

RADICALIZATION AND DIVERGENT EDUCATION SYSTEM IN PAKISTAN – CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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Abstract

Radicalizations is a universal phenomenon with all its forms and manifestations encompassing entire spectrum of human behaviours and their resultant outcomes in different situations. Not as simplistic as it ostensibly seems, radicalization is a complex process as it can be manifested in various forms i.e. from non-violent to violent. The process of radicalization leading to violence follows a nonlinear, non-predetermined path, shaped by multiple factors—personal and collective, social and psychological. Due to multiple factors, Pakistan has been facing the menace of radicalization for long time especially after the US invasion in Afghanistan after 9/11 incident. Despite all efforts, Pakistan failed in de-radicalization process. It is established fact that the divergent educational systems in Pakistan are one of the major reasons of radicalization. This paper focuses on how education can be used as remedial tool to get rid of the menace of radicalization.

Keywords: Radicalization, Socio-Political, Factors, Divergent Education Systems.

Introduction

Albeit it's universal nature, the term radicalization has been associated usually with the Muslim world contrary to its universal nature. Pakistan, owing to its peculiar socio-politico environment, finds itself at the cross roads of quagmires. Where on one side menace of terrorism has taken heaviest of tolls being suffered by any single nation in the world; up to the tunes of approximately 70 thousand dead, thousands of injured and more than 100 billion dollars lost in terms of economy. Notwithstanding, the extent of damage being suffered by Pakistan, we still find ourselves on the receiving end of the criticism, both home and abroad, due to the actions certain radicalized factions of our society.

System of education of any country plays a pivotal role in determining the stature of a particular nation in the comity of nations. It does all this by molding and directing the thought process and in turn energies its youth towards a path of

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innovation, exploration, rationale and moderation. Although, we do not find any society in today's world which can be declared "free from radicalization", however, most of the developed countries have their education systems tailored in a manner which guide their nations towards a path of cohesiveness and not of disintegration.

Unfortunately, this is not the case in Pakistan as our education system is a amalgamation of various streams, leading their adherents towards divergent axes. This article is an effort to identify the extent to which these divergent streams have contributed towards inculcating and nurturing radicalization in our society. An endeavor will be made to proffer viable recommendations for improving the situation at national level.

Before studying radicalization, it is imperative to look at some widely misused overlapping terms that have a very thin line, which distinguishes them. Terrorism, fundamentalism, extremism and radicalization are often misunderstood. Therefore, in subsequent paragraphs an attempt is made to clear the differences.

The definition of terrorism can be different for each individual. Same as defining the human experience, terrorism can be defined on the same footings. A universally accepted definition is hard to establish since people defining terrorism may have different cultural identity, socio-political realities and religious affiliations. A certain act of terrorism can be terroristic for a person and not for the other one. On the contrary, fundamentalism is somewhat simple, "it is an unwavering faith to a belief system, though some assert that the term 'fundamentalism' is essentially connected with religion".

Similarly, radicalization according to the European Commission is "embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead to acts of terrorism"². Hence, it is an integral part of counter terrorism policy to get rid of radicalization. Some elucidations go on to say that radicalization may not always be violent even though it may attempt to alter political, social and economic systems, but extremism is resorting to violence by undertaking a certain philosophy for the purpose of altering some existing structure, and systems. Some views hold that extremism is pursuance of local political beliefs while radicalization is an attempt to introduce extensive change.

The surge of religious extremism and the associated salience of terrorism and violence have stirred considerable anxiety all over the globe. The common term being used to label such occurrences is radicalization. The dictionary meaning of radical is "going back to the roots"³ In fact, it is a neutral term and riddled of political and ideological baggage. It simply means the use of principle or procedure in a certain situation with an aim to achieve its genuine or proper state. Radicalization is the process of individuals embracing opinion, ideas and views that could instigate acts of

terrorism. Some other perspective on radicalization put forward that the phenomenon of promoting or adopting an extremist faith system for the purpose of assisting ideologically driven violence to spread political, social, or economic change is called radicalization⁴.

Although few of the experts claimed that it is difficult to define radicalization due to its complexity still few other analysts are able to give their own definition of radicalization. Dr Ayesha Siddiqa defines radicalization as “an inclination to include or exclude set of people in terms of their belief or core sets of faiths and then promote discrimination on such basis”.⁵Such an attitude can later help trigger not only discrimination but also violence.

Another definition of radicalization by David Prince was cited by Azam, which goes on to say that “it is a process which pushes a person to commit acts of terrorism”.⁶ He also puts radicalization as process of acquiring extremist views. Mr Azam also comprehensively segregates the thin boundaries of determinants of radicalization in his work *Radicalization in Pakistan: Socio-culture Realities* by suggesting that usually the word radicalization is associated commonly with ideology and religious thoughts.

Contributory Factors for Radicalization

Radicalization differs for each person as it is a dynamic process yet they share some similar grounds that could be useful in understanding the causal factors responsible for this process. Radicalization extends in the society at three levels; individual, small groups and mass public.⁷ On individual level, radicalization may happen due to personal or group grievance (For example the subject empathizes with the group on which harm is being exacted. In this factor, the radical action is undertaken on the behalf of the group at a larger scale like suicide bombing is a calculable demonstration of change of radicalization into a violent behavior), slippery slope (An individual slowly indulges into radicalization because of firm political, social, or religious views. The first step contains non-violent activities just to elevate one's status in the group, but ultimately strong beliefs leads to criminal actions), love (The economic, social, religious and sexual bonds of intimate and devoted group of friends are included into this category such as orthodox or secular religious cults or environments. In this case love act as a significant force between the tight-knit clusters thus connecting the networks of followers).

The group level factors contain; groups polarization, group isolation and group competition. In a polarized group sharing of experience and the discussion among the members could magnify their dedication to a specific cause which may lead to violent activities. The mass radicalization comprises of Jujitsu (Japanese way of

unarmed fighting techniques) politics, and martyrdom (Its meaning and spirit varies according to various religions and cultures). However, in connection with radicalization it means that a radical person would die for an honourable cause which again depends upon his/her perception which always is a debatable issue). According to some studies the association of mental illness and poverty to the process of radicalization is thought to be as a myth. Poverty or mental illness cannot be accredited as a root-cause of the terrorism because mostly the radicals belong to middle class families and they stand well trained and educated too.

There are many themes available in the literature determining how and why radicalization happens? In Theory of 'Clash of Civilizations', Huntington refers to all Muslims as an identical group, inclined to radicalization due to their religion.⁸ The National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) of USA noticed that there was no specific single or set grouping of factors for radicalization.⁹ However, based on different researches, it is concluded that marginalization and poverty, exclusion and discrimination are the important contributors to be considered into account. Dr. Rasul Buksh Rais, a renowned academician, once quoted that the absenteeism of human freedom, constitutional means, unequal distribution of wealth, a prejudiced social structure and a flimsy law and order state of affairs yield radical movements in the developing states.¹⁰

The first stage is marked with accumulation of an unusual environment that supports singular ideological description and dejects pluralism. This is termed as the pre-radicalization stage. Here, political usage of religion becomes a standard. Depending on how a social and political system supports the anchoring of a certain ideology, the society heads to the next phase of latent-radicalization.

At second phase, a certain belief system is deliberately and consciously generated which puts people in unusual and separate boxes in terms of their distinctiveness. Although many reckon this as conservatism, this is in fact latent-radicalization. People do not essentially get violent but their view of the 'other' starts to change. They incline to believe in discrimination based on an ideology or faith as a usual process.

The third phase is active radicalization whereby individuals or groups begin to actively sponsor discrimination and targeting of the 'other'. A society advancing to this stage would experience a propagation of violence against targeted groups to satisfy ideological objectives. There is no one justification for a society to embrace this path.

Radicalization in Pakistan's Context

After gaining independence from Britain, Pakistan emerged on world map as a predominantly Muslim country and All-India Muslim league was handed over with the reins of the country. The modern elite of the party took charge of the power. Since the campaign for Pakistan was based on the claim to have a separate Muslim country for Muslims of the sub-continent, thus religion or culture became foundation stone of the country instead of territory. Due to this fact, the conventional Muslims pressed on to make Pakistan an Islamic model state. Even though this model followed equality, rule of law, justice in society in the initial stages, unfortunately later it fell victim to hardliners who wanted to impose a very narrow view of Islam.

Under the first constitution of 1956, a constitutional democracy was to be introduced in the country. Moreover, the country was to be known as Islamic Republic and efforts were to be made to bring all laws of the country in accordance with Islam. The constitution could not be applied due to military takeover in 1958. In 1962, General Ayub Khan gave 2nd constitution of Pakistan under which presidential form of government was introduced and again it was pledged that gradually all laws will be brought in conformity with Islam.

In 1973, the parliamentary form of government was re-introduced in the newly adopted constitution of 1973. Under this constitution, the prime minister of Pakistan has to be a Muslim. In the previous two constitutions, there was no such provision and only the president has to be a Muslim. While taking charge of the office the prime minister and the president must take an oath of testifying the finality of the prophet hood of Holy Prophet Muhammad. Conformity of laws in accordance with Islam was also emphasized.

The radicalization was genuinely triggered in Pakistan soon after Soviet invasion in Afghanistan. Under peculiar circumstances, the Soviet infiltration was of extreme importance for Pakistan." The countries belonging to capitalist block had the same concerns. Due to its geopolitical location, Pakistan was thought to be a key ally in containing the socialist designs of Soviet. Capitalist regimes thus used Pakistan as a vanguard state to safeguard their interests.

The aftermath of Afghan war had far reaching significant impact on the global political landscape generally and in particularly on the social, political and economic conditions of Pakistan. USA exploited the situation to its advantage and used an ideological weapon, which was so deadly that even today its aftershocks are being felt in the form of radicalization and extremism. For attainment of capitalistic purposes, the traditional Pakistani society was shrewdly used by highlighting sensitive topic of Jihad.

There was a great influx of foreign money from USA and the Middle East. All this money was diverted towards fuelling the ethnic and religious sentiments of innocent Pakistanis. It was a well-articulated plan, which was bound to be successful and ultimately the disintegration of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was materialized in roughly 10 years. Unfortunately, for Pakistan these plans backfired as there were no finishing touches to the strategy. The breeding grounds for fighters kept on flourishing and prospering while the Jihadists kept on scanning for new battle fields. It was dangerous for both, the targets and the place where they resided.¹²

Pakistan was threatened by USA of serious repercussions right after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. President Pervez Musharraf succumbed to USA pressure and joined its war on terror. Such a move invited the wrath of Pakistani faction of the Taliban. They responded with bomb attacks and assassination attempts on the lives of military personnel and civilians as well. Radicalization thus began to propel. Extremists began to target military and civilians as well. During the year 2008, some 2148 attacks of terrorism took place. 2267 people lost their lives and 4558 got injured as a result. This was a staggering 746% increase in such incidents compared with 2005.¹³

In 2008, a civilian government was elected but even this could not halt the rising terrorism. Since then Pakistan is continuously criticized by USA, India, Afghanistan and the European Union for not taking action against the perpetrators. It was in 2009 when Taliban took over of Swat and abolished writ of the government all together. This was the moment when Pakistan finally acted against extremists. Since then military operations have been conducted in Swat, Waziristan and few other areas of Pakistan.

It can be established from the above historical information that radicalization was initially in a passive form and wasn't a great threat. But right after the Zia regime, radicalization got activated and transformed into violent activities. In view of above it can be established that undeniably radicalization has wreaked havoc in Pakistan as it has greatly damaged the political, social and economic systems of Pakistan.¹⁴

Role of Divergent Education Systems towards Radicalization in Pakistan

Founder of Pakistan was explicitly vocal about the significance of education for the prosperity of this hard-earned country. Quaid was well aware of the fact that rise of the country in comity of the nations was to be triggered by an educated and thinking populace which could contribute towards establishment of a vibrant knowledge-based economy. In current era of soft-power and digital revolution, coercive diplomacy and diversification in global opinion can speedily damage or benefit a country using propaganda, continuation of myths, untrue narratives and other maneuvers in cognitive domain.¹⁵ In this progressively sophisticated and

hazardous environment, people need to obtain adequate knowledge and judgements to correctly interpret transforming challenges that continue undermine them and their country.

This capability to fittingly interpret and handle the complex challenges of modern world should be the desired end result and be reflected from country's education system. Such a vibrant, dynamic and effective system should be able to infuse country's masses with the spirit of inquiry, innovation and self-confidence, thus benefiting every section of the society.

Pakistan currently is going through a difficult phase. It is confronting numerous challenges in economic, political as well as ideological domains. All these issues are somehow the offshoot of a weak, polarized and non-unified education system. The causes behind these issues include intolerance, lack of overall awareness and illiteracy governed by an unproductive education system. The vital role of education has been neglected in Pakistan which has led to low development in all fields of life. Country's education system has failed to respond to modern day challenges and has hurt the nation economically, politically and socially. More than 70 years and 25 educational polices, have failed to enable country's education system to mitigate the increasing economic, political and social quagmire.

Pakistan stands at 126th out of 138 countries on the Global Competitiveness Index, 2016, owing to its poor indicators in health and education. A huge figure of 24 million children being out of school coupled with the fact that 47% of our children aged 5-16 do not obtain any formal education. Country's expenditure on education is also the lowest in South Asia. One can safely conclude that Pakistan's system of education is similar to an 'Educational Apartheid' where the English-language based education system for the elite is totally divergent from the education systems followed by millions of other students. This stark divergence reinforces a disruptive socio-economic and cultural reality where social mobility for brilliant individuals from poor backgrounds remains constricted. This violates the basic tenant that education needs to provide a level playing field that has an equalizing effect in terms of social and economic outcomes.

While a considerable amount of work has been produced on radicalization, de-radicalization and Madrassa system in Pakistan, none has been found focusing on the linkage between radicalization and polarization as a result of divergent and conflicting pedagogical systems. None has attempted to understand radicalization exclusively in terms of personality development through educational and instructional processes. The works on de-radicalization have mostly been suggesting short terms measures ranging from social and economic benefits for unsatisfied segments of society to general counter terrorism measures. None has particularly focused

exclusively on education as the primary cause as well as remedy for radicalization and de-radicalization respectively.

Conclusion

The article focused on understanding the linkages between radicalization as well as de-radicalization processes with Pakistan educational streams. The polarization has in turn caused personal disorder among youth giving rise to unstable radical extremist minds within the society. It is the right time to introduce a harmonized, balanced and congenial educational system so as not to produce divergent and antagonistic personalities within the society. The corrective efforts must be directed to develop and establish an educational system in line with national policy and National Action Plan for Counter-Terrorism. The basic objective of such an educational system should be to help produce well-informed and balanced personalities. Such rounded personalities should understand the basic national value system based on historical realities, religious and cultural values. For almost two decades, we have been making extensive efforts of countering extremism and violent terrorism. In view of persistent failure to achieve satisfactory results of these efforts, there is need to change the strategy and direction of efforts. The understanding of radicalization process may inform the academics as well as policy makers on the sources and roots of radicalism in the society. It may help in devising appropriate socio-economic policies particularly the ones, which relate with the development and growth of young generation in Pakistan. Thus, such understanding may help in complete transformation of the entire socio-economic landscape of the country.

NOTES

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