



Extremism in Pakistani Youth: A Social Policy Failure

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Syed Zohaib Abbas Rizvi¹

Sobia Jamil²

Abstract

The concepts of social policies and welfare states have been limited to the contemporary western civilization. Muslim nations have not been great examples of investing in the human resource. The effects of social policies like free healthcare and competitive education system are directly proportional to the level of extremism a country's youth reaches upon. States concerned on this correlation understand the psychological and physiological needs of their citizens. Problem under study is a lack of investment in human development in Muslim countries with Pakistan in focus, and a psycho-religious affiliation of youth with ultra-orthodox extremism. To examine the issue theoretically, we have used two theories: Religious pluralism to comprehend its various concepts of harmony among world religions and subsequently their sects; and social constructivism to connect its discursive formations with the secluded terminologies of pluralism. The purpose was to produce a discourse analysis of societal harmony vis-à-vis religion and society. To make the research methodology more reliable and authentic, data and incidents have been taken from renowned published sources, e.g. journal articles mentioning the belief structures in the Ulema (theology men) of Pakistan. It is a case study modeled on Pakistan's youth radicalization; explanatory mode of research approach has been used. Pakistani forces have consistently fought the Taliban and other extremist groups in a series of operations after 9/11, Zarb e Azb being the most famous and successful one. A sizable chunk of the country's youth has been affected by foreign funding of Madrassas; the level of radicalization varies. Government must fight at two fronts: Provide basic needs to every citizen; and deradicalize the youth by investing more in the ongoing rehabilitation centers or make new programs.

Keywords: Human Resource, Madrassas, Social Fabric, Sectarian Schism, Radicalization, Pakistan, Welfare State

1. PhD Candidate, International Relations, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan (Corresponding Author).
Email: abbas.zohaib110@gmail.com

2. PhD Candidate, UNISZA, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia Email: sobijamil09@gmail.com

Introduction

Pakistan is a country that is not only made under the name of religion (Islam), but it also chastises any attempt to secularize its constitution. These efforts to affirm its loyalty to Islamic principles are made at the governmental/establishment levels; the people of Pakistan were comfortable living a free life under the umbrella of an Islamic constitution. Things changed when Islamabad decided to counter the Soviet imperialism in Afghanistan. It evidently joined the American camp. When Washington spent billions of dollars of cash and ammunitions to support the Afghan Taliban, it had chosen Pakistan to channel weaponry via the Durand Line into Afghanistan. General Zia ul Haq, the Army Chief and President of Pakistan, was also tasked to train the Mujahedeen (Islamic religious fighters) since Islamabad understood the Pashto language and the conservative Afghan culture. Pakistan felt safe by siding with the United States since it wanted the super power (USSR) to remain engaged in the buffer state (Afghanistan) and not think of entering Pakistan for the warm waters of the Arabian Sea (“Timeline: History of”, 2012). All these war games were not enough to instill radicalization in the Pakistani society. The turning point was the Saudi involvement in matching US petrol dollars. They not only funded their oil money into Pakistan for Afghanistan, but also carefully chose the affiliations of the “would be mujahedeen”.¹ (مجاهدين) They ensured that the fighters should belong to the Deobandi sect of Sunni jurisprudence provided they were hailing from the countries rooted in the Abu Hanifa school of thought, e.g. Pakistan and Afghanistan. Otherwise, their first choice was obviously the followers of Wahhabism i.e. Ahl-e Hadith in the sub-continent. This stratification meant a ban on the hiring of Barelvis (Sunnis closer

1. The word Mujahedeen literally means holy warriors of Islam; mujahid refers to a single warrior. Both the major sects of Islam, Shias and Sunnis, use this connotation to glorify the image of their fighters fighting the infidels. A mujahid is considered a protector of the Deen. This protection is only ensured by sword/ weaponry; martyrdom (shahadat) or ghazis (warriors returned from a holy war injured or unharmed) are the two bounties multiplied by an indefinite amount of number in the hereafter.

to Sufi teachings) and Shias (Siddiqui, 2010). Due to a high demand of fighters in Afghanistan, the same/closer ideology Madrassas in Pakistan were pumped with Saudi money; the duration of courses was shortened to manage a fresh flow of mujahedeen into Kabul. These religious schools mainly taught excommunicating (Takfir) people if their beliefs were in contrast to the ones held by Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab. These institutions mushroomed and they never focused on the scholarship; targeting the infidels was their best pastime. This whole process of a decade (1979-89) produced a generation of battle hardened commoners cum soldiers and violence sympathizers. US paid Jihadist textbooks played a pivotal role in the creation of this mindset (Tharoor, 2014). Extremism thus entered from a few religious schools to the policy making circles of Pakistan. Apart from all these debates on the failure of the successive governments in power to address the issue of funding the Madrassas, the country was in relative peace from the end of the Afghan war (1989) to the events of 9/11, 2001. President Musharraf followed in the footsteps of President Zia, but this time against the mujahedeen. This caused the reticent lava of the last two decades to explode against Islamabad. Religious students again headed north-west into Afghanistan. Kabul has borne bombings and foreign invasions, but the country has remained defiant to the last two super power's misadventures. This policy shift did not go well with the normal public of Pakistan since it considers US as one of its biggest enemies in the world. Siding by it against Muslim brethren was the lowest morality people expected from its establishment. The famous discourse of Pakistan playing a major role in disintegrating the Soviet Union was dented with a severe blow when Musharraf turned against its Afghan allies, i.e. Taliban. People were infuriated by the decision, not understanding the magnitude of 9/11 and the American mood, a claim we often hear in the literature of Pak-US strategic relationship. The true state failure in all these Afghan wars was its inability to manage the youth returning from the

Afghan war experience. On the one hand, Riyadh and similar-minded Arab businessmen kept funding the Pakistani Madrassas whereas the governments in Pakistan turned a blind eye on the thousands of youth with extremist ideologies graduating each year from these institutions (Abdul Rauf, 2015). It brings in the economic factors as well. When Islamabad remained calm by having a sizable chunk of its youth being fed and clothed by the Saudi money (as well as Iran, the U.A.E., and Qatar) in the Madrassas' educational system, it forced these religious recruits to earn their bread and butter by selling what they knew best. The product was obviously extremism. Since so many of them had learnt extremism, only the most persuasive and the most myopic were supposed to earn the best deal on offer. These deals included posts like heading a madrassa or running a fanatical organization under the name of religion. This inability to teach students nothing but a conservative set of sectarian jurisprudence made them soft targets for suicide recruitment and other inhumane activities. The incident of 16 December, 2014, of an attack on an army school on innocent children killing around 150 people, again jolted the country (Boone, 2015). Though the attackers were foreigners, Jihadist tendencies persuade people to corroborate with the killers either by guiding them to the target area, financing their activities/organizations or by simply hosting them, making their status as co-accused in the eyes of law. Islamabad had to devise a 20-point National Action Plan (NAP) after this national tragedy (Salahuddin, 2016). It included statements on Madrassas' reforms. Although debates have been in process ever since, the progress has been really slow, courtesy of domestic politics and international meddling in the affairs of the country's future. There are around three million Madrassas students in Pakistan from all sects. The idea that all of them propagate extremism is a sweeping hypothetical statement which cannot be true or proven. One piece of statistics to support this argument is the fact that this figure of three million is less than 10 percent of the number of children in

schools (government, private and semi-private) in Pakistan. The ideological support for extremism has transcended from Madrassas to the schools and universities of Pakistan which is raising alarm bells among the prudent and educated. The rise of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq has not done the confused and pro violence youth any favor. Off late, we have seen university professors and some of the best schools' graduates involved in the killings of people belonging to the sects considered idolaters and inventors in the orthodox teachings of Islam (Tunio, 2015). No matter how many economic and social indicators one could link towards extremism in Pakistan, the root cause is the ideological confusion: [The youth of Pakistan is trained to be more loyal to the Muslim Ummah than to nationalism. People debate on the comparison between state and religion, and they find the state (Pakistan) being built on the foundations of religion (Islam). Confusion turns into rage when the youth find out that their country is pro-western democracies and a large chunk of the population of their own age is living a life of freedom with religion playing a secondary role. The state has failed in integrating this sizable yet neglected group of religious people. When they find their counterparts uncomfortable to work and commute with, they tend to develop cults and spend time in esoteric activities which in turn disturbs the social fabric of the society.

Theoretical Approach

Since we have taken the levels of religious (in)tolerance and the international funding of Madrassas as the independent variables impacting the social fabric of Pakistan, the dependent variable, the concept of religious pluralism, best fits the theoretical framework. The creation of a grounded theory is not required to understand the socio-religious and economic fault lines of the society. Religious pluralism is a concept that could be applied to an individual or to a state. It is the

attitude of an individual towards the beliefs of others coexisting in the same society; it is the policy of a state regarding the diversity of different faiths in the same social structure (Musofer, 2012). The key points of religious pluralism entail different jargons and concepts considered to be the societal outliers, but these are worth discussing vis-à-vis the frustrated youth of Pakistan. One's religion is not the sole and exclusive source of truth; every religion possesses some true values; the mutually exclusive truth claims that two or more religions are equally valid; these are a few extracts of the theory. The concept of moral relativism is interesting since it defies anything like a universal truth or an objective reality (Merritt, 2016). Instead, it takes relativity into account: Infallible truths might not be error free, so adjust according to the societal circumstances and the order of the day. Humans need to distinguish between absolute claims and ethical practices. Asking questions about your undeniable belief might jolt a believer for a moment or two since our basic assumptions, though self-explanatory, are impossible to justify. Justification leads to nothing but circular logic. Discerning right from wrong lacks logic; societal customs and ethical frameworks ingrained in our minds disturb the relative approach. Religious pluralism also teaches the concept of perennialism, i.e. there is one ultimate truth that springs up in a different reincarnation each time but the truth remains the same. Pluralism succeeds secularism since it not only favors mutual respect for all religions but also picks up humane and comfortable commonalities; secular societies often clash over the limits of the others' religions, e.g. riots on the Muslim veil in the west (Gosden, 2011). Though we are born in different traditions, we are all going towards the same goal of enlightenment. All we need is to travel from our path (religion) towards the centre (enlightenment) with our heart and mind open. On the way, we will find people of open hearts similar to us going towards the centre. There is no distance at the centre, so religion (path) gets sidelined while we get closer to the centre

(enlightenment). People suddenly start finding similarities in practices at least e.g. the meditative experiences mean different propositions for different religions, but that emptiness caters to peace. In layman's language, perennialism is the collection of common traits of different religions. This theory is philosophical in its terminologies, but it also has a solution for sectarian reconciliation that fits into the Pakistani society led by tribal orthodoxies and clerical misinterpretations – the concept of ecumenism. It is the finding of common grounds between two religions or between the denominations of a single religion to have unity and cooperation leading to a harmonious coexistence. Although every religion claims to be the proponent of peace and fraternity, seldom have we seen a collaboration of religions on an issue of conflict (Gutting, 2016). The eighteenth century world saw the coining of the term 'religious toleration.' It was literally the absence of religious persecution of minorities: Prejudice and exploitation continued. Later on, religious liberty replaced it. Mark Silk (Silk, 2007: 65) said, "Religious pluralism enables a country made up of people of different faiths to exist without sectarian warfare. The persecution of religious minorities has been understood differently in different times and places". Respecting every sect and religion was mandatory for religious freedom. The problem that the Saudi funding has caused in Pakistan is termed as exclusivist religions (sects in our case). My way is the best way to reach salvation and to find the sacred truth. The concept even endorses a suppressing of the teachings (considered falsehood) taught by other sects (Rais, 2012). This intolerance cannot be linked to the contemporary Pakistani society only: Protestant sects have fought against the Roman Catholicism in the past; Fundamentalist Christians have had out rightly rejected the practices of Paganism and had termed the doing of witchcraft as pernicious. Although we consider this attitude pertinent to the time before enlightenment, we have various examples of this in the modern world. Afghanistan's Taliban destroyed the ancient remains of 1700-year-old Buddhas of

Bamiyan which is not only a damage to the world's historical sites, but also a disgrace to a religion not in power or majority in Kabul (Ahmed, 2001). This idiosyncratic mindset is linked with the term called بدعت in Urdu¹. Pakistan has fallen victim to this concept several times. The definition of "biddat" is to add a new teaching or practice into the orthodox Islam practiced more than 1400 years ago. The worrying thing is that they deal with the so-called inventors of a new practice with iron hands; other Muslims' sects, i.e. Shias, Barelvis, and Sufis suffer as a result. The suicide bombings on shrines by the ever doubtful youth in Pakistan have raised questions on the security of Muslim Pakistanis making up the majority of the population (Yousafzai, 2017). Although minorities have also suffered in Pakistan, the major casualties have come from Muslim bodies. The extremist groups in Pakistan often exercise exclusive rights to their ideologies, denying others the same; religious pluralism gets shammed by this intolerance. A touchy question that bothers religious harmony is the de facto law in almost every Islamic country about abdicating the religion of Islam and the subsequent punishment (Mazhar, 2014). The unanswered query is that why will a person go to paradise if he/she turns a non-Muslim into a Muslim, but that same person does not deserve to live if he/she reverts back to the old religion? We have talked about the extreme forms of inclusivism, i.e. absolute reality cannot be deciphered by following just a single religion, and that all belief systems are equal in respect and philosophy. This hypothesis gets furthered by the concept of syncretism: Choose certain practices from different religions, blend the concepts and devise a new religion, giving birth to an ultra-extreme mode of inter-religious harmony. Concluding the theoretical framework of religious pluralism, the

1. The term Biddat (Bid'ah in Arabic) refers to an innovation or heresy in the true and direct words of Allah and the religion of Islam. Scholars of different sects and sub sects disagree on deciding the most pure form of Islam. Adapting to the changing world dynamics and the use of Ijtihad (logical reasoning) are also debated. The opponents claim that the orthodox consider everything as an addition to the original religion since they don't believe in anything called spiritualism.

concept of ecumenism seems to be the answer to counter the wave of radicalization in Pakistan. The federal government should invite all stakeholders to discuss the youth de-radicalization programs and devise a comprehensive strategy to blend common traits of all the sects of Pakistani Muslims to bolster the feel of harmony. Once finished, the country can use this religious pluralist approach (syncretism in this case) for its sizable chunk of minorities, mainly Hindus and Sikhs. Economic avenues are needed to be opened for the country's youth as well (Nawazish, 2011). Healthcare and education must be preferred over infrastructure development; people come first, then other luxuries ("Pakistan's youth," 2016). Although religion is a single aspect, it deals with the minds of the emotional youth, making it the focus of our study. Religious pluralism cum ecumenism would really help in formulating a strategy of counter radicalization for the policy makers in Islamabad. Just to get a feel for the social fabric of the Pakistani society, we can use Alexander Wendt's analysis (1992) of social constructivism to explore the societal connection with thoughts and ideas. Thoughts and ideas constitute a societal system: If they change, so does the society. Knowledge is constructed in a society by the process of interaction between two or more people/ groups. The giver and the recipient will keep on changing roles in different interactions at different levels of the society. The discursive formations like belief, ethnicity, unemployment, and proxy funding would establish a discourse analysis on extremism in Pakistan. It is in support of Wendt's concept of ideas and systems. Social constructivism talks about beliefs and ideas on the one hand, and about religious pluralism's approval of common beliefs and beautiful ideas on the other. These societal ideas should not be hijacked by the extremist youth or their national/ international handlers. The concepts like exclusivism produce discursive formations that are harmful for the society's wellbeing whereas ecumenism and syncretism are perfect for a societal discourse analysis (Riffat, 2015).

Research Methodology

Since we have taken Pakistan's societal religious intolerance as one of the two independent variables, case study is the research method for which we have opted. A few variables have been studied in depth for a definite period of time to confirm our hypothesis of a negative impact on the social fabric of Pakistan. Because of the qualitative nature of the literature studied, we have used an explanatory approach to try to cover all the possible aspects of the independent variables. The causal relationship between funding of money to Madrassas and the societal level of tolerance (independent variables) and their impact on social fabric of Pakistan (dependent variable) needed to connect different ideas (beliefs in this case study) using the explanatory method. Research ethics demanded a choice of the best approach to decipher the complex realities of the society sidelining the researcher's bias. We tried to avoid taking the normative approach since judgments and emotions had no room, courtesy of empirical evidence to the existing literature available on the issue. Observation is different from judgment: When published facts and figures second the researcher's observation, then the hypothetical questioning gets replaced by the empirical proof or evidence. We have taken the best and the most pertinent authors and works on the subject. In discussing the Pakistani case, we have also learnt about its possible connection with the war history of Afghanistan. Our reason for choosing the qualitative method is to explain the concepts associated with extremism and the will to support/commit crimes in the name of religion. An analysis of statistical figures and tables using the quantitative method did not satiate our appetite for research since we believed in exploring the literature of concepts and belief systems vis-à-vis the Madrassas' curriculum. Although figures and stats have been used, their primary purpose has been to support the body of qualitative knowledge. Pakistan's sensitivities needed something bigger than the analysis of data and figures of casualties and bomb blasts.

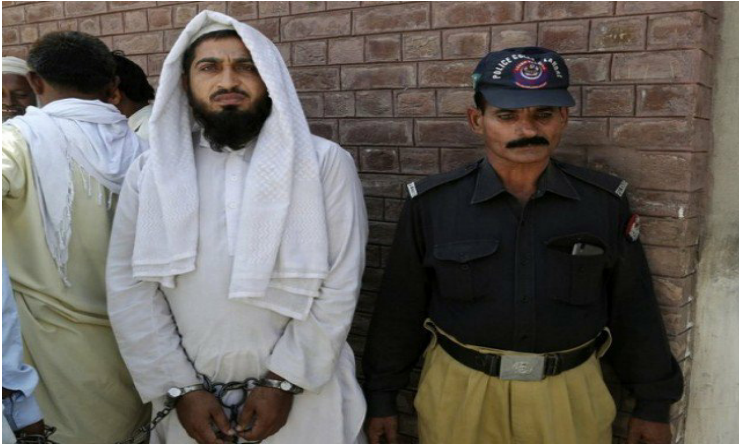
Review of Literature

Pakistan was established by the western dressed ¹Muhammad Ali Jinnah (titled Quaid-i-Azam) who was known for his commitment to democracy and equal rights for all religions in Pakistan. Just one year after his demise in 1948, Objective Resolution was passed (1949) with roots of religious orientation for the future of the new nation (Pal, 2010). These hues and cries of a possible pro extremist state policy materialized in the era of General Zia ul Haq. Wahhabi likeminded clerics flooded into the newly established Madrassas; intolerance was the one thing they were specialists in teaching. Christians have been massacred in some instances; Ahmadis were targeted individually and in worship places, Shia communities were targeted countrywide, and Sufi shrines dealings with suicide bombings are the unanswered queries in Pakistan's domestic war on terror. Hanging of terrorists is not a solution to counter terrorism; it is only a reactive response from the state. What Islamabad needs is to de-radicalize certain factions of the society, if not the whole society (Hanif, 2017). No doubt Pakistani establishment has made valiant efforts to curb terrorism: Operations Rah-e-Nijat, Rah-e-Raast, and Zarb e Azb have been the three major contemporary offensives against militants in the tribal belt of Pakistan. These operations were not only the wish of Pakistani people, but they were requested cum advised by the international stakeholders (Hussain, 2015). The tribal agencies of Pakistan were home to a collection of terrorists, including the ones belonging to the Eastern Uzbekistan Islamic Movement and China's autonomous Xinjiang region. The most potent anti-Pakistan group formed by this collection of terrorists, named Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), took away the 2.5 million habitants' Swat valley from the control of Pakistan which was taken back by the military by one of the largest migrations of IDP's (internally displaced

1. قائد اعظم: The great leader; بابائے قوم: Father of the nation. These two phrases are often used to name the founder of Pakistan.

persons), i.e. refugees within a country (Witte, 2009). TTP was rich in cash and foreign funding. They marketed the holy war against the Pakistan army, calling them the agents and facilitators of the west. Every family from the Swat valley was supposed to give one male child to the service of TTP. Salary and protection were given in return. Swat people were confused like other Pakistanis about the status of their relationship with the army and TTP. So, giving away a child to a terror outfit was considered a holy service in the Islamic subconscious of the inhabitants of Swat. Their minds became crystal clear once TTP's brutalities crossed all limits followed by the massive exodus and the brutal military operation. Other major military operations took place in the agencies of South and North Waziristan. These operations were considered even difficult since the army could not completely surround the region of Waziristan: Swat adjoins Pakistani territory from all four corners; Waziristan borders with Afghanistan. Terrorists fleeing to Kabul and later coming back to avenge the operations was a hotly debated issue in the media (Shah, Khan, & Dean, 2009). The war on terror is in its seventeenth year: Pakistan has sacrificed over seventy thousand lives – civilians, military and paramilitary soldiers – from every cadre of society; 130 billion dollars damage to infrastructure and weaponry has jolted the country in a war that the majority considers a US war for resources and geo-strategic interests of Chinese containment. All these statistics should be enough to persuade the policy makers to think again. Still the root cause remains partially untouched. This makes the Pakistani youth think twice about choosing the ship to step in; the ship of de-radicalization or the ship of Islamic renaissance. Going all out against the previous darlings is not a walk in the park. General Musharraf's era witnessed managed democracy and the Laal Masjid (Red Mosque) operation. When the country was condemned for allowing the fanatics of red mosque to roam free in Islamabad's center, one

man's government (Musharraf) ordered the operation that ended up in mass killings, including children of the red mosque's madrassa. The public fall out was disturbing. When children died, even the liberal learned class of Pakistan did not appreciate the method adopted by Musharraf's government. Theorists started questioning the state's policy that allowed fanaticism to mushroom into the heart of Islamabad (Ahmed, 2012). This episode had preceded Swat's radio FM, operated under the command of Mulla Fazlullah. The public's reaction did not matter; what mattered was the creation of the Ghazi group, named after the Imam of red mosque, Molana Ghazi Abdur Rashid. They have been rumored to have corroborated in various suicide bombings inside Pakistan. Surprisingly, they are still operating freely in the same mosque, supposedly with a state's requested softer stance on humanity. Thousands of Pakistani children sign up at different Madrassas to become Hafiz e Quran, i.e. to learn Holy Quran by heart word by word. These children learn the holy book in the Arabic script in an Arabic dialect alien to the Urdu language of Pakistan. The system of a peculiar learning environment entails countries like India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The suffocating atmosphere of these religious institutions nurtures the young souls in the disciplines of hatred and oppression of the women and religious rights (Mallet, 2015). Islam means peace; children studying it lack peace, inheriting this legacy from their teachers. Unemployment normally succeeds a certification from Madrassas. The frustrated youth, once out in the job market with curriculum vitae of close ended religious interpretation of life, often get disappointed by the offerings of the society. They take refuge in teaching younger students of theology. The salary in return is less than peanuts which incites violent psychological behaviors in an individual, e.g. child abuse and pedophilia ("Madrassas allegedly infested", 2017).



Picture 1. In this picture taken on May 4, 2017, a handcuffed Pakistani cleric who allegedly raped a child stands outside a court in Kehror Pakka, Pakistan. PHOTO: AP

The Madrassas of Pakistan have witnessed a continuous surge in different types of child abuse that involves a repetitive process of evolution; the oppressed (student) becomes the oppressor (clerical post/teacher). Such an explicit environment and the silence on it further alienates the concerned youth from society. Pakistan spends less than two percent of its GDP on education, which is really low when compared to any region in the world (Tahir, 2017). It is an insult to a nation trying to find its feet in the international arena of competitiveness. When the economy of a country does not show promise, people start questioning the state's policy, and the public trust level in the state institutions drop by a significant percentage. Pakistan has a perfect representation of the world Muslims' two largest sects, i.e. Sunnis (80-85%) and Shias (15-20%). Alienation of a sect that constitutes around 20 percent of the Pakistani population is a mistake Islamabad cannot afford to make. Dividing the public on sectarian grounds means a replication of Iraq's de facto disintegration and Syria's continuous bloodshed (Editorial, 2015). By ignoring the

intensity of these fault lines, the Pakistani establishment is unwillingly inviting Iran and Saudi Arabia to extend their proxy wars into Pakistan. Although the Shia in Pakistan have suffered at the hands of these directionless youth, the Hazara community in Baluchistan has suffered more than anyone else in the country. Australia, in 2013, offered asylum to 2500 Hazara families from Pakistan. That was a shame for the powerful establishment of Pakistan (Khattak, 2013). This ineffectiveness of the successive governments did not do any favor to the perplexed youth. A poll was conducted before the general elections of 2013 from the age bracket of 18 to 29. The query was about the best form of government in Pakistan. 29 percent favored democracy; 32 percent preferred a military rule; unsurprisingly, 38 percent opted for a Sharia law. Again, no one knew much about the prerequisites of Sharia law and the competencies of Qazis (judges) in fiqh and Islamic jurisprudence and no one wanted to give away personal freedom and liberty, but everyone was either favoring the imposition of Sharia law or was suspected of democracy. A pre-2013 election survey conducted by the U.S. based PEW research centre gave a staggering percentage of 84 percent of Pakistani Muslims favoring Sharia laws over the Anglo-Saxon judicial system (“84 pc of Pakistani”, 2013). This dilemma of the Pakistani youth is disturbing the social fabric: When the knowing youth is so perplexed, what can one say about the orthodox baby boomers of Pakistan?

An Analogy of a Pakistani Cave

Let us discuss the psychological hardships of the Pakistani youth (a male in this case). People are getting better education than the last generation, and are younger too, but they are all confused about the electoral system practiced by Islamabad. A youngster deep in his mind feels the government has not delivered. Is this a systemic failure or the people in power are incompetent and corrupt? Lost in

this thought process, he reaches a mosque for prayers; even before fully entering the prayer area 'his used to ears' again take note of the clerical sadism about the western propaganda to contaminate the Muslim youth by music and other worldly pleasures. This outgoing music loving youngster seconds the claims of the clergy man and his demand for Sharia imposition. When he reaches home, he follows a fresh story broadcasting live on television on a political alliance between a magnanimous religious figure's (to whom the mosque's cleric had shown unconditional allegiance for life) Islamic party and the political party in power (the cleric deemed responsible for promoting the western agenda of vulgarity). This poor chap did not care/know much about the endorsement of indecency in the society, but he did experience the corrupt aspect of the sitting government in many of his daily routine works. Now, this perplexed body gets further bamboozled when he questions his conscience: How can I close my eyes to what his (religious head) life standards are? But he also talks about Sharia (so as his appointed cleric in my mosque); Sharia is mandatory; this is what I have listened in all Friday prayers' sermons I have regularly attended; I myself have cursed western democracies and their connivance with the devil to hurt our religion. But wait a minute: These countries are doing really fine; their citizens are happy; they get the justice in an infidel society; I want to emulate that in my Islamic country; oh, I just remembered that I had applied for a European Union masters' scholarship last year funded by the same Zionist states. He sleeps, feeling anxious; he wakes up perplexed. These dichotomies by the clergy perplex a huge chunk of educated Pakistani youth. The problem lies in our education system that has been designed to suppress the democratic norms. Arshed Bhatti (Javaid & Abdulla, 2015) calls it a problem enrooted in our schooling. He says "our education system is anti-democratic and does not support democratic system".



Picture 2. Should I diet or eat big

The world needs to be careful about the percentage of population under the age of thirty. Pakistan, India, Iran, and other Middle Eastern countries would have exploding populations of people under 30 in 2045; this is a time bomb if not dealt with properly; the youth need jobs. Once denied, many could contact banned organizations; every religion and almost every sect offers employment for militancy to further a cause of that very religion/sect everywhere in the world (at least in the developing world). Sengupta cautions the governments on two possibilities: You could either *thrive* by a huge number of educated youth finding jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities in a booming market; or you could have a mix of educated, semi-educated and illiterate youth looking for bread and butter in an average and under-performing economy; *explosion* is the word used to define such a situation (Lord, 2016). Islamabad has always been cautious in disturbing the Ulema residing inside Pakistan. Although it has categorically mentioned the Madrassas' reforms in the national action plan (NAP), it fears a backlash from the influential religious clergy (Hasan, 2016). The report by the International Centre for

Religion and Diplomacy on Pakistan declared that there is in-person recruitment of Jihadist fighters by the Ulemas. Pakistan, unlike the international terror organizations, does not need/abide by the rules of media campaigns for recruitment (Greer, 2016). People revere religious figures irrespective of their ability to reason and comprehend situations, but a free of cost scholarship for their children by a seemingly spiritual personality does bear fruits. The methods used domestically for sectarian recruitment entail leaflets, brochures and chalking on the walls. The ICRD report confirms a registration process of Madrassas by the government, but it will take time to complete. Registration does not mean an end to violence, but it might instill responsibility among the caretakers of those religious schools. So, it is one of the fruitful measures government on which has worked/should work. The dilemma of majority rules is hurting Pakistan. Bertrand Russell says and we quote, “The tyranny of the majority is a very real danger” (Altaf, 2017). Even if these people are in a minority, the magnitude of their (il)logical arguments and the possible consequences for the opposing voices just exacerbate an already worsened situation of impatience and narrow mindedness.

Clerics call each other apostates and infidels. What they fail to teach the youth is the history of colonialism and imperialism (Ahmad, 2016). Had the colonized Muslim countries been Christians or Buddhists, the fate had to be the same. The conquering empires wanted land and resources and subjugated nations; there were acts of totalitarianism, not campaigns against the Muslims. The three crusades are exceptions since they were/are regarded holy wars by the three Abrahamic religions. Muslims also plundered and killed non-Muslims. They have fought each other in several battles. The best example is of the Ottoman and the Safavid Empire’s rivalry and blood history (Pillalamarri, 2014). Both considered each other foes and worse than Christians and killed thousands of fellow Muslims. How would you teach your youth about this issue? Madrassas and

schools both cannot answer this; they do not bother answering such questions. Though western media has blamed the Pakistani military of supporting extremist groups and creating the terms of good and bad Taliban, people in Pakistan still believe in the institution considering its sacrifices and efforts in the war on terror. Politicians have made alliances with sectarian outfits particularly in the Punjab province for electoral gains. This has instilled public mistrust in them (Khosha, 2016). The state needs to stop people from joining terrorist outfits, halt proxy recruitment from Pakistan, and de-radicalize its youth via different measures.

Pakistan; a Social Democracy

Pakistan is said to be an Islamic welfare state. This welfare concept needs an overhaul to address the notions of justice, food and security. Police and courts do not provide speedy and free justice; the poor sleep on an empty stomach; people cannot guarantee a protection of life and property. When people find themselves in such a trap, their trust from the western modeled institutions fades away. Fortunately or unfortunately, Pakistan does provide an alternative, i.e. go to your sects' religious scholars and ask for an exchange. This exchange means selling your soul and mind to the divine order of that clergy man. People find solace in consulting religious scholars/mosque Imams in matters of daily routine; this interaction keeps their faith and reliance on the clergy alive. Social interaction is fairly limited in Pakistan (Bari, 2016). You might enjoy a large number of friends and hang out with them. But the youth cannot discuss mind bobbling queries with each other since everybody is having the same social circle. Circles in Pakistan are made on the class structure to which you belong. Tendencies and inclinations of these circles are obviously different, but they lack a venue for consulting philosophical bindings. Asking questions on philosophy is considered anti-Islamic; learning Marxist theories is a

de facto societal crime. Mardan's lynching (Akbar & Farhan, 2017) of Mashal Khan (an admirer of Che Guevara) by a university mob over an alleged online blasphemy is a proof of the level of intolerance breeding in our educational institutes. The level of intolerance means a lack of knowledge; it means a thought process constrained in a circle of deceit and misinformation; brains never used apart from repeating Arabic verses daily in prayers without even knowing the etymologies of those Arabic scripts. The Islamic Ideological Council of Pakistan has not been able/keen to address such atrocities maligning Muslims in general and Pakistanis in particular.



Picture 3. Mashal Khan's room search after his death; a student (23) of mass communication in Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, Pakistan

Discussion

This study has addressed multiple questions relating to the factors responsible for damaging the social fabric of the Pakistani society. Gulf donations to the Madrassas in Pakistan and the subsequent intolerance taught at these holy institutions proved to have a directly

proportional link to crimes against minority religions and sects. Though previous studies have mentioned about this correlation, this research has taken a different root theoretically. The concept of ecumenism in the religious pluralism theory ensures a sectarian harmony among the denominations of world religions; Pakistan's scenario best fits in the model of harmonious behaviors.

This research has tried to evaluate the Pakistani society from the lens of a neutral person. It has highlighted the dichotomy in the policy circles of Pakistan's men in command. The study shows a lack of focus on educating tolerance to the society. The entire focus is on eradicating terrorism by annihilating the centers of Jihadist recruitment and the cutting of money and weapon supply to terror outfits. No valid effort of a change in the human mind is seen among the national policy circles of the country. Government to people contact is missing; people are left with no other option than to consult/contact the unchecked clergy men (women in some cases). The doubtful youth seeks logical answers to touchy questions; it needs counseling from governmental centers for youth psychological rehabilitation. Unfortunately, we do not have such luxuries (in a distressful society) at the moment. At least on paper, the government is making centers/institutes for different sectors/demographics (only the proven militants are treated in the rehabilitation centers set up by the Pakistani Army), but the only seemingly viable option for the Pakistani youth is to go to the people camouflaged in religious attires; there is very little check on what these people are teaching to these perplexed minds, but there is no check on the frustration creeping up in their minds after these despotic meetings/chats. Religious guidance and salvation do not cost money in Pakistan; they cost minds, bodies and characters of the society.

Economic factors do play an important role in nurturing extremist instincts in an individual, but the options that an unemployed, poorly fed person exercises in Pakistan usually end up connected to the

religion via clergymen. Like every country, Pakistan is home to all the possible crimes in the world. But the worrying fact is the inclination towards hatred and malign for other societal members, communities, minorities and beliefs, creating a slow and steady divide in the society. A massive plan for rebuilding human values is needed to be implemented by the government while supported by the civil society.

Conclusion

Pakistan, for the last sixteen years, has been involved with an arduous battle with the fanatics. Fanaticism has not been limited to the militants targeted by the Pakistani military: A sizable proportion of the population supports radical orthodoxy doubts the intention of fighting them or holds a soft corner for these disillusioned minds somewhere in their hearts. The youth of Pakistan has been found wandering on a directionless road with secularism, ecumenism, harmony, and peace on the one hand, and radicalism, excommunication (Takfir), isolationism, and hatred on the other. The imposition of Sharia laws in Pakistan with four Sunni schools (though Pakistan holds a majority for the followers of Imam Abu Hanifa, i.e. Barelvis and Deobandis) and the Jafaria Shia school of theology (Imam Jafar Sadiq, the 6th Shia Imam) has been a demand fallen on deaf years. Clergymen from all sects usually play politics by criticizing the governmental institutions for not allowing Sharia compliant laws in Islamabad. Perhaps their overt and covert connivance with the men in power dilutes their dubious demands. The youth of Pakistan realizes this fact, but they have also been raised by a controlled no-way-out Sharia strategy. When they see an infamous religious scholar instructing his disciples to vote for a specific person/political party who has often been seen drunk, charged with a multitude of corruption and accused of rape, their perplexities reach a new maximum.

This paper has targeted the Madrassas' religious education aspect

of Pakistani society and its impact on the youth. Unemployment, corruption, illiteracy, less GDP spending on education and health, lack of merit in jobs, security, sanitation, poverty, feudal lords, justice, and the police system, as well as numerous other third world problems pull the Pakistani youth from success to disaster. Still, Pakistan, as the Sufis say, is a miracle of Allah. We advise the authorities to de-radicalize the society first; then, other development projects would be of any use. A normalcy in the thought process of daily affairs would not only benefit the common people of Pakistan, but it would bring in the neighboring countries to respect this valiant effort and listen to Pakistan's point of view on world and regional affairs without a thought of doubt. We believe that the youth can play and is playing the best part among all the factions of the society: There is room for improvement – for massive improvement, from all sections of the society.

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