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*Trends and Patterns of Radicalization in
Pakistan*

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Introduction

Radicalization is the process by which people adopt extreme views, including beliefs that violent measures need to be taken for political or religious purposes.

¹ The phenomenon of radicalization, which has played a major part in the ongoing militancy in Pakistan, is of immense importance in the prevailing volatile security landscape of the country. Researchers, scholars, theoreticians of social sciences, policy makers and practitioners of diplomacy have been studying various aspects of radicalization in order to understand religious extremism and radicalization in different Muslim societies, especially in Pakistan.

Understanding the various trends and patterns of radicalization and their root causes is somewhat complex in the context of Pakistan, a society that is ethnically heterogeneous and divided along ethno-linguistic, ideological, sectarian and political lines. The behaviors and attitudes of radicalization at the sub-national levels differ to varying extents. The radical trends and patterns of some areas at times bear considerable similarities to trends and patterns elsewhere in the country. The main causes of radicalization across the country are political marginalization, poverty, economic deprivation and other inequalities, social injustice, sectarian divisions, illiteracy, the role of madrassas and the indoctrination agendas of militant organizations, which exploit these factors.²

Pakistan's critical strategic significance in the US-led war on terror and prevalence of religious radicalization here has made the country a special focus of such discourses. Despite the emergence of a new paradigm with the war on terror, the tendency has been towards studying radicalization in Pakistan with its potential regional and global implications through Western theories and prisms thus leading to reductionism.³ Such works have at times tended to jump to hasty conclusions through sweeping generalizations. Most of the studies on radicalization are centered on certain areas of Pakistan, most often the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) that border Afghanistan. There is a dearth of studies that examine the issue with its varying trends and patterns at the sub-national levels. Such analysis would pave the way for identifying the similarities and disparities in trends and dynamics of radicalization in the state at the societal level. This paper explores different trends and patterns of radicalization in Pakistani society based on a survey conducted by Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) with a sample of 1,568 respondents nationwide.

Before discussing the findings of this empirical study, it is relevant to look at the journalistic and academic works of local and foreign authors on the subject. Though there is a plethora of literature available on terrorism and religious extremism in Pakistan, none of the works have dealt with the subject directly in the local context. The exiting body of literature on radicalization in Pakistan has looked at the phenomenon in the context of the 'jihad' culture spawned by military dictator General Ziaul Haq's regime in the 1980s, as well as religious extremism and Islamic militancy, sectarianism and Talibanization.

Most of these works trace the roots of radicalization in Pakistan to the start of violent sectarian divisions between the majority Sunni and minority Shia sects. Muhammad Qasim Zaman's *Sectarianism in Pakistan: The Radicalization of Shi'i and Sunni Identities* explores the pattern of radicalization of the two sects in the backdrop of the Iranian Revolution 1979, implementation of Zakat Ushr Ordinance 1979 in

Pakistan and resultant awakening of the Shia sect.⁴ *The Islamization of Pakistan, 1979-2009*, a report of the Washington-based Middle East Institute reviews the history of radicalization in Pakistan in the context of the Iranian Revolution, the beginning of the violent Iran-Saudi Arabia proxy sectarian war in Pakistan and its implications for the social fabric of the country.⁵ International Crisis Group's Asia Report 2005 is also helpful in understanding the links between sectarianism and the trends of radicalization in Pakistan.⁶

The overwhelming majority of work on religious extremism in Pakistan has held Ziaul Haq's Islamization policies and the 'jihad' culture promoted during the Soviet-Afghan war responsible for the growth of religious extremism in Pakistan. Ayesha Jalal's *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia*, Oliver Roy's *Islamic Radicalism in Afghanistan and Pakistan* and Hassan Abbas's *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism* have studied the growth of religious extremism and the 'jihad' culture in the backdrop of the anti-Soviet 'jihad'.

The literature also highlights the role of madrassas during the anti-Soviet 'jihad' in promoting religious extremism in Pakistani society. These madrassa networks, which are scattered across the country, have inherent differences along sectarian lines and political attitudes and promotion of the 'jihad' agenda have contributed to the existing wave of radicalization in Pakistan. Muhammad Amir Rana's *Gateway to Terrorism*, Amir Mir's *The Fluttering Flag of Jihad* and International Crisis Group report, *Pakistan: Madrassa, Extremism and the Military*, have highlighted the role of madrassas in this context.

The rise and fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the impact of their retreat along with Al Qaeda remnants into the restive tribal region of Pakistan in the aftermath of the US invasion of Afghanistan have also led to the rise of different Taliban-like militant movements in Pakistan. Muhammad Amir Rana's *Al Qaeda Fights Back inside Pakistani Tribal Areas*, Aqeel Yousafzai's *Talibanization: From Afghanistan to FATA, Swat and Pakistan*, Naveed Shinwari's *Understanding FATA* and Ahmed Rashid's *Taliban: The Story of Afghan Warlords* have underlined the role of Taliban and Al Qaeda in Pakistan. Movements by different groups such as Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi in Malakand and Lal Masjid clerics and militants in Islamabad, demanding the implementation of their own version of *Shariah*, have also played a critical role in further radicalizing Pakistani society.⁷

Muhammad Amir Rana's *Gateway to Terrorism*, Aqeel Yousafzai's *Talibanization: From Afghanistan to FATA, Swat and Pakistan*, Mujahid Hussain's *Punjabi Taliban*, and International Crisis Group's *Pakistan: The Militant Jihadi Challenge* are among the few works that have discussed the militant landscape and networks in different geographical regions of Pakistan and helped in understanding the dynamics of varying patterns of radicalization in the country.

C. Christine Fair's *Islamic Militancy in Pakistan: A View from the Provinces* is the only empirical study conducted at the social level that assimilates the different views of the Pakistani people in the provinces.⁸ She has analyzed the public's beliefs about the militancy, militants' activities, objectives and the views of the Pakistani government and its response to the militancy. The work underscores the fact that the level of support for different Islamist groups and consequent government action against these militant groups have differed widely in form, severity and consequences in different provinces of Pakistan.

A review of the literature also reveals another dimension of the phenomenon of radicalization in Pakistan. The prevailing anti-US and anti-Western sentiments among the people of Pakistan are largely due to the US invasion of Afghanistan, while US drone attacks in the country's FATA region have also contributed to radicalizing the views and attitudes of the people. Pakistan's partnership with the United States as a frontline state in war on terror has also radicalized the views of many in Pakistan.⁹

Methodology

The empirical method of inquiry has been employed in conjunction with the mixed methods approach to ascertain the trends and patterns of radicalization at different sub-national levels. For this purpose a nationwide survey, an extensive literature review and interviews of people from different walks of life have been conducted.

A PIPS survey was conducted in Urdu with a total of 1,568 respondents across the country, with 71 percent urban and 29 percent rural representation. The survey had a margin of error of 2.5 percentage points. The number of respondents from each of the four provinces and other administrative entities reflects the ratio of population of each area vis-à-vis the total population of the country. As many as 34 percent of the respondents were from Punjab, 18 percent from Sindh, 23 percent from NWFP, 11 percent from Balochistan, five percent from Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), three percent from Gilgit-Baltistan and over two percent each from FATA and federal capital Islamabad. An effort was also made to ensure representation of respondents from different age groups, literacy levels and status of employment. Twenty-nine percent of the respondents were from the 15-20 year age group, 47 percent were between 20-35 years, and 23 percent were 35 years or above. Eight percent of the respondents lacked even basic education, 19 percent were educated to the middle level, 29 percent to the intermediate level, and 37 percent beyond the intermediate level, two percent had received madrasa education and 2.8 percent had received both madrasa and regular education. On the social status, as many as 14 percent of the respondents were unemployed, 28 percent were still students and not working yet and 55 percent were employed by the government or the private sector or had their own businesses.

Provincial differences are an important feature in the context of radicalization in Pakistan. Some behaviors are purely individual and not specific to any province or other administrative entity. An effort has been made to distinguish between the two factors, through a section of the survey where the questions specifically deal with the provinces and other administrative entities.

A sense of alienation and deprivation, disenfranchisement and denial of rights and other variables such as geographical proximity and ethnic links have been considered in determining the trends and patterns of radicalization in each province or other administrative entity. Ethnic linkages of a substantial part of the population of FATA, the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan with the Pashtun majority in militancy-hit Afghanistan make these regions more susceptible to radicalization than those that do not share a border with Afghanistan. The mushroom growth of militant organizations in different parts of the country was also observed during the study.

The input of respondents from the four provinces, as well as from AJK, FATA and Gilgit-Baltistan regarding the socio-cultural, ideological and religio-political questions has been analyzed in order to determine the views of the people about radicalization at different sub-national levels.

Socio-Cultural

In the socio-cultural domain no visible features or manifestations of radicalization were witnessed during the study. The respondents generally did not think that there is a conflict between culture and religion. When the respondents were asked if they listened to music or not, an overwhelming majority responded in the affirmative, while the largest section of respondents not listening to music was from FATA. In NWFP, FATA and AJK, 30.6 percent, 40 percent and 27.3 percent respondents, respectively, prefer not listen to music. The absence of enthusiasm for music among the people of FATA and NWFP comes partly due to threats from a specific group of hardliner clerics who have declared music un-Islamic through religious edicts. The ban on music echoes rules enforced by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in the late 1990s. The edicts and sermons broadcast through illegal FM radio stations in Malakand Division by Maulvi Fazlullah, chief of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan Swat chapter, and in Khyber Agency of FATA by Mangal Bagh Afridi, chief of the proscribed Lashkar-e-Islam, have attempted to create an aversion for music among the people of these areas and have at least managed to scare the population of the violent consequences for anyone found selling, or listening to music. The militants have frequently attacked and torched CD shops, music centers, internet cafés, and publicly flogged and beheaded dancers and musicians for defying their ban.¹⁰

Do you listen to music?

Response ¹¹	Punjab	NWFP	Sindh	Balochistan	FATA	Islamabad	Gilgit-Baltistan	AJK
Yes	79.7%	68.8%	79.0%	75.3%	54.3%	80.0%	92.2%	72.7%
No	18.4%	30.6%	20.0%	23.6%	40.0%	20.0%	7.8%	27.3%

Asked whether their choice of dress was influenced by religion, a clear majority replied in the negative. However, they said they preferred the traditional dress over western clothes.

Do you consider that choice of dress is any way linked to religion?

Response	Punjab	NWFP	Sindh	Balochistan	FATA	Islamabad	Gilgit-Baltistan	AJK
Yes	25.3%	22.6%	13.8%	25.8%	14.3%	37.5%	27.5%	29.9%
No	54.8%	59.9%	66.6%	54.5%	71.4%	60.0%	58.8%	55.8%

As is apparent from the findings above, the attitudes of the people are not radicalized per se in the socio-cultural context. Although, people devotedly practice their religion in some areas but religiosity is not a manifestation of radicalization in a country like Pakistan where religion is an innate attribute almost from birth.¹² Traditions and culture in different parts of Pakistan have not been radicalized by actions of religious extremists.¹³ Even in the areas where culture or traditions had been subdued by radicalization in the name of imposition of militants' versions of Islam on the local masses, the culture reasserted itself once this militant influence faded.¹⁴

Religious/Ideological

Before looking into the survey findings about religious or ideological views of the respondents, it is worthwhile to consider the historical context. Whether Pakistan was created in the name of Islam and what should be the place of religion in the affairs of the state are questions that have confused the discourse on national character since the country's independence from British rule. Pakistan has never attained a distinct national identity of its own. The lingering tug-of-war between a Western-oriented liberal bureaucracy and a right-leaning clergy has further confused the discourse on the national character.¹⁵

Pakistani people are traditionally religious. Asked about the path to receiving their religious education, the largest section of respondents across Pakistan said that they had received their basic religious education from their parents, and not from madrassas.

When the respondents were asked about their preferred mode of understanding or seeking guidance on religious teachings, contrary to the common perception of the clergy's domination in the religious domain, the majority in all the regions surveyed except Gilgit-Baltistan said that they relied on religious books. Among other significant findings, the responses also showed that the people either rely on religious commentaries and books or the local prayer leaders and religious clergy. The mixed responses from NWFP and FATA were due to a higher number of madrassas in those areas and the prominent role the clergy, which is held in high esteem in the Pashtun tribal society, plays there.¹⁶

What was the source of your basic religious education?

Response	Punjab	NWFP	Sindh	Balochistan	FATA	Islamabad	Gilgit-Baltistan	AJK
Parents	27.0%	19.2%	25.5%	28.1%	31.4%	17.5%	37.3%	26.0%
School	6.3%	7.2%	4.5%	10.7%	2.9%	5.0%	13.7%	6.5%
Mosque	3.7%	8.1%	7.2%	7.9%	8.6%	2.5%	2.0%	3.9%
Madrassa	3.5%	1.9%	1.4%	7.9%	2.9%	--	3.9%	3.9%
Reading	1.7%	4.2%	4.1%	6.7%	--	2.5%	2.0%	--

What is your preferred mode of understanding Islamic teachings?

Response	Punjab	NWFP	Sindh	Balochistan	FATA	Islamabad	Gilgit-Baltistan	AJK
Parents	15.1%	7.5%	19.3%	23.6%	2.9%	17.5%	15.7%	9.1%
Common course books	4.5%	3.6%	5.9%	10.1%	--	2.5%	3.9%	2.6%
Religious books	38.8%	38.2%	29.3%	25.8%	28.6%	30.0%	25.5%	35.1%
Prayer leaders/clerics	10.2%	22.6%	8.3%	13.5%	20.0%	10.0%	33.3%	15.6%

Sectarianism

Many scholars believe that sectarianism is a permanent feature of radical trends in Pakistan. The debate on sectarian radicalism propounds that people in the country are divided along sectarian lines at various sub-national levels. The discourse portrays that sectarianism takes people towards radicalization as they are accustomed to devotedly following the interpretations and beliefs of their own sects and are unwilling to consider alternative views. The people in Pakistan are divided into four major Muslim sects—Barelvi, Deobandi, Shia and Ahl-e-Hadees. The four sects have their separate mosques and networks of madrassas. These divisions have further accentuated the sectarian cleavage.

The survey elicited mixed response at various sub-national levels about sectarian divisions and differences among Muslims. The largest section of respondents in Punjab, NWFP, Sindh, Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK considers sectarian divisions are based in subjective interpretations, while the largest group of respondents from Balochistan and Islamabad holds that sectarian divisions are based in differences of approach. In Punjab, 35 percent respondents consider sectarianism to be a matter of interpretation, 21.2 percent consider it a matter of differences of approach and 23.6 percent believe it is based in fundamental religious differences. In Sindh, 39 percent hold that sectarian divisions are based on subjective interpretation, while 20.3 percent believe it is linked to differences of approach. In NWFP, 30 percent consider it a matter of interpretation, 21 percent refer to it as fundamental religious differences while 19 percent call it differences of approach. Respondents from all the areas surveyed also consider sectarianism harmful and think that it promotes radicalization and extremism.

What is the real difference among Deobandi, Barelvi, Shia and Ahl-e-Hadees sects?

Response	Punjab	NWFP	Sindh	Balochistan	FATA	Islamabad	Gilgit-Baltistan	AJK
Interpretation	35.5%	30.9%	39.0%	28.1%	22.9%	20.0%	43.1%	37.0%
Fundamental religious differences	23.6%	21.2%	14.8%	12.4%	31.4%	22.5%	17.6%	22.1%
Political differences	8.6%	9.2%	15.2%	13.5%	5.7%	2.5%	9.8%	11.7%

Differences of approach	21.2%	19.8%	20.3%	33.1%	28.6%	35.0%	19.6%	20.8%
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The respondents gave mixed reactions when asked about their views on religious divisions. In Sindh, Islamabad and Gilgit-Baltistan, the largest section of respondents considers religious divisions to be the outcome of ignorance, while the respondents from Punjab, NWFP, AJK and FATA mainly consider these divisions as borne out of ignorance or as nothing unexpected. Irrespective of the aforementioned perceptions of sectarian divisions, people strictly adhere to the *Fiqh* (jurisprudence) of their respective sects for interpreting religious commands.

How do you look at religious divisions?

Response	Punjab	NWFP	Sindh	Balochistan	FATA	Islamabad	Gilgit-Baltistan	AJK
Expected as it had been predicted that Islam will have 73 sects	30.5%	27.3%	19.7%	3.4%	40.0%	12.5%	17.6%	16.9%
Necessary	7.2%	7.5%	10.3%	13.5%	5.7%	2.5%	11.8%	5.2%
Beneficial	6.5%	7.5%	6.9%	18.0%	5.7%	2.5%	11.8%	3.9%
Harmful, they promote sectarianism and extremism	21.2%	22.8%	13.4%	2.2%	28.6%	20.0%	15.7%	35.1%
Logical/rational	2.0%	4.2%	4.1%	16.9%	8.6%	7.5%	5.9%	1.3%
Ignorance	27.7%	15.0%	32.8%	3.4%	2.9%	40.0%	23.5%	28.6%

The core reason for violent manifestations of sectarianism is the existence of various sectarian groups within different schools of thought who try to garner support for their agendas among the followers of their respective sect. Deobandi sectarian organizations are in a majority among these sects and have their networks in almost all parts of the country. There are few militant wings associated with Ahl-e-Hadees, Shia and Barelvi organizations. Further research into the linkage between radicalization and sectarianism is required to explore the dynamics of this issue.

Politico-Religious

In the politico-religious domain, the underlying trends and patterns have been studied in the context of the 'jihadi culture' promoted during the Zai regime, Talibanization in Pakistan, especially after 9/11 and different movements demanding the implementation of *Shariah* in the country.

a. 'Jihadi Culture'

The current wave of radicalization in Pakistan is attributed to the support of General Zia's regime to the anti-Soviet 'jihad'.¹⁷ The support extended to militant groups at the time laid the foundation of the 'jihadi culture' in Pakistani society. The continuity of state assistance to Kashmiri jihad groups further molded the views of Pakistanis towards jihad which is why the public largely continues to consider the militancy in Indian-held Kashmir as jihad. Respondents from all parts of Pakistan, with the exception of Gilgit-Baltistan, generally regard the militancy in Kashmir as jihad.

Are the militants in Indian-held Kashmir engaged in jihad?

Response	Punjab	NWFP	Sindh	Balochistan	FATA	Islamabad	Gilgit-Baltistan	AJK
Yes	57.1%	64.6%	39.7%	57.3%	60.0%	65.0%	11.8%	89.6%
No	19.5%	14.8%	28.3%	25.3%	8.6%	12.5%	58.8%	3.9%
Don't know	21.2%	17.0%	29.3%	13.5%	25.7%	20.0%	25.5%	3.9%

The public lacks the knowledge of what real jihad is according to Islamic principles. The opinions surveyed indicate that a considerable number of people in NWFP, Sindh, FATA and AJK believe that jihad means striving against cruelty. A substantial number of respondents from Punjab, Islamabad and Balochistan believe that jihad means fighting against adversaries of Islam. The respondents from Gilgit-Baltistan state that jihad is resisting worldly desires. The respondents from AJK, FATA and NWFP consider waging a defensive war as the most preferred jihad. In Balochistan, the respondents' preference was equally divided between defensive and offensive jihad. The findings show that people's views about jihad are confused. Militant organizations such as Jaish-e-Muhammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba exploit this confusion to their own ends and continue to operate openly even after being banned by the government.¹⁸ All jihad organizations in Pakistan espouse Al Qaeda's ideology of waging jihad against all those powers which they believe have conspired against the Muslim world. Enamored by the religious merit of jihad, or what these militant organizations call jihad, people become prone to radicalization, considering that they are serving the religion by shedding blood and that the promised reward awaits them in the hereafter if they embrace martyrdom.

KNOWLEDGE FOR PEACE

What does jihad mean to you?

Response	Punjab	NWFP	Sindh	Balochistan	FATA	Islamabad	Gilgit-Baltistan	AJK
Fight against cruelty	17.7%	44.0%	30.3%	19.1%	51.4%	17.5%	25.5%	41.6%
Fight against adversaries of	27.3%	20.1%	10.3%	22.5%	14.3%	20.0%	11.8%	18.2%

Islam								
Spreading Islam to all parts of world	7.1%	5.0%	3.4%	3.9%	8.6%	5.0%	2.0%	--
Fight against one's desires	17.5%	8.4%	12.4%	23.0%	2.9%	7.5%	49.0%	13.0%

What is the preferred mode of armed jihad?

Response	Punjab	NWFP	Sindh	Balochistan	FATA	Islamabad	Gilgit-Baltistan	AJK
Defensive	35.5%	54.0%	20.0%	32.0%	54.3%	40.0%	17.6%	62.3%
Offensive	11.5%	12.0%	7.2%	31.5%	5.7%	12.5%	25.5%	7.8%
Don't know	48.1%	25.6%	69.7%	30.9%	37.1%	37.5%	52.9%	26.0%

Militant organizations in Pakistan are currently engaged in trying to influence young Muslims to wage jihad on two fronts—Kashmir and Afghanistan. A clear majority of the respondents considers the war in Afghanistan to be a political war. A substantial number of respondents from NWFP and FATA consider the US invasion of Afghanistan to be an act of aggression, which they think justifies jihad. However, the support shown by the respondents in those two areas could be, at least in part, influenced by a shared ethnicity with the Pashtun majority of Afghanistan, rather than a common religion.¹⁹

How would you describe the unrest in Afghanistan?

Response	Punjab	NWFP	Sindh	Balochistan	FATA	Islamabad	Gilgit-Baltistan	AJK
Jihad	12.6%	29.8%	10.0%	19.1%	37.1%	10.0%	9.8%	23.4%
Tribal conflict	21.0%	11.1%	17.9%	27.0%	5.7%	12.5%	15.7%	15.6%
Political war	59.7%	47.9%	57.9%	48.3%	47.5%	52.5%	68.6%	54.5%

As with the confusion among Muslims regarding the concept of jihad, the notion of struggle for the implementation of *Shariah* is also far from straightforwardness. A clear majority of respondents from all regions surveyed, except Sindh and Gilgit-Baltistan, considers the struggle for implementation of *Shariah* jihad. In Gilgit-Baltistan, 47 percent of the respondents stated that the struggle for the implementation of *Shariah* is not jihad, while in Sindh the opinion was almost equally divided between those who believed it to be jihad and those who did not express their views.

Do you consider the struggle for implementation of *Shariah* jihad?

Response	Punjab	NWFP	Sindh	Balochistan	FATA	Islamabad	Gilgit-Baltistan	AJK
Yes	63.0%	70.8%	36.6%	69.7%	65.7%	62.5%	27.5%	59.7%
No	13.4%	9.2%	23.4%	12.4%	14.3%	2.5%	47.1%	15.6%
Don't know	20.8%	16.4%	37.6%	14.0%	20.0%	25.0%	19.6%	23.4%

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b. Talibanization²⁰

The emergence and spread of Talibanization is considered an indicator of radicalization of Pakistani society. The Taliban movement in Pakistani tribal areas is not a distinct organization but an alliance of different organizations which espouse the ideology of the Afghan Taliban. After the US invasion of Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban and Al Qaeda remnants fled to the tribal areas of Pakistan where they reorganized and encouraged different tribes to form their own Taliban-affiliated militias. The phenomenon of Talibanization started from South Waziristan Agency and within a few years not only engulfed almost the entire tribal belt, but, also spread to some settled districts of NWFP, such as Swat. Different militant and sectarian organizations in Pakistan joined hands with Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, founded in South Waziristan in 2007 under Baitullah Mehsud, and started an insurgency against the state in 2007 that is still raging. The Taliban established a 'state' within the state, with parallel administrative and judicial structure under the garb of implementing their version of *Shariah*.²¹

c. Shariah Movements

Movements by other groups for the implementation of *Shariah*, such as Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi in Malakand and Lal Masjid clerics and militants in Islamabad, also joined the Taliban and claimed to be striving for *Shariah* rule. The militant landscape of Pakistan presented an ideal environment for them to flourish. Al Qaeda and other international groups actively supported them. The militants portrayed the military operations against them as an effort to deny the implementation of Islam. The propaganda seemed to work for some time as Taliban and other militant movements managed to persuade the people that their violent actions were necessary to realize *Shariah* rule. There was a time when these groups were even held in high esteem in Pakistan. However, there has been a sea change in the last two years. The increasing number of terrorist attacks, including suicide attacks, against civilians and the security forces has turned public opinion against the militants.²²

Around half the respondents from Sindh (61.7%), NWFP (42.3%), Islamabad (50%), Gilgit-Baltistan (80.4%) and AJK (49.4%) said that the Taliban were not fighting for Islam. In FATA, nearly half the respondents questioned (45.7%) were not sure if the Taliban were fighting for Islam, while a further 31.4 percent said they were not.

A considerable number of respondents from Punjab (30.1%), NWFP (25.3%), Balochistan (49.4%), FATA (22.9%) and Islamabad (27.5%) consider Taliban soldiers of Islam. However, 33.7 percent respondents in Balochistan, and 31.4 percent in FATA do not think that Taliban are fighting for Islam. The majority in all the areas surveyed condemns violent acts of Taliban, including attacks on girls’ schools, and CD/video shops, etc.²³

Are Taliban fighting for Islam?

Response	Punjab	NWFP	Sindh	Balochistan	FATA	Islamabad	Gilgit-Baltistan	AJK
Yes	30.1%	25.3%	12.1%	49.4%	22.9%	27.5%	3.9%	14.3%
No	41.8%	42.3%	61.7%	33.7%	31.4%	50.0%	80.4%	49.4%
Don't know	25.7%	28.1%	23.4%	15.2%	45.7%	20.0%	15.7%	31.2%

How do you see Taliban attacks on girls’ schools, cinemas, CD/video and barber shops?

Response	Punjab	NWFP	Sindh	Balochistan	FATA	Islamabad	Gilgit-Baltistan	AJK
Condemn these acts	29.0%	41.8%	42.4%	51.1%	45.7%	32.5%	54.9%	23.4%
Support these acts	9.7%	9.7%	2.8%	10.1%	5.7%	10.0%	5.9%	2.6%
Don't know	22.7%	18.7%	30.3%	24.7%	22.9%	12.5%	2.0%	11.7%

Episodic Tendencies of Radicalization

It is not unusual for public opinion to quickly swing from one end to the other in the face of unprecedented incidents. Such opinion shift can result in short-lived tendencies or patterns of radicalization which decline as quickly as they emerge. The respondents were asked questions regarding the security forces’ action against militants holed up in Lal Masjid in 2007, the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto in 2008 and the crisis triggered by military dictator General Pervez Musharraf sacking superior court judges, in order to gauge which of the three events in as many years had influenced people the most. In Punjab, Balochistan and AJK, almost a similar percentage of respondents cited the Lal Masjid operation and Benazir Bhutto’s murder. In Islamabad, NWFP and FATA, the biggest section of respondents said they had been influenced the most by the Lal Masjid operation. The response from Islamabad was understandable because events surrounding Lal Masjid unfolded in the heart of the capital city, which had never before seen violence of such magnitude.²⁴ In Sindh and Gilgit-Baltistan, a large number of respondents said that Benazir Bhutto’s assassination had affected them the most.

Which of the following events influenced you the most?

Response	Punjab	NWFP	Sindh	Balochistan	FATA	Islamabad	Gilgit-Baltistan	AJK
Lal Masjid operation	31.4%	46.2%	8.6%	23.6%	48.6%	30.0%	9.8%	26.0%
Benazir Bhutto's assassination	34.4%	7.2%	68.6%	18.0%	8.6%	10.0%	37.3%	27.3%
Judiciary crisis	5.8%	8.1%	2.8%	6.7%	8.6%	17.5%	13.7%	18.2%

Anti-US/Western Sentiments

Another factor feeding radicalization in Pakistan is the anti-US sentiment, due partly to US drone strikes in FATA. The counter-terrorism operations launched by Pakistani security forces in NWFP and FATA have also radicalized views of the people against the government. The responses of the public about Pakistan’s decision to join the United States in the war on terror have been mapped. Clear majorities in all parts of Pakistan consider Islamabad’s made a mistake in joining hands with the US in the war on terror.

Was Pakistan’s decision to join US-led alliance in war on terror correct?

Response	Punjab	NWFP	Sindh	Balochistan	FATA	Islamabad	Gilgit-Baltistan	AJK
Yes	20.1%	13.1%	13.8%	18.0%	11.4%	15.0%	31.4%	27.3%
No	59.7%	71.9%	58.6%	70.8%	74.3%	55.0%	52.9%	61.0%
Don’t know	17.7%	12.0%	23.4%	8.4%	8.6%	27.5%	13.7%	9.1%

Conclusion

Religious extremism is the common factor in all visible trends and patterns of radicalization in Pakistan. The dynamics of such trends and patterns in various parts of the country are different from each other but are largely interlinked. The fundamental cause of such trends and patterns is people's ignorance of the religion. People either rely on the prayer leaders or religious clergy for religious education or books authored by clerics of their respective sects, and both tend to fan sectarianism. State policies also play a vital role in formulating the views of the people. Except some episodic incidents, the major trends and patterns of radicalization are constants with a consistent history, the phenomenon of sectarianism being a case in point.

Though this study has endeavored to highlight the general trends and patterns of radicalization in the country, further empirical study of each trend and pattern with their underlying dynamics is required for the formulation of de-radicalization policies. A one-size-fits-all approach towards de-radicalization has proven counterproductive in the past and would do so in the future as well. An informed discourse on each trend and pattern should enable policy makers to formulate trend-specific de-radicalization policies. The hostile attitude of the people to such phenomenon of extremism and radicalization is the biggest hurdle in the way of an objective analysis of such issues.

Notes

¹ See "Defining the Phenomenon of Radicalization in Pakistan: A Report," *Conflict and Peace Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (Islamabad: Pak Institute for Peace Studies, January-March 2009), pp. 5-23.

² International Crisis Group Report, "Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants," *Asia Report N°125*, (Brussels/Islamabad: 2006); Muhammad Azam and Safia Aftab, "Inequality and the Militant Threat in Pakistan," *Conflict and Peace Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (Islamabad: Pak Institute for Peace Studies, April-June 2009), pp. 33-46; Safia Aftab, "Poverty and Militancy," *Conflict and Peace Studies*, Vol.1, No.1, (Islamabad: Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 2008), pp. 65-86; "The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan," in *Asia Report 2005*, International Crisis Group, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3374&1=1>, accessed December 10, 2009; Muhammad Amir Rana, "Mapping the Madrassa Mindset: Political Attitudes of Pakistani Madaaris," *Conflict and Peace Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (Islamabad: Pak Institute for Peace Studies, January-March 2009), pp. 27-42.

³ Asim Sajjad Akhtar, "Moving Beyond 'Islamic'," *The Middle East Institute Viewpoints: The Islamization of Pakistan, 1979-2009*, (Washington DC: The Middle East Institute, 2009), pp. 22-24.

⁴ Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Radicalization of Shi'i and Sunni Identities," *Modern Asia Studies*, No. 32, Vol. 3, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 689-716.

⁵ The Middle East Institute *Viewpoints: Islamization of Pakistan, 1979-2009*, (Washington DC: The Middle East Institute, 2009).

⁶ The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan," in *Asia Report 2005*, International Crisis Group, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3374&1=1>, accessed December 10, 2009.

⁷ Muhammad Amir Mir, *Talibanization of Pakistan: From 9/11 to 26/11*, (New Delhi: Pentagon Security International, 2009).

⁸ C. Christine Fair, *Islamist Militancy in Pakistan: A View from the Provinces*, http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/jul09/PakProvinces_Jul09_rpt.pdf, accessed December 10, 2009.

⁹ Jim Garriaon, *America as Empire: Global Leader or Rogue Power?*, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publisher Inc., 2004), p. 156.

¹⁰ PIPS Annual Security Report 2008, (Islamabad: Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 2009), p. 5.

¹¹ For the sake of brevity only significant percentages (more than 10%) of responses have been presented in the tables.

- ¹² Muhammad Azam, "Radicalization in Pakistan: Socio Cultural Realities," *Conflict and Peace Studies*, Vol.2, No. 1, (Islamabad: Pak Institute for Peace Studies, January-March 2009), pp. 43-66.
- ¹³ Interview with Mazhar-ul-Islam, executive director Lok Virsa Islamabad, March 19, 2009.
- ¹⁴ After successful military operation in Swat, where cultural activities had been suppressed by force, the local traditions and customs resumed once these areas were cleared of the militants.
- ¹⁵ K. K. Aziz, *The Murder of History in Pakistan*, (Lahore: Vanguard Publishers, 2004), p. 200.
- ¹⁶ C. Christine Fair, *The Madrassah Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan*, (Lahore: Vanguard Publisher, 2009), p. 69.
- ¹⁷ Hassan Abbas, *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism*, (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2007), p. 90.
- ¹⁸ Muhammad Amir Rana, *Seeds of Terrorism*, (London: New Melina Publisher, 2005), p. 67, 77.
- ¹⁹ Rasul Baksh Raees, *Recovering the Frontier State*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 29.
- ²⁰ Talibanization denotes such militant movements which seek to establish Islamic Shariah imitating the rule of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.
- ²¹ Muhammad Amir Rana, "Taliban Insurgency in Pakistan: A Counter Insurgency Perspective," *Conflict and Peace Studies*, Vol. 2, No.2, (Islamabad: Pak Institute for Peace Studies, April-June 2009), pp. 9-31.
- ²² Christine Fair, *Islamist Militancy in Pakistan: A View from the Provinces*, http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/jul09/PakProvinces_Jul09_rpt.pdf, December 10, 2009.
- ²³ PIPS Annual Security Report 2008, (Islamabad: Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 2009), p. 7.
- ²⁴ A wave of terrorism, particularly suicide bombings, swept the country after the Lal Masjid operation in 2007. See PIPS' Pakistan Annual Security reports, 2007, 2008, 2009, available at <http://www.san-pips.com>

About Institute

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