhere. Instead, we are killing each other wearing masks....My particular appeal to all those Ulema who are sitting here to promote harmony. Why can't we maintain this harmony outside? Why should we weaken ourselves internally?”³⁵

In our considered view, the biggest threat that Pakistan faces today is because of its failed education policy. It may be appropriate to point out that there has been no education policy since early 1980s, and the young generation remains directionless. As a shortcut to fulfilling the government obligations to provide affordable primary education to the poor, the regime opened madaris which are neither mosques nor schools. Their pupils are not aware in which slot of society they were being educated. Consequently, as pointed out earlier, there are approximately between 1.5 million to 2.5 million madras students, but there is no sure way to assure that a majority of them would not become extremists because they are unlikely to find employment on the basis of their unskilled education.³⁶

Currently, we have three parallel education systems, Urdu medium, English medium and the madrasah culture. So, clearly, Pakistan's education system has divided Pakistani society in three distinct groups which is alarming and detrimental to its national security interests.

While the democratic process is back on track, unfortunately, the government has no plan to integrate society into the broader political, social and cultural persona. Due to the inflation and the price hike, there is no visible sign of improvement in the social life of common people in the foreseeable future. Therefore, the writers see a serious problem in coming days and months where common people may also be driven to extremism/radicalism.³⁷

It is commonly believed that people may continue to survive on one meal a day, but they would not tolerate injustice for long. While higher courts are involved in fire-fighting, the lower judiciary is just about in as good a health as any other institution of Pakistan. A majority of the population cannot even get their cases registered in police stations due various constraints and pressures.³⁸ The aggrieved party would then possibly take recourse to other means to avenge

itself, and for that purpose, it may align itself with some radical/extremist group. Once an individual become a part of such a group, he forecloses his option of coming out of it.

Let us now focus on another serious challenge which relates to radicalization of Pakistani youth. The incidents of 9/11 have had a negative impact on the youth in particular in Muslim communities. That reflects a particular mindset questioning nations' boundaries, seeks a transnational Islamic identity, and believes in violence rather than dialogue to achieve its objectives. However, as already pointed out, the incidents of 9/11 is not the only cause in Pakistan's case. The other causes are embedded in history spread over sixty years, including inconsistent State policies leading to political and economic instability, hostile neighbourhood and the lack of investment in human and social capital.

In this context, Hasan Askari Rizvi has provided a clear picture as to how State policies affect society as a whole. He says that when the State education system is unable to offer a balanced education with an emphasis on political, cultural, and religious pluralism, a large number of young people become vulnerable to narrow and extremist appeals. Some of them may cross over to the phenomenon of terrorism as a strategy for advancing their causes.³⁹

Other factors notwithstanding, as predicted by Hassan Abbas, the madaris became the nursery for the jihadist groups during 1980s and then the assembly line that churned out tens of thousands of radicalized young men who engaged the Soviet Military in Afghanistan and later the India Army in Kashmir. Some of them made terrorism a way of life in Pakistan and eventually they came to hold Pakistan hostage.⁴⁰ Whatever he perceived then, things are unfolding accordingly. We believe that when such a vulnerable and directionless class is available, their exploitation is not an issue at all.

As pointed out earlier, marginalized and oppressed communities that experience relative deprivation are prone to exploitation leading to radicalization. Unemployment/joblessness can become a catalyst to encouraging radical behaviour leading to violence. On the contrary, the greater the amount of services available, the less vulnerable a community would be to radicalization. The youth that constitutes a majority in Pakistan's demographic structure, is vulnerable and if this class is not brought into the national mainstream through sustainable investments of educational, social, political and economic outlays, it can turn into a human liability.

At the time of partition, Pakistan Army emerged as one of the most organized institutions that continued to play a dominating role in Pakistan's domestic as well as foreign policy affairs. It was and is still considered as the guarantor of Pakistan's external and internal boundaries. Its intelligence wings

Emerging tendencies of radicalization in Pakistan: a proposed counter-radicalization strategy

have been playing a making and breaking role in political affairs by exploiting their links with radical/religious groups. It played an instrumental role in organizing Jihadist groups to support Kashmir independent struggle after having fully supported the Afghan Jihad against the Soviet Union. The same groups have now become part of the problem for Pakistan. Instead of creating unity, the army encouraged polarization in society.

Additionally, due to frequent interference in the political system, the army has also played a negative role in the growth of institutions and has not allowed democracy to prosper. The army also played in the hands of feudal lords and did not allow sustainable economic policies. Resultantly, we have a serious vacuum in all sectors; and in the absence of visionary political leadership; the nation seems frustrated with the existing political system.

Proposed counter-radicalization strategy

Global approach

Rather than looking the issues from a shallow prism, international community should focus on broad objectives of addressing the core causes which are amicably analyzed by the scholars, well registered and fully understood. Top-down approach would help developing countries in addressing and managing their governing issues due to the close support extended by the developed countries.

In authors' considered opinion, the West might like to redefine its objectives and focus on the core causes that lead to extremism and let their Muslim communities live side by side with them with honor and dignity. Additionally, the perspective that the US is engaged in a war against Islam must be removed by demonstrating that the US is friend of Muslims and not the enemy.

International community must be made to realize that al Qaeda is a small minority therefore; the environments must not be created for them to get majority status in the Muslim world. Our operative strategy should be able to isolate them by removing the perceptions that the West is adamant to destroy the Islamic values of Muslims community. It is for sure that the ideology propagated by al Qaeda can't be defeated by killing selected people; it can only be defeated by giving rational alternative options acceptable to common Muslims across the world.

We are of the view that the international community can deny al Qaeda a future only by winning the war of hearts and minds of the Muslim community rather than winning the war of ideas. Therefore, the two ideologies i.e. Islam and the West should co-exist and no effort are made to merge the two.

Al Qaida and the supporters of al Qaeda brand of ideology would automatically die if a just society is created globally. Therefore, if wide gaps of 'have and have not' between various societies/communities is reduced by having equitable distribution of wealth, there would be no extremism/radicalism and terrorism and the world will become peaceful.

While the West has an important role to play, the leadership of Muslim countries also has an important responsibility to help each other. Unfortunately, in order to protect their own agendas, some Muslim countries and independent groups are involved in creating the tendencies of extremism/radicalism in other Muslim countries. Pakistan presented itself as center of excellence to promote such tendencies and continues even today. It is therefore, important for Pakistani leadership to approach the relevant capitals to register its position and concerns.

Pakistan being partner in the ongoing war on terror has already lost over \$74 billion in addition to the killing of over 35000 people. Pakistan Army has recaptured the areas like Swat, Bajur, South Waziristan, Mohammad and Orakzai Agencies but it has yet to win hearts and minds of the people those who suffered. The motivation that brought Sufi Muhammad in Swat has yet not been addressed fully. People have not seen a major shift needed to completely isolate the terrorists/Taliban because of the lack of resources. International community has yet to come up to fulfill its commitment to support Pakistan. If Pakistan is left alone, its sacrifices can go waste and the society can drift back to chaos/anarchy which is neither in the regional interests nor in the interest of international community at large.

Regional approach

With regards to the problems in our western neighbour Afghanistan, the international community should focus on applying a three-pronged strategy: political dialogue among all stakeholders; socioeconomic reforms; and selective use of force against spoiler groups. An active participation of Pakistan is essential if permanent and sustainable peace is to be achieved.

In the Pakistan-India context, the unresolved issue of Jammu and Kashmir would continue to haunt and would not allow the two countries to improve their relationship beyond certain limits. Therefore, Kashmiris' struggle for self-determination would allow Jihadist groups to remain active in one form or the other. Thus, in order to have a peaceful region, the bilateral issues between India and Pakistan must be resolved on a priority basis so as to take away the motivation for the people to become extremists in either side.

National approach

To wean away a large segment of Pakistani society from well-knit web of religious extremists, a holistic policy focusing on human security is an essential element of national strategic outlook. There is no dearth of theoretical knowledge on the subject. In a nutshell, a counter-radicalization campaign has to be the first phase and an essential element of counter-terrorism strategy. The strategy would require well coordinated and sustainable response on the home front which includes optimal use of all element of national power. Some of the proposed steps as a counter-radicalization strategy may include:

Application of soft power is the best recipe to address the core causes leading to radicalism/extremism. Currently, a large section of population does not expect much from their political leadership. They are looking for their fundamental rights in the form of minimum social security which includes two meals a day, basic health care, basic schooling for their children and security against unlawful exploitation. It is not a challenging task; it does not require colossal economic resources either, but it does require sincerity to the cause and management of the existing resources.

Suffice it to say that land reforms are paramount to give a chance to the oppressed society and reduce the class differences. Reduction in abject poverty would encourage the poor not to enrol one or more of their children in a madrasa where ideologies of hate and terror are propagated, but to get their children mainstream education with the purpose of equipping them with knowledge and skills.

As was the vision of Jinnah, we must remove constitutional anomalies to give equal rights to all citizen of Pakistan. Article 2 of the Constitution defines Islam as the State religion, and aims to bring all laws in conformity with it. It contradicts Article 25 of the fundamental rights section, which declares all citizens to be equal. Such contradictions, within the basic law of the land, need to be removed so that all citizens, irrespective of their religion, sex, region, ethnicity or sect are considered equal before law.

We believe that if we succeed in separating religion from politics, that would serve both positively. That would not drag religion in politics and would not allow clerics to blackmail the political system. That would enable the State to make laws and policies, independent of religion. A national level debate is important to highlight the pros and cons of the idea.

The development work and social reforms in FATA must be undertaken immediately through a constitutional amendment. The young generation of FATA must be integrated in broader society through education and employment.

Once young people have a chance of employment in a productive economy, they are less likely to be attracted to religious or other kinds of violence, as a form of earning a livelihood.

The economic factor serves as the spinal cord. If the spinal cord fails to work, the entire body would collapse. Pakistan's economic managers have performed poorly, despite having the potential to do well. We, therefore, need to concentrate entirely on welfare of the people and development of the State. The policymakers need to reinvent the wheel to put Pakistan's economy back on track. Unless the economy is brought back on track, jobs cannot be created and prosperity cannot come, which is the vital factor if extremism and radicalism is to be addressed.

There are three categories of unemployed for whom different foci for job creation need to be developed. The first category is rural unemployed for whom we need to optimize agriculture, water management, dairy and livestock. The second category is the urban uneducated unemployed for whom we need to develop building and construction sector by creating skilled labour. The last is the urban educated unemployed for whom telecom and IT, education sector and banking and other advanced industrial sectors would be best suited.⁴¹

Education creates the mindset. A well educated person, even if he is poor, is less likely to be driven towards extremism. He would in all probability still struggle to go along with the existing social order. But the present education system, if not reformed, would be very damaging to the existing social order. If majority of madrassa students are not integrated in society, Pakistan's future would be very bleak. There are a number of suggestions made by scholars which need to be taken into consideration while drawing up education reforms. The National Education Policy of 2009 is truly a promising document, provided it is implemented in letter and spirit.⁴²

Good governance through strong institutionalized approach is the key to curbing the tendencies of extremism/terrorism in the country. The government machinery must be fully functional and prepared to home on those trying to change social order against the wishes of majority population. The law enforcing agencies including police and other civil armed forces and intelligence agencies must be fully prepared to take physical action if required. The government must work from a position of strength. Sadia also suggests that substantive reforms must be taken to improve the structure of governance and establish the writ of the State in a universal manner.⁴³ Additionally, independent and effective judiciary should prove a serious deterrence against the tendencies of radicalism/extremism.

Unfortunately, the sectarian issue is one of the most volatile problems in Pakistan which has a political angle as well. We propose that even if

constitutional amendments are required, those must be done to restrict the clerics to their religious domain. Sect-based processions to show strength must be disallowed by law and the use of loud speakers must also be banned. The establishment of interfaith committees at the district level by the Ministry of Minorities Affairs to hold monthly meetings to address issues of religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue is an important development.⁴⁴

We need to control the misuse of mosques to propagate radical, militant ideas, stop proliferation of any printed material spreading militancy and ban/curb all extremist organizations. The government must assert its influence and frame a code of conduct for all so as to create harmony and understanding between various sects.

The sources of funding that support extremist outfits need to be dried up. The law enforcing agencies need to trace the sources and block them. The Muslim countries involved in supporting the extremists must be officially approached and funds made available through charities must be routed through government so that they reach needy people only.

We must create unity in the nation by preserving our social and cultural values. The government should make an appropriate media strategy so as to reduce negative impact of international media, especially that of India. The government should make sure that our national media is not hijacked and our private TV channels are not working against national interests. Through media campaigns, we must disseminate values of peaceful coexistence and tolerance.

It is good news that, as part of these efforts, the Ministry of Culture has announced plans to set up a TV channel focusing on culture and traditions of the country with the objective of countering violent extremism.⁴⁵ Convergence of common goals and objectives is important to muster public support in isolating the extremists; the media, especially TV, has a special role to play in this regard.

The worn out policies of perceiving Afghanistan as Pakistan “strategic depth”, and forces such as the Taliban as “strategic assets”, must be done away with. Similarly, the old policy of “bleeding India with a thousand cuts”, by encouraging militant infiltration into Indian Kashmir and carrying on a prolonged low-intensity conflict, must be revised.

Finally, with regards to the U.S., it is the strongest military and economic power and would continue to assert its influence globally and it cannot be kept away from the regional affairs, especially due to the ongoing war on terror. Nonetheless, Pakistan must seriously think and evolve an independent national security strategy and regain its lost political and economic space without which its sovereignty would remain at stake. There are still many areas in which both

Pakistan and the U.S. can continue to cooperate without compromising on their respective national policies.⁴⁶ Pakistan's national security policies need a fresh approach.

Democracy in Pakistan is in the process of making and needs wholesome supports from its institution. Pakistan's military being a well established institution, should encourage the democratic process to go on.

Conclusion

It is often believed that the preservation of the foundational ideologies of the State is imperative for survival, and that everything must be done to preserve the traditions within which the State was born. However, dynamic societies reveal an important secret – that change and transformation are as necessary for survival as preservation. Therefore, understanding the issues like radicalization and extremism is important to correct the policies to face the challenges of the 21st Century.

Although there does exist a consensus in the international community that a democratic, stable Pakistan is paramount to rid the country of radicalism and extremism, the million-dollar question is: Are we on right path? Probably not. If the tide is not turned by a decisive strategy, Pakistan could begin to slide toward a failed State that will become a breeding ground for radicalization of society which could create anarchy leading to the creation of client States from within Pakistan.

Besides other problems, religious extremism is a serious problem and no outside power can do anything about it. Therefore, the political leadership duly supported by religious scholars should evolve a strategy to minimize/eliminate the element of hatred between various sectarian groups.

The establishment of stable democracy would require a visionary and dedicated political leadership able to find solutions to Pakistan's economic crisis; provide effective governance and curb the increasing spread of violence and Talibanisation.

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