The *Arabist* Shift from Indo-Persian Civilization & Genesis of Radicalization in Pakistan

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Alluding to a synthesizing Indo-Persian culture that historically shaped Muslim identity in the subcontinent, C. G. Jung says: "the Taj symbolized an incredible flowering of the "delicate secret of the rose gardens of Shiraz and the silent patios of Arabian palaces... in the rich Indian earth"

(C G Jung- C W Vol. 10. P. 519-520)

Pakistan is undoubtedly going through tough times; many of its troubles are due to the policies it adopted deliberately and at times unwillingly due to external imposition. The residues of the fight, which began after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and appeared as the modern global jihad with America's blessing in Afghan refugee camps. Bruce Reidel writing in *The National Interest* informs that the ISI trained eighty thousand fighters from forty-three countries during that time.[1]

This however, does not let Pakistan off from the responsibility for the deliberate decisions it took during that period that has altered the course of action in its political history. The Islamization process that began during the Zia era led to 1) gain legitimacy domestically and 2) to create a warring corps that could be used to help Islamabad achieve its regional interests oblivious of the fact that the little demons it was encouraging would one day become a monster threatening the existence of the state.

However, it is possible that the Pakistani military may have never wanted to radicalize Pakistan or at least rational thinking suggests that it should not have been doing that. Its support to the radical religious groups was only for the purpose of achieving its goals in Kashmir against India without the realization of the domestic fallout of the *mullah-military* alliance that gave birth to a sea of radical young people ready to sacrifice their lives to establish "Islamic Emirate of Pakistan".

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Outward looking policy remained intact during the 1990s, though sectarian violence was an indication of the state patronage of one particular sect against others, it was still not hurting the state or at least the leaders thought so.

With the "Islamization" of the state, Pakistan increasingly became an ideological state. However, there was no single definition available to explain what Islamization was. With a number of sects and varied types of "Islam", the Deobandi school of thought became the official school to look up to for theoretical explanations. With its close resemblance to Saudi Wahabism, Saudi Arabia became the patronizing factor, even though a majority of Pakistanis were and still adhere to the Braelvi/Sufi tradition of Islam.

Main Argument

The confusion over the Arabist[2] shift with the Islamization process has led to the monolithic world view derived from Islamic orthodoxy and has become the guiding principle for the radical young minds in Pakistan.

Domestic and international politics as well as societal issues are articulated in purely religious idiom. Such Islamic indoctrination emphasizes that political and social developments are shaped primarily by the conflict-based interaction between Islam and other religions, especially Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity.[3] Instead of emphasizing the notion of Pakistan is a nation state based on cultural and religious pluralism, ideas like Islamic universalism; militancy and "Islam versus the other" are highlighted by the radical religious groups which have affected the psyche of the whole nation.

The Zia regime linked Arabism with Islam, not realizing or deliberately ignoring the fact that Islam is a religion, while "Arabism" is more of a cultural notion. "Islamization" of the society through "Arabization" was considered the right policy. To prepare the next generation of young Pakistanis full of Islamic zeal and "well informed" of their glorious past beginning with Arab Islamic history, education was the first casualty that came under attack. As Moeed Yusuf puts it:[4]

> Pakistani textbooks were reoriented during General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization…currently present Pakistan…is under threat from a Hindu India on the one hand and an anti- Islamic West on the other…an inherently paranoid outlook does make the younger generation more susceptible to Islamist ideologies.

Pakistan's Identity Crisis and the Use of Islam

Roots of the crisis of Muslim identity go back to the pre-partition era. The issue of social purity emerged after the decline of Muslim power, when Shah Waliullah and other Muslim revivalists in the sub-continent attempted to preserve the distinct identity of the Muslim community through strict adherence to pure Islam. These individuals felt that the Indian Muslims had

become socially and culturally "polluted" owing to their close association with Hindus. This thinking translated into the need for distancing Muslims from the Hindus through the creation of a separate homeland and pursuing religion without any extraneous influences.[5]

Though the secular leadership of Pakistan movement emphasized the Muslim community, it never intended to create a theocratic sunni state. As discussed in the Council on Foreign Relations Report "the early death of Pakistan's founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, left the question of Islam's role in society unresolved. Pakistan's rulers and military have frequently used religion to define state ideology."

Ayesha Jalal, professor of history at Tufts University's Fletcher School argues that this has led to Islam actually becoming a "divisive force in so far as it is being utilized by the state to deny people's rights or even to deny diversity."[6] A research fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, Hassan Abbas, explains how religious extremism used by the state to counter the perception of threat from India has come back to haunt it which the state has failed to deal with effectively so far.[7]

The potentiality of an alliance between 'ulama' and fundamentalist leaders was demonstrated in 1953 when serious riots broke out in Lahore over the question of whether the members of the Ahmadi sect should officially be regarded as a non-Islamic minority. The issue was of particular importance because of the presence of Ahmadis in senior government positions.[8]

Although the British left the sub-continent in August 1947, Hindu Kush failed to escape the crossfire of the superpowers of the time which were the United States of America and the Soviet Union. The Arab world, particularly Saudi Arabia, on the other hand had not forgotten the loss of their geo-political hegemony in the region. With years of catalytic funding for jihadi Islam in South Asia in general and India in particular, Saudi Arabia also revived the medieval base for jihad in the Hindu Kush. After the withdrawal of the Soviet army, the Taliban and later the Al-Qaida became the custodian of jobless jihadis in Hindu Kush from Kashmir, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Pakistan's recent history is full of political chaos, economic mismanagement and religious exploitation. This process of constant socio-political upheavals has led to disillusionment among the masses. The youth of the nation who are unable to see a promising future for themselves try to attain solace in religion and that is where radical religious organizations play their role.

The absence of a strong political platform for the youth, is greatly responsible for the lack of its healthy political participation. Consequently, religious organizations have provided a platform to the youth that has led them in certain directions devoid of any sense of balance in their life. Thus, both religious and political extremism flourished that led to the formation of an identity that

requires one to be different from others in order to be a true Muslim. According to this worldview then, Islam and other religions cannot and should not have any similarities.[9]

Baldas Ghosal in his study explains that a strong sense of grievance and victim mentality has reinforced Islam's role as a medium for asserting identity. The external manifestation is the wearing of Middle Eastern clothing. Strict observance of fundamentalist Islam is also a means of asserting identification with reform and protesting against the corruption of the upper classes in many societies. This might somewhat explain the fundamentalists' prescription for an austere way of life free from temptations and pleasures.[10]

Islamization – Zia's Reliance on *Wahabi/Deobandi* Sect

During the Cold War, religion was promoted as a force to counter the atheist Soviets. Since the rugged mountains of Afghanistan were the battleground to defeat the "evil" enemy, religious schools and organizations flourished in these areas to help counter the Communists. They endorsed a false perception that Islam was spread through the sword. Further, public opinion was created that Arabism and Islam are complementary and mutually reinforcing. As some scholars have opined, "Arabization and Islamization are inseparable parts of a single cultural ideal", this view now pervades the Muslim world. In their drive towards authentification and uniformization of Islam, the transmitters (Saudi Arabia and other Arabic countries) and the recipients (non-Arab Islamic societies) equally emphasized 'Arabization' as the norm of pure and ideal form of Islam to be followed by Muslims."[11]

General Zia-ul-Haq found this to be a great opportunity to fulfill both Islamic objectives as well as the legitimization of his rule in the country. This he accomplished through the patronization of the religious groups while suppressing the progressive political parties. The Americans were eager to have a system that could stand as an opponent to communism and cared little about which form of Islam that would be. Perhaps they had no idea about the complications within the Muslim community about its interpretation.

Initially, it was the Sunni Bralevi groups that were encouraged against progressive, liberal parties in order to create the "Islamic character" of the nation that was "lost "due to Bhutto's social democracy. But no one can survive with out money for long, and neither did these groups.

The government needed money and Saudi Arabia provided wealth with only one caveat; to encourage *Wahabi* ideology in Pakistan/Afghanistan. One reason for this was to serve the religion whereas the other was purely geo-political as Saudi Arabia wanted to have influence in the Hindu-Kush region. The US administration was satisfied as the Soviets, Indians and Chinese were contained through Saudi Arabia without the need of a single US soldier on ground.

Historically, Wahabism never took roots in the region because it prohibited a lot of practices that were common in life. In the words of Curtin Winsor, "Wahhabism was largely confined to the Arabian Peninsula until the 1960s, when the Saudi monarchy gave refuge to radical members of the Muslim Brotherhood fleeing persecution in Nasser's Egypt."[12]

The isolated Wahhabi creed of the Saudi religious establishment and the Salafi jihadist teachings of Sayyid Qutb, who denounced secular Arab rulers as unbelievers and legitimate targets of holy war (*jihad*) coordinated and co-opted as Curtin puts it, "It was the synthesis of the Wahhabi social and cultural conservatism, and Qutbist political radicalism - that produced the militant variety of Wahhabist political Islam that eventually (produced) al-Qaeda."[13]

Baldas Ghoal, highlighting the Saudi efforts to use the money coming from newly acquired oil wealth on Arabization, states that[14]

> during the 1970s, Wahhabi clerics encouraged the spread of their ideology into Saudi universities and mosques, because it was seen as a barrier to the threat of cultural Westernization and spread of corruption that accompanied the 1970s oil boom. The diversion that the royal family seized upon was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Wahhabism gained considerable influence in the Muslim world following a tripling in the price of oil in the mid-1970s.

The Saudis financed the construction of some 2,000 schools, 1,500 mosques, and 210 Islamic centers between 1982 and 2002.[15] In Pakistan, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and southern Thailand, Wahhabis co-opted (or replaced) village and neighborhood imams, and there is also a fresh stream of converts returning from stays as guest workers in Saudi Arabia.[16]

Burnett Rubin has characterized the beliefs of the radicals as "[they] reject all forms of ijtihad [they] oppose all forms of hierarchy within the Muslim community, including tribalism or royalty, favour, excluding Shia from participation in the polity, and take a very restrictive view of the social role of women." All these characteristics of the Indian and Pakistani Deobandis are found in exaggerated form among the Afghan Taliban.[17] While John Esposito has put it more succinctly, arguing that they are "rigid, militant, anti-American and anti-non-Muslim culture." He goes on to articulate that this school espoused a myopic, self-contained, militant worldview in which Islam is used to legitimate [sic] their tribal customs and preferences. The classical Islamic belief in jihad as a defense of Islam and the Muslim community against aggression was transformed into a militant jihad culture and worldview that targets unbelievers, including Muslims and non-Muslims alike.[18]

In Pakistan, the educational system was the first sector that was axed during the Islamization process, when on the pretext of providing free education to the poor, madrassas were established all over the country. The degrees that these institutions awarded qualified young men to preside over Qazi courts or work as Ulema in various departments of the government.

The recognition of the madrassas by the government, led to the emergence of Islamic constituencies, always ready to vote for religious parties, as they did when a referendum was held for General Zia, where the choice was largely construed as one where the people could either vote for the Quran or not. Interestingly, despite the United States' contribution to help Pakistan establish its religious credentials during the Cold War, the US, in the initial years of its engagement with Pakistan, had already recognized the troubling potential of Islamist politics.

The new Islamic identity was then the steady process of transformation from a secular, inclusive and an adaptive form of Islam to a more textual, ritualistic and exclusive one guided by exogenous forces, as ideas, practices and finances that flowed in from the Arab world. The transformation brought about conflicts – not only within Islam with regard to its correct interpretation and desirable way of life, but also among Muslims and others countries.

Claiming Lineage to Saudi Arabia on the Basis of Religion

Reinforcing Islamic credentials through Arabization of society appears to be a phenomenon adopted by " born again" Muslims who were defined by Baldas Ghasal in an article on militancy in Indonesia as "a process of homogenization and regimentation - the "Arabization" of Islam - puts greater emphasis on rituals and codes of conduct than on substance"[19] it's important to note that this Arabization is more of a cultural issue than a religious one, though the radicals try to convince the simple people that by adopting the Arab culture , they would be on their way to be a good Muslim.

Here it is crucial to understand that if on the one hand Arab culture has influenced Pakistani society, the political manifestation of that *Arabist* shift has come from the Egyptian Islami co-option with Saudi Islamist concepts. The ideological reformulation of Islamism that has, at the close of the twentieth century, elevated terrorism to the status of a religious obligation resulted primarily from the fusion of previously distinct Egyptian and Saudi Islamist concepts. Despite the underlying universal vision of the two formulations—each stated or implied that Islam was the ultimate truth and posited that all of God's creation was its eventual realm—parochial concerns of their respective national domains remained the primary focus of both the native Egyptian Islamism of the Muslim Brotherhood and the native Saudi Islamism of the Wahhabi establishment until well into the 1970s.

Starting in the 1980s, however, the combined elements of Egyptian and Saudi Islamist localisms engendered a lethal globalist Islamist formulation that transcends nation-state boundaries, not only in principle, but also in its methods of recruitment, action and strategy.[20] It is not a secret anymore that before the late 1960s, when the Palestinian resistance movement rose to prominence as the center of revolutionary activity, the main vectors of political thought propagated in the Arab world originated in Cairo.

Egypt's well-developed higher education system insured consistent Egyptian soft power in the Arab world. It not only produced legions of Egyptian teachers and other professionals who were needed in and dispatched to other Arabic-speaking countries, but it also attracted the Arab youth of such countries that wanted to acquire university degrees. While this phenomenon long benefited the advocates of Arab nationalism, statist socialism, and the notion that Egypt was the Arab world's center of gravity, it eventually gave the Muslim Brotherhood an even more lasting advantage by providing the structure through which the movement spread to societies across North Africa and Southwest Asia. Much of this spread was produced by a "pull" factor, in which non-Egyptians imported the Brotherhood's ideals into their own societies, rather than by the "push" of emissaries exporting those ideals.[21]

In every part of the Muslim world where Brotherhood-inspired organizations have taken root, a process of social, cultural, and ideological radicalization that has helped to incubate new efforts to fuse religion and politics into the "total system" has taken root. With Saudi money and Wahabi thinking, the Brotherhood's notion of Islamization has generated and empowered more radical versions throughout the Muslim world.

The growing rift within Sunni Islam that has spread across Pakistan and fuelled the Taliban with foot soldiers from some radical centers of learning has clear connections to Wahhabi doctrines plus Muslim Brotherhood radicalism.

The recent murder of a renowned Islamic scholar Dr. Sarfaraz Naeemi in Lahore[22] sheds light on the level of intolerance that has spread in our society. The late Maulana had repeatedly warned against the influence of absolutist Saudi doctrines in Pakistan. He recognized that the Taliban ideology was most closely associated with the Salafi/Wahhabi brand of Islam. Many of the draconian capital punishments that the Taliban practiced in Swat valley were emulating judicially prescribed practices in Saudi Arabia.

The assassination of Maulana Naeemi marks a turning point in Pakistan's civil strife. The Taliban profess to be "pure" Sunni Muslims, and have targeted Shia mosques and seminaries many times before. However, Maulana Naeemi is the first notable Sunni scholar to be murdered by the Taliban.

As long as the financial resources are available to these groups they will continue to assert their version of Islam. In this regard, Saudi Arabia's role is crucial. If officially, the Saudi government has denounced its policy of providing financial help to Islamic preaching groups, private donations in the form of *zakat* and other forms of charity are still maintaining the lifeline of radical groups.

Even if it is argued that funds are only being given to teaching and learning organizations, it is very difficult to evaluate where the money goes once it reaches Pakistan. Saudi Arabia appears to

have continued to fund much of Pakistan's policy in Afghanistan through both official and unofficial channels. It feels some affinity to the Taliban interpretation of Islam, and support for the Taliban is consistent with its rivalry with Iran and long-term strategic cooperation with Pakistan.[23]

Indo-Persian Culture Denounced: Death of Spiritual Pluralism

Pakistan grappled with the question of its identity – whether to be a secular democratic country for Muslims and other religious minorities or an Islamic state – even before it was formed in 1947. Pakistan's Muslim population is divided into the Sunni and Shia sects, and is also home to smaller sects such as the Ismailis, the followers of Aga Khan.

However, as Cohen, in *The Idea of Pakistan,* notes "most Pakistanis in rural areas remain vague about their Islam, and their religion is strongly intermixed with folk practices, Sufi beliefs, and even practices Hinduism and Buddhism."[24] Saroosh Irfani explains that with the advent of the "Arab-Afghans' and Taliban, the synthesizing impulse of Indo-Persian culture was largely eclipsed by an '*Arabist* shift'- the tendency to view the present in terms of an imagined Arab past with the Arabs as the only "real/pure" Muslim, and then using this trope of purity for exorcising an "unIslamic" present.[25]

The identity crisis and radicalization of Pakistan is a consequence of decades of Islamization and the marginalization of secular democratic forces. Establishing Islam as the state ideology was a device aimed at defining a Pakistani identity during the country's formative years, as explained by Haqqani.[26] This gained momentum during military ruler Zia ul-Haq's, and successive military governments who have Islamized laws, education, and culture, and coopted and patronized religious parties to counter their civilian opposition. Both civilian and military Pakistani governments have allowed religious extremist organizations to flourish.

According to Haqqani, the focus on building an ideological state has caused Pakistan to lag behind in almost all areas that define a functional modern state.[27] A 2005 International Crisis Group report explains that the political use of Islam by the state[28]

> promotes an aggressive competition for official patronage between and within the many variations of Sunni and Shia sects of Islam, with the clerical elites of major sects and subsects striving to build up their political parties, raise jihadi militias, [and] expand [madrassa] networks.

The report further states that the political disenfranchisement of regions like the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in the northwest and the Federally Administered Northern Areas in the northeast have turned these areas into sanctuaries for sectarian as well as international terrorists and centers of arms and drug trade.[29]

Anti West, Anti India, Anti Liberal Mindset: Sunni Theocratic Totalitarianism?[30]

The Government of Pakistan, its society and the military, are at an ideological crossroads. Nationalism in Pakistan is equated with religion. In official as well as public parlance, ideology of Pakistan and Islamic ideology are interchangeable phrases. The sectarian clergy and militants – interpret the religion in anti-West, anti-American, and anti-Indian terms. Theirs is an anti-culture, which, incidentally, coincides with the military mindset when it comes to Pakistan's South Asian heritage.

A slightly exaggerated account according to Vali Nasr of Indophobia in Pakistan is that it increased with the ascendancy of the militant Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami under Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi. According to Nasr, the first victims of Indophobia in Pakistan were not Indian nationals, but the Muhajir Urdu immigrants who were accused of dual loyalty with India by the Jamaat and their cohorts, to justify discrimination and physical attacks on the Muhajir Urdu minorities[31] and led to the radicalization of the youth in urban areas.

Religion versus ethnicity paralyzed the city of Karachi for decades. Intolerance and extremism took roots in urban areas provided examples to unemployed youth in small towns and villages to look towards religion for some sort of "status" or "respect". Unfortunately, the cause they were so dearly associated with was not really Islam but their own worthiness in a competitive world.

Since Pakistan was supporting and pampering the "Mujaheedin", hatred towards India increased all the more. This was presented as a fight between good and evil. Pakistan was the good guy standing against the bad guys i.e Former Soviet Union and India. The Americans were not listed as the bad guys because of the "moral" and "financial" support they were providing to the Mujaheedin.

Radical Islamist leaders advocated violence against India for decades. SDPI came up with a study on ideologically driven school textbooks according to which, since the 1970's, Pakistani school textbooks have systematically inculcated hatred towards India and Hindus. According to this report:[32]

> Associated with the insistence on the Ideology of Pakistan has been an essential component of hate against India and the Hindus. For the upholders of the Ideology of Pakistan, the existence of Pakistan is defined only in relation to Hindus, and hence the Hindus have to be painted as negatively as possible.

Similarly, a 2005 report by the National Commission for Justice and Peace informs that "Vituperative animosities legitimize military and autocratic rule, nurturing a siege mentality. Pakistan Studies textbooks are an active site to represent India as a hostile neighbor. "The report further states that "the story of Pakistan's past is intentionally written to be distinct from, and often in direct contrast with, interpretations of history found in India. From the government-issued textbooks, students are taught that Hindus are backward and superstitious."[33]

Regular state-owned educational institutions de-emphasized the notion of Pakistan as a nation-state and citizenship in a territory-based state, religious and cultural pluralism. Instead the emphasis was on Islamic universalism, militancy, and Islam versus the other. Grass root support for the Taliban can be traced back to the re-orientation of Pakistani society towards Islamic orthodoxy and militancy from the days of General Zia-ul Haq's military rule.

Apart from educational institutions where the state policy of Islamization altered the textbooks to bring it in line with their interpretation of religion in the country, the religious-political parties are at times involved in a head on collision on the issue of interpretation. Hence we find, Deobani/Wahabi traditionalists supporting anti US protests whereas the Brailves are a bit milder towards the operation against the militants.

A Generation Raised on Religious Radicalization: From Mujaheedin of Afghan Jihad to *Lal Masjid* Zealots

9/11 gave the anti-U.S. Islamists a free hand to reach out to more young people. The mere spectacle of the World Trade Center towers crumbling is still being flaunted as the destruction of the myth of U.S. power. The heavily indoctrinated, religious-minded public saw it as a miracle of faith. According to others in the Muslim world, the U.S.'s anti-Muslim policies invited these attacks. The post 9/11 situation was exploited by none other than the jihadi groups that cherished the fact that the symbols of US imperialism (the Twin towers and Pentagon) were attacked.

However, way before the 9/11, young Pakistani minds were already fed with doses of Islamization through school activities that included 'Acknowledging and identifying forces that may be working against Pakistan,' 'Making speeches on Jihad,' 'Collecting pictures of policemen, soldiers, and national guards,' and lessons on 'India's evil designs against Pakistan.'[34]

Similarly, the Islamization propaganda through the textbooks used by all government schools promoted a mindset that was bigoted and obscurantist. So it was not just madrassas, but public schools were also supposed to help the state in indoctrinating young minds.[35]

As aptly stated by Dr. Hasan Askari in the *Daily Times*, Pakistan has lost over a generation to Islamic orthodoxy and militancy. By now this generation has reached middle-level positions in the government, security services and private sector.[36] The typical Pakistani mindset, developed after state imposed *purification* policies, finds it hard to accept that the once glorified "Mujahideen" are now threatening the state of Pakistan. Ironically, violence by the Taliban is justified by such people as a reaction to US policies in the tribal areas and Afghanistan.

Hence, one can say without doubt that years indoctrination of young minds in the 1980s and 1990s, bore fruit in the form of a Jihadi mindset that is easily convinced to wage Jihad through violent means if the opponent is not ready to submit.

Though a number of madrassas were occupied by such zealots over the years, it was the Lal Masjid in Islamabad that openly declared "*Jihad*" against its own society and the government. Maulana Qari Abdullah of the *Lal Masjid*, was assassinated at the mosque in 1998 and the complex was run by his sons, Maulana Abdul Aziz and Abdul Rashid Ghazi since then. The brothers admitted to having had good contacts with many of the wanted leaders of al-Qaeda, including Osama bin Laden.[37]

Pakistan's decision to become an ally of the US in the war on Terror was enough to irritate the "children of Jihad" as they were not convinced that Pakistan needs to deal with extremism. Given the fact that the Lal Masjid leadership was openly pro-Taliban, both the brothers of Lal Masjid were suspected of their links with the banned jihad organizations. Additionally, they continued Friday sermons full of jihad zeal and anti US speeches. As BBC quoted in its report , "The mosque became a center for speeches calling for the assassination of Pervaiz Musharraf. One of these speeches was delivered by Maulana Masood Azhar, whose Jaish-e-Mohammad group members were later involved in failed attempts on the life of the President."[38]

The height of lawlessness was observed when these self proclaimed custodians of Islam took law in their own hands and started countering the authorities. A glaring example of this was seen in July 2005, when Pakistani authorities attempted to raid the mosque in connection with the investigation into the 7 July 2005 London bombings, but the police were blocked by baton-wielding , Burqa clad female students.[39]

The Lal Masjid episode illustrated the radicalization that was taking place over the decades despite claims of "Enlightened Moderation". General Musharraf's reliance on MMA and PML-Q did not let him touch the conservative vote bank that was still sympathetic towards Islamic groups. The affection and association showed by the brothers to Osama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri was a clear indication of the fact that a segment of society had accepted the Arab connection as part of their "religious" duty rather than mere politics. Diplomats were surprised by the speed with which the Zawahiri condemned the attack on the Lal Mosque and called on Pakistanis to rise up against Musharraf's government.[40] As Dr. Hasan Askari writes:[41]

> A generation and a half has been socialized into religious orthodoxy and militancy, and has internalized hard-line Islamist discourse on national and international affairs to the exclusion of other perspectives. This socialization downplays the notion of Pakistan as a territorial nation-state, Pakistani citizenship and Pakistan as a political community. Their main reference points are transnational Muslim identity; Western injustices against Muslims; non-resolution of the Palestinian and Kashmir issues; the West as an adversary of Muslims; and the role of the Islamic movement rather than Muslim states as the liberators of Muslims from Western domination.

Is Pakistan an Epitome of Religious Extremism?

The Lal Mosque radicalization is not just a black spot in Pakistani history but shows the characteristic of the Pakistani society at micro-level. The unmistakable strain of extremism in this culture is evident everywhere in the country. Farhat Taj writing in *Daily times* shared that in a visit to Jamia Hafsa in January 2007, the female students and teachers eagerly stated that the madrassa was "grooming wives and mothers for jihadis, female suicide bombers and female foot soldiers who will clash with the law enforcement agencies of Pakistan, if necessary" to enforce their version of Sharia, first in Islamabad, and then the rest of Pakistan. A student warned the writer, "We will bring you all into the fold of Islam or eliminate you from the face of the earth, Inshallah".[42]

Moderate non-Arab Muslims all over the world and Pakistanis in particular need to work for reinventing the happy synthesis of culture and religion rather than being influenced by Arabization to prove their true Islamic credentials. De-Arabization can help Pakistan ease relations with its immediate South Asian neighbors with whom relations have been severely affected due to the deliberate association with the Middle East.

Interestingly, the more Pakistan tries to associate itself with the Arab world, the more it is reminded of its non-Arab credentials and its South Asian roots. The recent crisis in Pakistan has exposed the Arab lack of empathy *vis-a-vis* insurgency and militancy in Swat.

Pakistan's position as a non-Arab, non Middle Eastern country that is not connected with Arab politics and culture is very clear amongst the Arabs. As Rafia Zakaria states:[43]

> This point, emphasized repeatedly in the coverage of Obama's speech by Al Jazeera, Al Arabiyya and other networks, should be worthy of note to Pakistanis. Not only did several Arab anchors refuse to acknowledge the refugee crisis and civil war in Pakistan as a pressing issue facing the Muslim world, they quite indifferently discarded it as something inconsequential to the Arab world."

Despite this attitude, Pakistani political-religious parties as well as radical militant groups are all praise for the "Brother Arab" countries, whose only display of brotherly attitude is showering these organizations and political parties with millions of dollars *zakat* money. This should be enough to remind the so-called "Arabist" proponents that for Arabs, South Asian Muslims are just another group of underdeveloped community, which needs to be *purified* by Arabist shift in their culture.

Nonetheless, there are substantial signs that society is now slowly breaking free of the Islamist spell of the Zia era. This trend is likely to take a decade to crystallize. Meanwhile, the government will have to contend with divided societal orientations, polarization on the issue of counter-terrorism and the American role in the region.

The long-term solution to religious extremism and militancy would require massive changes in the fundamental agents of socialization of the polity. Some changes have been made in state education since 2004-05. Madrassa education needs to be regulated and courses should be in line with an arrangement of theology as well as modern education not only in natural sciences but social sciences to provide exposure to multiple political and social discourses.

Pakistan at present faces the challenge of reinventing itself both at the State level as well as the societal level. More so, it needs to adopt a top down approach to reform and reconstruct the conceptual and ideological orientation to undo the state enforcement of a particular sect of Islam. If society appears indifferent about the nature of religiosity, it is not because people want it that way, but because there is a great deal of confusion that can only be removed if official steps are taken to de-radicalize the society. This can be done through education syllabi, media programs and free intellectual discourse on religion and cultural nature of the society in the Pakistani context.

The real clash is not between Islam and the West as has been projected, but between the orthodox and the moderates. The key question is how far will the new generation differ from the one lost to orthodoxy and militancy. Pakistan's inability to control radicalization limits its capacity to engage in a sustained struggle to control extremism and terrorism and reviving the pluralist and tolerant spirit of Pakistan taking pride in its South Asian heritage.

Note:

The views expressed in this article are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) or its affiliates.

Notes and References

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[22] Prominent Pakistani Muslim scholar Maulana Naeemi who spoke out against the Taliban and supported the government's military operation against militants was killed in a suicide bomb attack in Lahore in June 2009. Under his leadership, Sunni Ittehad Council, made up of 22 different groups, held a news conference where it said the Taliban's authoritarian brand of Islam was creating problems for moderate Muslims. Announcing a "Save Pakistan" campaign, the council, which claimed to represent about 85 million followers of the moderate Barelvi school of Sunni Islam, endoresed the military operation against the Taliban.

[23] Burnett Rubin, testimony, October 2008.

[24] http://www.cfr.org/publication/18749/pakistans_fragile_foundations.html- March 2009.

[25] Saroosh Irfani, *Daily Times*, August 15, 2007.

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[27] Ibid.

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Former CIA Director R. James Woolsey used the phrase while stating, "Within Sunni Islam, along with several more moderate schools, there are two varieties of theocratic totalitarianism. Both of these are Salafists, believing that only a literal version of the model of rule implemented in the seventh century in Islam has ultimate legitimacy. Both have the objective of rule by a unified mosque and state; for some this theocracy is personified by the caliph. Different individuals in these movements emphasize different aspects, but generally the common objective is to unify first the Arab world under theocratic rule, then the Muslim world, then those regions that were once Muslim (e.g. Spain), then the rest of the world. Salafists of both jihadist and loyalist stripe, e.g. both al Qaeda and the Wahhabis, share basic views on all points but one. Both exhibit fanatical hatred of Shiite Muslims, Sufi Muslims, Jews, Christians, and democracy, and both brutally suppress women. They differ only on whether it is appropriate to carry out jihadist attacks against any enemy near or far *now* or whether to subordinate such efforts for the time being to the political needs of a particular state, i.e. Saudi Arabia.

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ayman al-Zawahiri, issued a videotape on July 11, 2007 calling for Pakistanis to join jihad, in revenge for the attack by Pakistan's Army on the mosque. Al-Zawahri's four minute address was entitled *The Aggression against Lal Masjid*, and entirely focused on the clash between the Lal Masjid militants and Pakistan's army. The video was released by al-Qaeda's media wing, as-Sahab and was also subtitled in English. See *The Sunday Times*, July 15, 2007 and *Daily News Egypt,* July 12, 2007 available at http://www.dailystaregypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=8205

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[42] Farhat Taj, "Jamia Hifsa must close down" *Daily Times*, February 3, 2007.

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