

Religion And Military in Pakistan: Implications in the Security Environment of South Asia

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ABSTRACT

Religion has always been an integral of politics in the security environment of South Asia and particularly between India and Pakistan. As both countries possess nuclear arsenals coupled with persistent tensions between them, it reflects precipitating danger in this area. This region has often been fraught with extremism especially of religious extremism in Pakistan. Here we observe two mutually reinforcing phenomena, firstly, it is the rise of extremism and secondly state's affiliation with a particular religion. Within Pakistan, Army has always been the most dominant institution, which has been dominating political domain of Pakistan. Although, the army in Pakistan is as professional as other nations', however, the impact of religion in the army of Pakistan is to such an extent that it has assumed itself as the spiritual defender of Islam's ideology which was mostly engendered during the time of Zia ul Haq.

Keywords:

Introduction

The departure of British from Indian subcontinent resulted into enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan. In beginning, Pakistan saw India as the epistemic threat to its identity as the Muslim nation. Whereas in India, Pakistan was seen as the notorious state which sought to dilute its secular credentials by claiming over Kashmir. Amidst all these happening, one particular but the shared tradition of progressive thinking was forgotten that impinges future of both countries.

The rise of Islamists can be traced from the era of declining Mughal Empire during the British Raj. Muslims saw themselves being pushed aside who had earlier ruled the sub-continent. British have consolidated their power at the expanse of Muslim natives. It has given a surge of fundamentalist and purification movements within Islam. It has side lined those Ulemas who were acquiescent towards non-Muslim (Mohanty and Mohanty, 2010). When Mughal Empire was on the decline; Shah Waliullah reacted to it by emphasizing reform movement for Muslims in India. He rejected taqlid which called for blind imitation of early scholars, and he advocated for ijthad which has pitched for liberal interpretation of the Quran. Cheragh Ali reacted upon Anglo- Muhammadan law in British India that mercilessly used Hedaya and Hadith.

A.G. Noorani quotes Cheragh Ali's work 'the Principal of Movement in the Structure of Islam' where he contends that one must distinguish traditions of a purely legal import from those of non-legal character that have arisen because of pre-Islamic usages of Arabia (Noorani, 2012). Formerly, Syed Ahmed Khan has supported the liberal tradition of Ijthad. In Pakistan, Fazlur Rahman Malik who was the founder of the Islamic Research Institute said in his work 'Islam and Modernity' that the Holy Quran did not support the Islamic state and clarified that jihad was a perversion of the concept as stated in the Quran.

Why did extremism appear in the subcontinent? What were the reasons behind the break of dialectical tradition in Islam from the subcontinent? It has been argued that it occurred because of intellectual stagnation in the Islam and also the western imperialism inspired revivalism and fundamentalism. The political Islamist has woven a imagined historical Islam to discount modernity.

When Jinnah imagined of the future Pakistan, he expected that it would be little India except that in Pakistan Muslims would be a majority. Although, his vision has traversed through religious cleansing on the both side, in retrospect Tariq Ali writes that, "though Jinnah vision was flawed it was never theocratic and was for that reason forces of Islamic fundamentalism in India were hostile to the notion of Pakistan...a separate Muslim state marked a breach with his faith"(Ali, 2003). The founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Maulana Abul Ala Maududi criticized Muslim League, Jinnah, and Iqbal for not following the strict interpretation of Quran and Hadith. After Lahore Resolution in 1940, Maudaudi laid the foundation of the Jamat-e-Islami(JI) as opposite of the League. With the rise of Maudaudi and their supporters, soon after the independence of Pakistan, the links between Maudaudi and Arabs clerics got institutionalized, and by 1950s Wahhabism, Maududi's JI and, Muslim Brotherhood dominated Islamic discourse in Pakistan (Ali, 2003).

The rise of extremists in Pakistan flourished because of unfortunate political happenings such as delay in the constitution-making process, declaring religious minority Ahmadis as non-Muslim, early exit of Jinnah, the assassination of first elected Prime Minister Liaquat Ali and finally the successive military rules. As Jinnah did not prepare any clear roadmap or guidelines for Pakistan and later the army in Pakistan has seized this opportunity and dominated political order in Pakistan.

Army and Islam

The strategic culture of Pakistan and shaping of its societal dispositions and orientation of policymakers have much been influenced by the Islamic factor. The constitution of Pakistan declared it as the Islamic Republic; it specifies that all existing laws should confirm with the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah and it mentions the formation of Islamic Council that would suggest Majlis-e-Shoora, Parliament of Pakistan, for ensuring conformity with the provisions of Islam and Sunnah.

Islam has been dominantly figured in the military of Pakistan. The impact of religion on the strategic thinking of Pakistan has been enormous. Pakistan's Army is the only army in the world which openly professes that they are not only for the defence of territorial integrity but also the spiritual defender of Pakistan's ideology (Cohen, 2004).

According to Ayesha Jalal, in Pakistan, the army has acquired primacy because of weak political inheritance from the British India in contrast of India. In Pakistan, the absence of strong political base has provided a formidable nexus between military and bureaucracy and this nexus has actively sought religious support for strengthening their position (Jalal 1995). Another Pakistani scholar Ayesha Siddiqua traces the origin of the primacy of the military, she mentions that the economic interest of military drives their political interest and she used the term, 'Milbus', for this particular phenomenon (Siddiqua, 2007).

After the independence of Pakistan, constitution making process went through an arduous path. It took nearly a decade to form its first constitution. Ahmadis sect was declared as non-Muslim in 1954. The Munir Report was constituted to probe the causes of anti-Ahmadis disturbances. This report has vigorously debated about the role of religion in state and mocked the idea of the Islamic state and warned also. Though, the advice of this report has been buried.

General Ayub has taken over the power in Pakistan after the assassination of Liaquat Ali. Ayub Khan abrogated the constitution of 1956 and suspended all parties. He introduced his own concept of Basic Democracy. Ayub stressed on religious knowledge in educational system, moreover it distorted historical figures for example in education more emphasis was upon Aurangzeb rather Akbar, at secondary level education emphasis was on national culture and Islamic values. Instead of promoting integrative values, education was used to serve utilitarian purpose. Salem M.M. Qureshi tells that during the Ayub period the emphasis was on Islam and soldiers were given to believe that they have not only to defend their homeland from vicious neighbour but also they have to fight for the cause of Islam against the "idolater infidel" (Qureshi, 1973).

Zia-ul-Haq, during his military rule, transformed the secular outlook of the military in Pakistan. The extent of change of Zia's policy was visible in the convention of the Jama'at-i-Islami in 19 Islamabad, 1991 where 19 retired generals have participated, and especially retirees from Inter-State Intelligence (ISI) (Cohen, 2004). During Zia's era, the political culture of Pakistan was misguided and brutalized under the guise of religiosity. Owing to Cold war and geopolitical scenarios, Pakistan fostered fundamentalists in Afghanistan.

The fusion of Islamic element in army of Pakistan by Zia-ul-Haq was only starting point for radicalization of politics in Pakistan. Later on democratic governments of Nawaz Sharif, a protégé of Zia, and Benazir Bhutto, daughter of the first elected government Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, have alternatively ruled Pakistan till Nawaz Sharif was overthrown in another coup by the military General Pervez Musharraf in 1999. Democratically elected governments of Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto during 1988-1999 could not stop rising religious extremism in Pakistan. In Kashmir, Pakistan nurtured and exported Jihadist and terrorist elements backed by Pakistani military and ISI, for example, Tehrik-e-Jihad fought in Kashmir by using maps and briefing from military officers from Pakistan (Jones, 2002). The elected governments in Pakistan could do little to lessen the effects of Islamization of political institutions.

Pervez Musharraf, the military ruler of Pakistan, called for stopping sectarian violence between Shias and Sunni and also he pitched for abatement of terrorism as he participated in Global War on Terror with the United States. Though Pakistan had actively supported the US in Afghanistan, Musharraf did not sever his ties with the Islamists parties like Jamiat-e-Ulema (JUI) which has been the political patron of Taliban and also it has the critical alliance with Mutahiddin Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) (Fair and Jones, 2012). Association with all these organizations has indeed consolidated the power of Pervez Musharraf. Later on, Musharraf has tried to control extremism as he acted in Lal Masjid, which was stiffly contested within Pakistan.

The Islamization of the army in Pakistan caused to transform South Asia into a hub of terrorism. Pakistan itself got victimized because of radicalization. With the emergence of Pakistan, the soldiers and people within West Pakistan viewed East Pakistani, not as original Muslim as they were converted recently into the Islam, further, they could not disassociate themselves from their Bengali ethnicity. Following the election verdict of 1970, it has negated the result as Awami League has got majority in the assembly, which West Pakistan parties and the army could not reconciled, and thus the soldiers of West Pakistan have indulged into rape and tortures with their fellow countrymen; this horrific offensive was well captured in *Midnight's Children* by Rushdie where he showed how brutally the University students were suppressed (Ali, 2003).

After three successive war defeats by Indian, Pakistan has launched a proxy war against India since 1990s. Since more than two and half decades, India has been a victim of the jihadist movement backed by Pakistan in Kashmir. As both countries possess Nuclear weapon, there is a very least probability of direct war between India and Pakistan. However, repeated terrorists attack on Indian state have escalated the fear of full-fledged war as it happened after the terrorist attack of Parliament in 12 December, 2002. After November, 2008 terrorist attack, the relationship between India and Pakistan has undergone to the lowest point. There is a general belief that terrorists and radical groups in Pakistan are not under their control. Therefore, it poses very dangerous threat to the security environment of South Asia.

Conclusion

Pakistan, which has used jihad as an instrument of state, itself, has caught under the rise of radicalism. The Influence of Mullahs and Shariah Law have deeply penetrated into Pakistan's society. However, within Pakistan, authorities have not yet realized the horror of rising extremism. Maulana Fazlur Rahman opined that radical groups do not pose any serious threat and even former ISI Lt. General Asad Durrani placed his faith in wisdom people, and he felt that people eventually would manage to moderate extremists. In reality, Pakistanis authority and especially military and ISI are still actively using Jihad as a state instrument to gain strategic gains especially against India. They have not taken up any concrete step to curb terrorists menace. Lasker-e Tiaba is still operated within Pakistan and Hafiz Syed is still walking freely in the territory of Pakistan. Even, the Chinese are very apprehensive of Pakistan and also about rising religious extremism. They are fully concerned about export of religious extremism in their territory like Xinxiang province of China.

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