Jihad, Extremism and Radicalization:
A Public Perspective

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Introduction

It is important to study what Pakistani people think about religious extremism, radicalization and Jihad and what contributes and/or has contributed over time to make them think so. Among many reasons for the importance two of them are significant. First, Pakistani state and society are facing extensive threats from these ‘phenomenon’ and knowing people’s perceptions, who are the ultimate victims, is fundamental in dealing with these threats and the related emerging challenges. Secondly, it is important to look into convergence and polarization of public views, at societal level on these issues to assess the levels and dynamics of tacit or open public support/approval or rejection to extremist and radical forces.

Most of the Pakistani people may not be familiar with the academic or even literal explanations of the concepts of radicalization and extremism, especially when the commonly accepted definitions are borrowed from the West. These definitions, as believed, by Pakistani scholars and academics, are generally not relevant in Pakistani context. Hence it is useful to understand the public perceptions of extremism and radicalization by employing reductionism; taking violence, militancy and also terrorism as reducible phenomenon for this purpose. Nonetheless, people’s understanding of Jihad can be studied and analyzed as it is. Meanwhile an effort could be made to see as to what extent extremism and radicalization are overlapped or confused with the concept of Jihad in the public perceptions.

Academics and scholars make a conscious effort to treat radicalization and radicalism as distinct from extremism and terrorism. The reason is found in the fact that both positive and negative connotations are associated with radicalization. It, however, does not mean that radicals cannot be extremists or terrorists. Radicalization can generate extremism, which is the acceptance or adoption of an irrational and extreme position about an issue. The Communism or Marxism was considered a radical ideology because it questioned the legitimacy and advocacy of existing institutions. The term began to be used for rightwing ideas and movements after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, leftwing radicalism greatly weakened as a world of force and thereafter Islamism in its different sectarian garbs and regional manifestations became synonymous with radicalism. Islamism simplifies Islam to a set of beliefs and practices which are apparently anti-intellectual, anti-modern, anti-liberal, and anti-democratic. Thus, as a political ideology, Islamism – also known as Islamic fundamentalism, militant Islam, radical Islam etc – generates a mindset that is invariably hostile to non-Muslims, deviant sects, women and liberal Muslims. Such a mindset translated into political actions tends to be violence-prone and can give impetus to terrorism.

There are countless studies available on the issues of Jihad, extremism and radicalization in Pakistan. But a focus on the public perspectives on these issues has rarely become a topic of empirical or theoretical researches, though a significant number of opinion polls is available. Indeed, only a few studies have tried to explore the understanding and viewpoint of the Pakistani people on Jihad, extremism and radicalization, and the public support or denouncement for these phenomenons. Even if it has been done, that is also from a theoretical perspective evading an empirical input, in most of the cases.

It is useful first to review some Pakistani focused key researches on religious extremism, radicalization and terrorism before discussing the available literature on public perspectives on the subject. Studies on the extremism and radicalization in Pakistan tend to discuss the phenomenon in any of these two ways. A considerable group of studies treats these phenomenon in Pakistan as part of a global phenomenon; either to compare the Pakistani radicalization and extremism with radicalization and extremism in other Islamic countries (Mahmood, 1995; Roy, 2002) or to explore the global and regional links of Islamic
radicalized movements (Hegghammer, 2006). A second comparatively larger group of studies attempt to understand the phenomenon through religion and radicalized religious groups as the major causative factors. Most of these studies have exclusively explored the role of the radicalized and extremist/militant groups in Pakistan (Rana, 2003, 2005; Chitkara, 2003; Haqqani, 2005; H. Abbas, 2004, Waseem etc.) whereas some have tried to discover the links of religion (Kaul, 2002), sectarianism (ICG, 2008) and religious seminaries (Stern, 2004; Roy, 2002; ICG, 2002) with the said phenomenon.

Books and literature produced on Jihad have two main discourses. The first, the interpretational, ideological and intellectual discourse undertakes exegesis of Quran-o-Sunnah, and debate on legal (with regard to Islamic jurisprudence) and historical explanations to understand divine settings for Jihad and its obligations for Muslims. The second discourse tries to understand Jihad through the waves of militancy and terrorism where the Muslims are involved in. The first discourse is by exclusively a group of experts on Islamic theology and jurisprudence and evades - perhaps by default - the common Muslim’s views and opinions. The second discourse, nonetheless, has also remained evasive of public perspective with few exceptions and falls largely in the second group of studies mentioned above.

These various approaches have been used to (i) explore mostly the causes of extremism and radicalization with less emphasis on empirical studies. (ii) The evidence is almost uniformly consistent in indicating that religion is at the heart of the issue. (iii) Only a handful of studies have endeavored to undertake historical (Rana, 2003), political (Kaul, 2002), educational (Davis, 2007) and psychological (S. Abbas, 2008) aspects as undercurrents of the radicalization and extremism in Pakistani society. (iv) People’s perceptions of Jihad, extremism and radicalization and eventual possibility of tacit and/or open sympathy or support for or denouncement of the extremist, radical and ‘Jihad’ groups have been out of scope of these studies.

Some studies and opinion polls, however, have tried to bridge this last mentioned gap that is to explore the public perspectives of Jihad, extremism and radicalization, and which is the focal point of this paper.

Nasim A. Jawed (1999) interviewed some 163 respondents in 1969 (91 in Lahore and Karachi and 72 in Dhaka) from four occupational categories belonging to two social classes - professionals (practicing lawyers, university teachers and journalists) and the ulama from the traditional religious leadership. He used his survey findings viz-a-viz Muslim political ideas reflected in Islamic texts - both traditional and contemporary - in order to explore the public attitudes towards national identity, desirability of an Islamic state, role of religion and religious leaders in politics, Jihad as national defense, and desirability and character of Islamic law etc. The research work is a unique blend of social scientific approach and humanistic perspective but its findings may not be as valid today as they were 40 years before due to much changed geographical, sociocultural, political, ideological and global realities for Pakistan.

C. Fair and B. Shepherd (2006) used the data of the Pew Institute - a survey conducted in 2002 in 14 Muslim countries including Pakistan - to study the demand-side determinants or support patterns of terrorism. They used survey inputs describing public views on threat to Islam, suicide bombing and role of religious leaders in politics. They have provided some useful findings on support to terrorism in Pakistan but the study is neither country-specific nor does it provide an insight into public perspectives on social phenomenon of radicalization and extremism, which are said to lead to terrorism; it was obviously out of scope.

In another study, C. Fair (2004) has tried to explore the reasons which compel people to join militant organizations. Her discussion on militant recruitments on individual level offers a set of views of militant
recruits, but her exclusive focus remains on militant and terrorist landscape wherein she focuses on ideological frameworks, mainly based on religious schools of thoughts in Pakistan, to understand the group dynamics of militant recruitments. An almost similar study, but more empirical in methodology and wider in scope, was conducted by Sohail Abbas (2007). He endeavoured to explore the ‘Jihadi’ mindset by conducting two case studies of the “Afghan Jihad” militants detained in Haripur and Peshawar jails. Contrary to C. Fair’s ideological groupthink framework he focused on individual psychological analyses (psychoanalytic perspective) of detainees to understand their mindset. But the societal narrative, description of views/opinions emanating from different layers of social fabric of Pakistan as a whole in support or denouncement of Jihad, extremism and radicalization is not the subject of these studies.

Shinwari (2008) has nevertheless recorded tribal people’s socio-cultural, political and religious perceptions of the issues of Jihad, militancy and Talibanization etc. by surveying 1,050 tribesmen from Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). His study provides deep insight into the subject but from perspective of only one of the seven demographic units of Pakistani federation.

The surveys and opinion polls mainly by the Pew Global Attitude Project, the Gallup and others provide an empirical insight into Pakistani public’s perceptions and concerns about issues related to terrorism, war on terror, Pakistan’s alliance with US, religious extremism, Taliban, Al-Qaeda, Islamic law, female education and the role of religion in politics and compatibility with democracy etc.

The Pew survey (released on July 14, 2005) titled “Islamic Extremism: Common Concepts for Muslim and Western Public” encompasses 17 countries including Muslim and European with Pakistan. It seeks public opinions, along with other topics, on threat of Islamic extremism, suicide bombings, the role of religion in politics and Osama bin Laden. Another survey by the Pew (released on August 13, 2009) focuses exclusively on Pakistani people’s opinions on religious extremism, Pakistan’s alliance with the US, Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Islamic laws and girls’ education.

The focus of the most of the Gallop surveys in understanding Pakistani public perspective in issues related to religious extremism remains on Pakistan’s alliance with the US (Julie Ray, Dec. 29, 2008; Rajesh Srinivasan and Julie Ray, Oct. 3, 2008), war against terrorism (Julie Ray, Dec. 17, 2008), Taliban and Talibanization (Julie Ray, May 12, 2009), religion and democracy and role of Shariah (Dalia Mogahed, Oct. 3, 2007).

The International Republican Institute collected public responses in Pakistan in 2009 on Pakistan’s alliance with the US on war against terrorism. Another survey by <WorldPublicOpinion.Org> asked people about their views on Al-Qaeda, Taliban and other militant organizations in Pakistan. The <WorldPublicOpinion.Org> and United States Institute of Peace (USIP) carried out a joint study *Pakistani Public Opinion on Democracy, Islamist Militancy, and Relations with the US*, which was conducted by C. Fair, Clay Ramsay and Steve Kull in 2007. The study surveyed only urban adults in 19 cities to explore their views on the role of Islam, democracy, militant groups, and Pakistan’s relations with the US etc. The study lacked a homogenous sample representative of entire Pakistani populations and public perspectives on social, cultural and ideological fronts.

Opinion polls and surveys are extended to assess the public opinions at certain intervals of time. Their credibility in academic and research domains in understanding certain social phenomenon is limited in measuring instant responses of the people sans a qualitative analysis and background investigation.
This paper will try to explore the public perspectives – understanding, perceptions/views and also concerns – to analyze the responses at societal levels to the phenomenon of extremism, radicalization and ‘Jihad’. An underlying theme will be to assess the ideological support and accommodation at societal level for radical and extremist forces. The genesis and evolution of certain public perspectives will be explored in historical settings particularly the socio-cultural, religious, political and educational aspects. This diachronic analysis will be then used to explain and elucidate the empirical findings with regard to people’s views of the set of phenomenon under study.

Methodology

The character of this study is defined by its two key aspects related to empirical and theoretical explanations. Besides relying on the empirical findings of a survey it analyzes the relevant literature, books, documents and other texts to have, firstly, an insight into previous findings and approaches on the subject and, secondly, to look into ideological, political and socio-cultural contexts and dynamics of public perspectives in Pakistan over time.

The quantitative part of analysis depends on the Pak Institute for Peace Study (PIPS) survey on radicalization and extremism which interviewed adult respondents from across Pakistan’s seven federal units – four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Federally Administered Tribal areas (FATA), and Gilgit-Baltistan – and also the capital city of Islamabad, between October 2008 and April 2009. For this purpose a comprehensive survey questionnaire, including both open and closed ended questions, was used. For survey population, PIPS used a cluster random sampling technique keeping in view that it represents the survey population and the target population across Pakistan. Keeping in view the objectives of the survey, the PIPS fixed survey sample size at 1,568 assuming the target population as much as 160 million. At 95 % confidence level, the confidence interval for overall sample size was fixed at 2.50; with margin of error being +/- 2.5%. The further distribution of survey population has been made on the basis of 1998 Census’s population characteristics on administrative (rural and urban) domains.
Ideological Sensitivities and Historical Explanations

Without going into detail of how people form or structure their views and beliefs from sociological or psychological perspectives, this part of the paper discusses briefly the ideological – political and religious – sensitivities which have remained associated with Pakistani people’s beliefs and views as core elements of social learning and state functioning. With regard to this a retrospective analysis of the processes of ideological inductions and social transformations in Pakistan seems useful.

It is a common notion and general perception among people that Pakistan was made in the name of Islam. While historians differ about the motivation of Pakistan’s founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah, regarding the formation of an Islamic state, there is little doubt that contemporary Pakistani identity is anchored in Islam. Along with that notion, a country where majority population (more than 98 percent) is Muslim people’s thinking in religious terms or their religiosity seems natural, but it varies from individual to individual. Perhaps the people’s desire for Islam playing a greater role in their lives can be taken as their approval of religious extremists. This is not a matter of discussion here. But it is important to see people’s vulnerability to the ideological structures, especially when these structures are developed in the religious frameworks, organized at the level of state and society and offered to the people for consumption. In a society like that of Pakistan, where religiosity is inborn while education and critical thinking have remained ignored, such ideological inductions can have implications for public opinions and perceptions.

Some social scientists see Islamism as a force of social change - a distinct phenomenon in Pakistan - and bracket religion with other social institutions of Pakistan such as family and occupation. M. Abdul Qadeer (Pakistan, 2006) identifies that Islamic themes were woven into conception of Pakistan’s nationalism. They remained largely on the symbolic plane of Pakistan’s public sphere during early periods of Pakistani history, although Islam as a religious and spiritual institution continued to be a critical element of national culture and people’s identity. Yet in the period starting from 1977 Islam became an important instrument of inventing traditions and reorganizing social life.

The Islamic foundation of Pakistan ideology was strengthened in the beginning mainly by a state-led discourse pursued by most of the Pakistani historians, religious scholars and educationists. Pakistani historiography has mainly tried to homogenize the culture, traditions, and social and religious life of the people; which suits the political attempts towards centralization. Any attempt to assert the historical identity of a region has been discouraged and condemned. According to Dr. Mubarak Ali, this framework of historiography was developed under the framework of the ‘Pakistan Ideology,’ which is based on the idea of a separate Muslim nationhood.

With regard to their concern in promoting Islamic nationalism, the first success of the religious and traditionalists, including ulama of the Deoband, the Majlis-e-Ahrar, and the Khaksars, came in the form of Objectives Resolution in 1949. It was the milestone in the political history of Pakistan which ignited the role of religion in politics in Pakistan. The religious circles then started openly debating and asserting that Pakistan was made in the name of Islam and should be directed to Islamic ideology. The anti-Ahmadi movement of 1953 was another turning point in this regard. The religious clergy started to assert itself in political arena which became obvious by the following agitations against Ayub’s Family Law Reform in 1961 – an ordinance designed to regulate certain aspects of the family life of Muslims like divorce,
polygamy, minimum age of marriage, and registration of marriage, and which religious elites thought un-Islamic.

By this time the religious clergy in the East and West Pakistan was convinced over the desire of Pakistan becoming an Islamic state. Nasim Ahmed Jawed says, while describing the findings of a survey conducted in first seven months of 1969 in the East and West Pakistan, that 96 percent ulama professed national identity of Pakistan as an Islamic one. When asked about desirability of an Islamic state all the ulama in both of the former two wings of Pakistan said, of course, that the state should seek to serve Islamic ends.

Parallel to historians and religious clergy, at another level, this work of strengthening national ideology was undertaken by the educationists and text book writers, supported by the successive governments. A close review of the textbooks particularly “Pakistan Studies” reveals that their writers believe that “Pakistan ideology is indeed Islamic ideology which guides us in every sphere of life”. Ideologically imbued materials were not confined to Islamist and Pakistan Studies courses; they pervaded the entire syllabus, including Science, English, Urdu, Geography, Social Studies, etc.

This process of establishing an Islamic ideology for Pakistan was later expanded to a broader theme of Islamization of state and society. It was a multipronged process which targeted mainly public education, politics, legislation, economy, media and social order.

The basic roadmap of public education in Pakistan is provided by the school curriculum. The present curriculum dates back to almost a quarter century, when in 1981 the regime of General Zia-ul-Haq used the Ministry of Education and its Curriculum Wing to launch an ideological assault on a generation of children. It was transmitted onwards by the successive governments of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif to General Musharraf. Pervez Hoodbhoy enlists some excerpts from the official curriculum, duly authorized by the Curriculum Wing of the Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan, which say that by the end of Class-V the child should be able to understand Hindu-Muslim differences and the resultant need for a Pakistan, demonstrate by actions and beliefs in the fear of Allah, understand India’s evil designs against Pakistan, make speeches on Jihad and Shahdat (martyrdom), and acknowledge and identify forces that may be working against Pakistan.

While most of the emphasis is put on the institutions of religious education, madrassas, especially by the international media when it comes to discuss the causes of intolerance in Pakistani society, many scholars, however, don’t rule out the role of Pakistan’s public school system:

...while this [madrassas] may be a partial contributory factor, the real problem lies in the public school system – which subsequently feeds into the higher education system of colleges and universities.

C. Fair also contends in her paper on militancy and madrassas that the public school system in Pakistan works on a basis of a curriculum that is highly likely to engender intolerance and promote the concept of conflict resolution through violence. S. Hafeez has put it in these words: “Any attempt to ‘Islamize’ the social sciences is very likely to engender fanaticism, emotionalism, and post-facto analysis on or interpretation of social realities.

Parallel to public schools the higher education also had the similar trends of Islamization. A directive issued by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1983 said that textbook writers were to demonstrate that basis of Pakistan is not to be founded in racial, linguistic, or geographical factors, but
rather, in the shared experience of a common religion -To get students to know and appreciate the ideology of Pakistan, and to popularize it with slogans, to guide students towards the ultimate goal of Pakistan – the creation of a compulsory Islamized State.\textsuperscript{23}

To inculcate Islamic values among the youth a Shariah Faculty, which later became a fully fledged International Islamic University, was founded at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. Learning of Arabic was encouraged and Islamic Studies was made a compulsory subject at the high school and college level along with Pakistan Studies. In order to formulate the basis for “Islamic democracy” and to develop the parameters for an “Islamic Political System”, Islamic Ideology Council and Islamic Research Institute were revitalized. In 1978 Islamic Ideology Council proposed a scheme of “Establishment of an Islamic Society.” It sought Islamization of educational, economic, legal system etc. of the country.\textsuperscript{24}

It was under General Zia that narrow and bigoted religiosity explicitly became a state policy.\textsuperscript{25} Zia visualized a social order in which all sectors of life were regulated in accordance with Islamic percepts. Thus began a radicalization in religious terms which was referred to as Islamization.\textsuperscript{26} In government offices [and also education institutions], the recital of afternoon prayers was promoted and special spaces were assigned for this activity. Anyone who did not pray was considered an outsider…Ramazan was enforced and the people found that eating and drinking in public was penalized…women were asked by zealous passers-by to cover their heads or to dress modestly.\textsuperscript{27} Perhaps as a result of Zia’s policies, Pakistani society undoubtedly moved towards becoming more conservative in terms of the public practice of social and cultural mores over the last three decades.\textsuperscript{28}

In a bid to create an Islamic social order in the country structural adjustments were made in political, constitutional and legal spheres. Almost all the consecutive governments since Pakistan’s establishment have been providing assurances to its people that Pakistan is committed to the establishment of an Islamic democracy and Islamic social justice; the starting point was Objectives Resolution 1949. The Constitution Commission appointed by General Ayub Khan had found that 96.6 percent of the people whose opinion it consulted through questionnaire or interviews were in favour of adopting a preamble with Islamic provisions to the Constitution.\textsuperscript{29}

All constitutions in Pakistan from 1954 onward have had almost identical preambles that God is the ultimate sovereign of the universe and this sovereignty is to be exercised by the people but within the limits prescribed by Allah (in Quran and through Sunnah), and that necessary facilities should be created for Muslims of Pakistan to order their lives in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam. But there are sharp and wide differences between the modernist elements and the traditionalist and fundamental (religious) groups with regard to the interpretation and enforcement of the preamble.\textsuperscript{30}

General Yahya Khan’s (1969-71) Legal Framework also required that the National Assembly of Pakistan preserve the “Islamic Ideology”. It was during Yahya’s rule and electoral campaign that the term “Islamic Ideology” was explicitly used for the first time and acquired new meaning.\textsuperscript{31}

The religious ideological conflict intensified during and after the Z. A. Bhutto regime (1971-1977). The Constitution of 1973 provided more Islamic injunctions than any previous constitution. However, the Bhutto regime again became the target of religious and traditional forces when Bhutto tried to implement socialism, which the religious forces took as a synonym for secularism which is opposed to the religion. To counter this agitation, Bhutto fell back on such ritualistic aspects of Islam, as inviting the Imam of Ka’aba to lead Friday prayers, enforcing prohibition, declaring Friday a holiday, instead of Sunday. These
concessions did not appease the agitators, and this gave further impetus to the politics of Islamization in Pakistan. In July 1977, Bhutto’s government was overthrown by General Zia ul-Haq in the wake of a rising Islamic movement led by the Jamat-e-Islami and Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam, the main politico-religious parties.

The politics of Islamization helped Zia as well to legitimise his rule and also provided him with the opportunity to develop solidarity with Saudi Arabia and the Islamic world in general. Zia introduced normative and structural changes in the political system, based on religion. For criminal offences, Islamic punishments were announced and enforced. Criminals were publicly flogged. At the structural level, in 1973, Shari'ah benches were introduced to enforce laws according to Islamic jurisprudence. To Islamize the economy, on 10 February 1979, the Zakat and Usher Ordinance was announced making it compulsory for everyone to donate 2.5 percent of one’s unused/spare wealth, money and assets etc. (as Zakat), and 10 percent of agricultural produce (as Usher) to Zakat Fund of the government which will distribute it to needy and the deserving. The Interest free banking was introduced and was hailed as a major step towards developing a framework for Islamic economy.

Sectarianism grew in parallel with Islamization process. From occasional local disputes about religious beliefs and customs in the 1960s and the 1970s, sectarian differences have evolved into attacks on individuals and institutions of other sects by the 1990s and 2000s. By the end of Zia era, Pakistan was a cultural wasteland both in social and intellectual terms. The opposition to Zia was essentially a political one and did not touch upon the cultural and social damage that his regime inflicted upon the country.

This transformation is not yet over. Pakistan’s socio-cultural structure is changing. T. Rahman describes it as follows: “Complex processes of social transformation are underway. But the problem is the direction of change which is positive only partly, and negative in general. Something has gone wrong with the process of change. The change tends to be more in favour of the radical forces than peaceful socio-cultural agents”.

Some scholars assert that Pakistani mainstream media has been a source of great confusion among populace regarding the issues of terrorism and extremism. Hussain Naqi, a veteran journalist and human rights activist, says that a part of Pakistan’s mainstream media has been manifesting an approach that is very close to the militants’ media, and media barons of Pakistan can’t be excluded from this ‘responsibility’ of creating and promoting an extreme religious or ideological view in the country.

This above-mentioned feature of media cannot be seen in isolation with the efforts to Islamize Pakistani media which had indeed started soon after establishment of Pakistan. Zafrullah Khan mentions a report on media prepared by the Council of Islamic Ideology, right from 1962 until 1993 which contains many recommendations such as on how to include Islamic ethos into media discourses. He also argues that academic discourse has remained supportive to this kind of media narrative where some of the leading scholars of journalism in the country have been asserting that if we want to reform Pakistani society we need Islamic journalism whose sole source of inspiration should be “Amr bil Ma’roof wa Nahi Anil Munkir”, a methodology which was later on internalized by almost all ‘jihadi’ publications.

During Zia regime media underwent some peculiar changes. Women television announcers had to cover their heads. Classical music and dancing were banned along with Pakistani films and film songs. The media establishment underwent a change and a new guard took over.
Zia’s Islamization was coupled with ‘Jihadi’ sentiment during anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan. Thousands of recruits from Pakistan, mainly from religious seminaries and refugee camps, were trained and sent to Afghanistan to fight against the Soviet forces. A parallel ‘Jihadi’ media was promoted to spread the messages of ‘Jihad’ and get human and financial support for the cause. The Jihad publications were printed in several languages in Pakistan, mainly from Peshawar, Karachi and Quetta. The number of such publications had reached to 91 by 1988.41 The Pakistani religious groups’ publications, including those of Jamat-e-Islami (JI) and Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI), supported their favourite Jihad groups in their news and analysis. Monthly TERJUMAN UL-QURAN, weekly ASIA and daily JASARAT of Jamat-e-Islami, monthly AL-HAQ of Darul Uloom Haqqania Akora Khattak (JUI), and AL-JAMIAH of JUI were on the forefront.42

Another important trend which has run at societal level, parallel to state-led ideological induction, arises from the role of religious leaders, the ulama and religious seminaries which have remained fundamental in imparting religious education to the masses. M. Azam, a researcher at the PIPS, has counted three major problems in people’s understanding of Islam: language (owing to Arabic language of Holy Quran), sectarian approaches and political use of religion.43 But the role of ulama and religious clerics has remained much more than mere interpretation of Islam and establishing sect-oriented religious explanations. They have been trying to influence both the state affairs and social order from the very beginning. Their vision on nature of state and society for Pakistan should be seen separately from mere Islamization efforts of different regimes.

Similar is the case with religious seminaries - the madrassas - which are also not confined to a sole purpose of education. More than 60 percent of madrassas in Pakistan are said to have political affiliations. As Rana has stated in his paper on political attitudes of Pakistan madrassas, 59 percent are affiliated with religio-political parties, three percent with other mainstream parties and 18 percent with sectarian or Jihadi groups/organizations. Nonetheless the administration of 60 percent of the madrassas believes that playing their role in politics is a religious duty.44

Educationists, nevertheless, believe that despite its disciplinary merits, religious education has an inherent propensity to reduce critical thinking since there is predisposition to ideological beliefs that often discourage questionings of Divine plans. Despite such tendencies have been moderated at times and science has been allowed to flourish under moderate religious rule, the underlying tension between questioning the unquestionable remains.45

It is true that the Ulama are not powerful or influential in the administrative hierarchy, but they exercise considerable sway over the masses who venerate them. The Muslim League, while waging its campaign for establishment of Pakistan, depended heavily on religious leaders to mobilize mass support for its cause. After the establishment of Pakistan, the Muslim League did not build a strong grass-roots organization, nor did the leaders try to put forward a liberal or modern interpretation of Islam before masses. The people eventually have remained dependent on the Ulama and the clerics for understanding Islam owing to low rates of literacy and deserted education. They have remained vulnerable to the religious education which Ulama and clerics have been offering. And the intellectual horizons of the orthodox Ulama have remained confined within the bounds of the Shariah as found in the Quran and Sunnah and certain schools of Islamic law developed during the classical period of the Muslim history.46
Empirical Findings

This part of the paper discusses the empirical findings of the survey. The survey questionnaire contained more than fifty questions seeking people’s responses in political, religious, socio-cultural, economic and global perspectives. There was a coherent set of questions on Jihad, Taliban and militancy which was used to explore the public perceptions, and support level if any, on Jihad and militancy.

1. ‘Jihad’ and Militancy: Support Determinants

In Islamic teachings Jihad is a vast concept. There are three levels of Jihad: intimate struggle to purify one’s soul of evil influences; to strive for justice [or against cruelty] through words and non-violent actions; and use of physical force in defense of Muslims against oppression and transgression by the enemies of Allah, Islam and Muslims.47

In order to explore people’s understanding and views of Jihad, respondents were asked about what Jihad meant to them. The question, however, did not ask about the level or type of Jihad, such as physical (armed) or verbal etc., which they might have in their minds while answering this question. As many as 28% respondents said that fighting against cruelty was Jihad; the maximum response against the given options. Male respondents were more likely to choose this option (32.4%) than women (18.2%). Among age groups, this option was selected the most (30.8%) by the respondents between 20-35 years of age.

![What does Jihad mean to you?](image)

About 21% of the respondents defined Jihad in terms of fight against the adversaries of Muslims. This response was almost uniform within all groups of age, gender and economy. However, 31% of the respondents who chose this option belonged to education level of below middle class. A comparatively less number of respondents, corresponding to 5%, said Jihad meant to spread Islam in every corner of the world. Some 15 % people viewed Jihad as a fight against personal desires. About 27% were of the view that Jihad encompassed almost all the mentioned options.

Traditionally, the defense of an Islamic state has been seen by the Muslims as Jihad. According to a scholar, Majid M. Khadduri, classic example of bellum justum (Just War) in Islamic tradition is defensive in nature. According to him, changes were made in Islamic bellum justum theory as time passed by. Often there was the need of the Muslim states to make peace, but not on their own terms. Therefore, Muslim jurists began to reinterpret law and to justify the suspension of Jihad. They agreed on the necessity of the peace.48
Some Muslim jurists have the point of view that the wars of Muhammad (PBUH) were defensive and they prove it from Quran-o-Sunnah, tradition and Islamic history.\textsuperscript{49} They emphasize that from the beginning to the present context of the life of Muhammad the necessity for Jihad has always been for defensive purpose.\textsuperscript{50} But according to some scholars Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) fought offensive Jihad in some wars such as in Khyber or Ghazwa Tabuk.\textsuperscript{51} Believers of offensive Jihad claim that those who promote the idea that Islam allows only defensive war reject the Quran and Sunnah and conceal the facts of history. They manifest servility of mind, and their statements are unreliable.\textsuperscript{52}

People are aware of the armed or physical Jihad but it is doubtful whether they have clear idea about Islamic law regarding offensive or defensive mode of it. This was manifested in most respondents’ ‘don’t know’ reply when they were asked about which type of Jihad should be armed one; 49% selected this option. Among others more respondents, 38%, were in favour of defensive Jihad as compared with 13.3% favouring the option of offensive Jihad.

Male respondents had almost equal level of support for defensive and offensive Jihad – 40.6% and 40.4% respectively. Among female respondents it was 31% and 12% respectively for defensive and offensive Jihad. Contrary to only 18.5% illiterate respondents picked up the option of defensive Jihad more than 50% respondents having higher education supported this option.

The respondents, however, were much clearer while describing and linking the conflicts in Kashmir and Afghanistan to Jihad. About the unrest and fighting in Afghanistan most of the respondents, corresponding to 73%, were of the view that it is not Jihad; 18% said yes it is Jihad while 9% took evasion. Among those 73% who did not think Afghan war Jihad, 55% respondents said it was a political war and 18% considered it a tribal conflict.
On the other hand when asked about the Kashmir conflict, 56% of the respondents said it was a Jihad and only 21% – quite contrary to 73% in case of Afghanistan – said otherwise. This clear difference of opinion is probably because of the historical link of Pakistan with the Kashmir conflict. Both India and Pakistan link Kashmir with their state identities. India interprets its rule over Kashmir as evidence of its secular credentials. Pakistan describes Kashmir as integral to its Islamic identity and an unrealized aspect of the process that led to Pakistan’s independence. Majority people of Pakistan also see Kashmir as a continuity of struggle of independence. According to Nasim A. Jawed in the context of Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, the religiously oriented Muslims have generally considered Pakistan’s war against India as Jihad both on grounds of Muslim self-defense, and – in the case of the first two wars – as the rightful efforts to liberate the Muslims of the disputed Kashmir. But in reality this is not confined to just religiously oriented Muslims, majority people of Pakistan has been approving Pak-India wars on Kashmir as being Jihad. The survey question has indeed asked if the fight in Kashmir is Jihad without mentioning the past Indo-Pakistan wars or the recent armed struggle in Indian held Kashmir but it is more related implicitly to the present situation.

The public perspective disapproving Afghan war as Jihad also resonates with Pakistan’s past and current policies towards Afghanistan; Pakistan no more considers the Afghan war a Jihad as it did during the Soviet-Afghan war. The other reason can be the terrific damage which Pakistani state and society have faced due to some militant groups, mainly the Taliban, arising out of Afghan war and now hitting Pakistan. Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Talat Masood, a leading defence analyst, is, however, of the view that as people see Indian presence in Kashmir a continued colonial raj owing to India’s permanent occupation, the American presence in Afghanistan is perceived as not permanent. And people think there should be Jihad against this [Indian] colonialism, although it has not worked yet.

In order to ascertain the people’s mindset on the ideology and acts of Taliban the respondents were asked (without mentioning any areas or countries) whether the Taliban were fighting for Islam. Some The 46% respondents were of the view that Taliban’s fight had nothing to do with Islam; they denounced the ideological basis of Taliban’s fight. However, 26% respondents said Taliban’s fight was for Islam while 28% people did not reply. A major portion of the respondents, who declared Taliban’s fight as an Islamic belonged to those who had got their education from madrassas; 41% of the respondents having madrasa education and 34% having both madrasa and regular education termed Taliban’s fight Islamic.

Given the increasing level of Taliban atrocities in country, the disapproval of Taliban’s fight on religious grounds by some 46% respondents is not a satisfactory matter. According to Muhammad Amir Rana, there could be two reasons for this particular public response: “Firstly, state pursued jihad policy for a long time which provided people a rationale to support those who engage in jihad. Secondly, Taliban have been using religion and jihad to achieve their political gains, and the people, who lack
understanding of this, however, may suppress or confuse their disapproval of Taliban owing to their religious sensitivities. Especially when the religious scholars and clerics do not guide the people in the correct direction and their religious knowledge is poor such sensitivities can mislead their opinions. Another factor can be the anti-American feelings among the people which translate into supporting the Taliban who, to the people, fight against the US.

This confused public perspective became more visible when people were asked how did they see the militant acts of Taliban. Some 38% respondents condemned the acts of Taliban in Pakistan such as attacks on security forces, civilians, CD/video shops, girls’ schools and other targets. Only 8% said they supported these Taliban’s acts. Along with that most of the people, corresponding to 54% of total respondents, were found confused about Taliban’s acts. Supportive responses were relatively high among those who had got madrasa education; Only 12% respondents having madrasa education supported Taliban acts - 4% higher than the overall support figure of 8%. Among females, the support for Taliban’s acts was slightly higher than the males; it was 9.2% in female and 7% among male. About 42% male and 29% female condemned Taliban’s acts.

The respondents who supported the Taliban’s acts were asked further to comment on how did they justify the Taliban’s acts. Most of the respondents, corresponding to 73% of those supporting the Taliban acts, did not have any justification to support their view. About 9% respondents said that these acts were to eliminate anti-Islamic activities. According to 7% respondents these acts were to incline people towards Islamic teachings. For 5% respondents these acts were to spread panic and fear among anti-Islamic communities. Another 6% respondents were of the view that these acts were to compel the government to enforce Islamic rules and laws.

Although majority of the people don’t approve Taliban’s fight in Afghanistan as being Islamic or a Jihad, but they also oppose the decision of the Pakistani government to support the USA in war against terrorism. When asked about if Pakistan’s decision to support the US in war against terrorism is correct, 64% said ‘no’. Only 17% termed it a correct decision while 19% did not reply.
With regard to the 9/11 attacks a sizeable number of Pakistanis believes that such an intricate operation was well beyond the capability of Osama and his company.58 Secondly most of the Pakistanis see the US attacks in Afghanistan as an attempt to weaken the Islam and Muslim, a concept mainly put forward and propagated by the religious scholars, leaders and some political analysts. Thirdly, people also believe that the acts of terrorism in Pakistan are a reaction to the US drone attacks in Pakistani tribal areas being carried out in the name of war against terrorism.

People in general, have no clear idea of who is responsible for this decision. They think that America invaded Iraq and Afghanistan. There are conspiracy theories among the people about America and they do not know the realities.59 With regard to this, the role of religious scholars also influences public opinion who have been staunch oppose of war on terror. A comprehensive charter of demands issued by 30 leading religious scholars, mostly the Deobandis, had suggested in February 2008 that President Musharraf should step down to save the country from suicide attacks and the then turmoil. They advised Musharraf to be bold enough not to see ‘extremists’ through American eyes.60

2. Public Perceptions of Extremism and Radicalization

This part of the paper endeavours to see as to what extent people’s views resonate with those of radical and extremist forces which advocate typical religious, political and socio-cultural manifestations of Pakistan. It will help in a way to evaluate the public perspectives on extremism and radicalization. For this purpose two sets of questions were identified in the survey which sought public opinions on variety of issues in religio-political and socio-cultural settings.

Surprisingly, to start with, most of the respondents neither supported political parties nor any religious party or organization. What does it indicate? Are people not satisfied with the performance of political and religio-political parties in achieving people’s aspirations? If this argument is correct, are these ideals built on economic and social welfare or ideological factors? At the same time their responses highlight two arguments: firstly the increased role of religion [and religious scholars/leaders] in politics, law and society; and secondly the need for social development. This is being discussed below.
When asked about their support to some political parties, more than half the respondents - 58% to be precise - replied in negative, 39% said yes and 3% did not reply. The respondents having private businesses were found more supportive of political parties; about 50% of such respondents supported one or another political party. The largest denouncement for the political parties came from the illiterate people, and 70% of the illiterate respondents said they did not support any political party. About 65% of the unemployed respondents, too, did not support any political party.

A large number of respondents did not support any religious party either. About 65% respondents did not support while 33% supported some religious party or organization. Dr. Tariq Rahman, Director National Institute of Pakistan Studies at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad sees bad governance as a major reason for people’s general mistrust in political leaders and parties. At micro level, however, there is constituencies-confined politics where patron-client relationship exists between the voter and the leader. Thus, public response of mistrust in political leaders and parties is more manifested among the middle class.

Unlike their disliking for religious parties or organizations, the respondents expressed more trust in religious scholars and clerics when they were asked about who is participating actively in serving Islam and Pakistani society. More than half, 55%, respondents acknowledged the services of religious scholars and clerics for Islam and society. Only 6% each supported the role of political leaders and military rulers in serving Islam and society. About 14% commended the role of political and social scholars.
The respondents were also asked a set of questions on nature of laws and government in Pakistan. This is important in the context of efforts for enforcement of Shariah (Islamic law), sometimes by use of force, by the extremist groups particularly in North Frontier Province (NWFP) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Historically, demand for enforcement of Islamic law has remained at the heart of revivalist Islamic movements. But legality of its enforcement at personal level – by other than state apparatus – and through armed struggle has also remained questionable. It is, however, visible that certain additional connotations have been attached to Jihad such as efforts to Islamize the political institutions and law by all necessary, including political, and – in the last resort – forceful, or rather revolutionary means.

When asked if struggle for implementation of Shariah was also Jihad, without specifying armed or not, about 60% of the respondents said ‘yes’ and only 16% replied in negative; 24% did not reply. People from all age groups and with different occupation had almost a similar distribution of views. Support for implementation of Shariah was, however, more visible in respondents having madrasa education as 71% of such respondents replied in affirmative.

A large number of respondents, 63%, were confused about the Hudood Laws, laws related to Islamic punishments. Among rest of the respondents 25% said these laws should be reformed and 12% replied otherwise. Responding to another question, 47% of the respondents favoured this option that the religious-political parties should be given a chance to rule Pakistan; 35 opposed and 18% said they did not know.
Religion was also one of the important factors, quite contrary to its visibility in outcome of polls, when people were asked about their consideration while casting vote where more number of respondents put it above clan or biradari. About 32% of the respondents said they considered the education and capability of the candidate, 21% gave priority to party, 20% prioritized religion and 15% termed clan/biradari as basis of their casting vote. Support for religion as decisive factor for casting one’s vote was more prevalent in illiterate respondents, 29%, and respondents having madrasa education, 53%. Overall support, however, remained for candidate’s education and capability.

The survey asked the respondents three particular questions to seek their views about what the religious extremists and militants describe an “Islamic code” of social order for women. The ongoing trends of extremism and radicalization are impacting the minds of people and that are also affecting the socio-cultural traditions. In the name of Islamization of society and culture, certain cultural and social values, activities and norms have been discouraged or suppressed. These are mostly related to the women.

In response to a question about how do you explain *pardha* (wearing the veil) for women, 67% respondents said this was purely a religious duty. Some 20% viewed its necessity according to the situation. Only 6% of the respondents said it was a personal matter and 5% termed it as unnecessary.

About the female education, a considerable majority of the respondents, amounting to 81%, said it was important for women to get education. However, 15% of the respondents said it was not important; 4% did not reply. Mostly illiterate respondents said women education was not important; 27% such respondents said ‘no’ to women education. The maximum number of respondents from occupation group of ‘private services’, more than 90%, supported the women education. This trend shows that people’s views do not resonate with the extremist and radical thinking related to women education and traditional mindset of people on such issues is changing. Another important factor of this vehement public support to women education can be the militants’ targeting girls’ schools in NWFP and FATA.
which was regularly highlighted in the media. The timing of this survey coincided with the period when such attacks on girls’ school were a routine matter.

Towards the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth century the modern western education had got acclamation in the Indian subcontinent but the Muslim reformers despite accepting its importance were not fully ready to extend it to the women. They deemed western education necessary for Muslim men but dangerous for women. Even Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who was a staunch supporter of western education, opposed opening up new schools for girls and asserted in the beginning that they should only read religious books. Maualan Ashraf Ali Thanvi, one of the leading religious scholars associated with Deoband school of thought, also recommended only religious education for women to ‘safeguard their religion and faith’. He opposed girls’ going to schools where girls from diverse communities, classes and ideologies could impact negatively their thoughts and moral values. Maulana wrote a special book for women, Bahishti Zewar, an ‘Islamic code of life for women’ which Muslim families used to give their daughters in dowry. The book was in fact an effort to keep traditional mindset of women intact and maintain the deprived status of women on religious grounds which had perpetuated under feudal influence.

Even when Muslim reformers agreed to women’s education under the pressures of the colonial government and partly to keep up with those of other religions, they sought to maintain strict control over the environment of women’s education and its content and curriculum. So while they allowed them an education, it had to have serious religious aspects to it, home economics was often recommended and the education was to be only by Muslim women teachers and not in co-education environments. Women’s education, in other words, was to be tailored to their gender roles as wives and mothers and home-makers rather than as independent economic and political agents. However, among the urban well-to-do classes it was also a symbol of modernity and class and liberalism. Education is seen among the urban lower middle classes as the road to mobility and by the richer classes as the means of maintaining class privilege and economic independence.

Propagation of this traditional mindset about women education was further strengthened by the social taboos not allowing women to work outside their homes; hence discouraging their education. But now the situation has much changed in Pakistan although poverty and lack of awareness, along with religious and socio-cultural traditions still remain the hindering forces regarding women education.

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<th>Public perceptions of women’s getting education and work</th>
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<tr>
<td>Is it important for women to get education?</td>
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<td>Should women work outside their homes?</td>
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<td>Don’t know</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>15% 34%</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>81% 59%</td>
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As in the case of women education most of the respondents were also in favour of women’s working. About 59% of the respondents said women should work outside their homes, 34 opposed to it and 7% took evasion to the question. About 50% of the respondents having their education less than middle class and 47% of the respondents having private businesses said ‘no’ to women’s working out of their homes.

According to Rubina Saigol, a leading educationist and human rights activist, the material basis of widespread support for education must not be ignored. The market has something to do with this change where people see women’s getting education and working important. Market forces have compelled people to seek more than one source of income to support families as most of them cannot survive with single source. The only way that women can get “respectable” jobs like teaching or medicine is through education and they can thus supplement family income in a socially acceptable way.68

Secondly, the consumerist pressures of modern times have led to changes in social mores and beliefs, not necessarily because social attitudes have changed. There are increasing numbers of female-headed households so the traditional family patterns are also changing in Pakistan due to urbanization and economic migration of men to other countries. There is a plenty of push and pull factors that have ensured acceptance of women’s education and employment and often religious arguments are given for this, eg. that Hazrat Aisha and Hazrat Zainab were educated and taught other women of their times.69

Conclusion

Religion remains a core element of people’s belief system while lack of education and critical thinking guides and confuses the views of most of the people of jihad, extremism and radicalization. Certain state-led ideological patterns along with assertions of religious scholars and clerics have had great impact on people’s perceptions of these issues. Most of the people don’t like the religious extremists and militants but they look towards the state and religious clergy to transform their disliking into an open rejection of the radicals, extremist and militants. At the same time people’s responses validate two things: first the increased role of religion [and religious scholars/leaders] in politics, law and society; and secondly the need for social development.

Notes:

1 See the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) report “Defining the Phenomenon of Radicalization in Pakistan,” based on a yearlong exercise of focus group discussions and interviews with academics, scholars and researchers, published in Conflict and Peace Studies, Vol.2, Number 1, (Islamabad: PIPS, 2009).
6 Ibid.
Ahmadi or Qadiyani sect challenged the finality of the prophethood, a universal belief of the Muslims, and said Prophet Muhammad is not the last prophet and there can be more after him. Mirza Ghulam Muhammad was their supreme leader and his followers had belief that he is a prophet of God.

These religio-political groups had opposed the creation of Pakistan and were highly critical of Mr. Jinnah and his associates.

Telephone Tareekh (Urdu), (Lahore: Thap Publications, April 2009), p. 79.


University Grants Commission directive, (Islamabad: Mutalliyah-i-Pakistan, Allama Open Iqbal University, 1983), p. 11.


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52 Muhammad Idris Kandhalvi, Dastur-i-Islam, (Lahore: Talimi Press, n.d.), p. 34.
55 Telephonic interview by Tanveer Anjum, Islamabad, 8 January 2010.
56 Interview by Tanveer Anjum, Islamabad, 12 January 2010.
57 Interview with Abdul Basit, Head Conflict and Security Research at Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), by Tanveer Anjum, Islamabad, 8 January 2010.
58 Hassan Abbas, Pakistan’s Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army, and America’s War on Terror, (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2007), P. 223.
59 Interview with Tariq Rahman.
61 Telephonic interview by Tanveer Anjum, Islamabad, 11 January 2010.
62 Telephonic interview with Zafrullah Khan, Director Centre for Civic Education Pakistan, Islamabad, 8 January 2010.
67 Rubina Saigol, email conversation with Tanveer Anjum, 11 January 2010.
68 Email conversation. 11 January 2010.
69 Ibid.
About Institute

The Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) is an independent, not-for-profit non-governmental research and advocacy think-tank. An initiative of leading Pakistani scholars, researchers and journalists, PIPS conducts wide-ranging research and analysis of political, social and religious conflicts that have a direct bearing on both national and international security. The PIPS approach is grounded in field research. Our surveys and policy analyses are informed by the work of a team of researchers, reporters and political analysts located in different areas of conflict in Pakistan. Based on information and assessments from the field, PIPS produces analytical reports, weekly security updates and policy briefings containing practical recommendations targeted at key national and international decision-makers. We also publish survey-based reports and books, providing in-depth analysis of various conflicts or potential conflicts.