A CASE STUDY OF RADICALIZATION OF ISLAM IN PAKISTAN DURING AFGHAN JIHAD 1979-89

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Abstract

Back in August 1947, Pakistan emerged as sixth Muslim populated country on the map of the world with the claim to spread the peaceful message of Islam throughout the world but during cold war 1947-91, when the Americans and Russians intervened in the decaying politics of Afghanistan, Pakistan also came forward to help its Muslim neighbor to ward off the Russians. Thus, this period encouraged the Taliban to form their government in Afghanistan and helped the Americans to push the Russians out of their country but such a move radicalized Islam in Pakistan. The country drifted into extremism though it was already slightly extremist but during Afghan Jihad the ruling elite and Military also move in that direction. It was after that period, the country adopted the Taliban version of Islam which brought inequality in society, it was that version of Islam which created gender inequality, it was that version of Islam which brought an end to religious freedom, it was that version of Islam which brought an end to the practice of tolerance, forbearing and forgiving, it was that version of Islam which says that Islam spread through the use of sword/force, it was that version of Islam which gave an identity to militant organizations and yes it was that version of Islam which gave birth to the evil of suicide bombings. This article will portray the period during Afghan Jihad which radicalized Islam in Pakistan and analyzes the causes for its acceptance in Pakistan and then suggest solutions to de-radicalize the existing version.

Keywords: Islam, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Cold War, Afghan Jihad, -isms, Radicalization

Introduction

In August 1947, the British Empire divided the Indian Sub-Continent into two independent sovereign states, one was named as Republic of India and the other was Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Iqbal, 2018; Bhattacharya, 2013). The two states were so diverse in comparison to each other that their inhabitants failed to cooperate even though (McLeod, 2008) they lived and died on the same soil for centuries. So, there existed an unending opposition and rivalry between the two neighboring countries which mainly focused the religious identity. To give a separate identity to Pakistan, it was decided that Islam must be the sole agenda of the country but it was never thought that which Islam (Boquerat & Hussian, 2011) and whose interpretation of Islam it would be? Thus implementing Islam in Pakistan means opening the Pandora box because the Muslims are so diverse on interpretation of Islam that they can hardly agree upon a single interpretation, though they cannot decide the way one need to offer his/her prayer (Fitzpatric & Walker, 2014).

Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan was a moderate educated in Britain and adopted a lifestyle akin to British wanted a modern interpretation of Islam (Butt, 2015) but he did not live long to see his vision being accomplished, whereas, his followers adopted a fundamentalist version of Islam which was opposed by the minorities of the country especially the Hindus (Khan, 2012). The struggle between the fundamentalist and moderates Muslims continued like a tug of war but at the end it was the fundamentalist who won the game. In 1949, with the passing of Objective Resolution Pakistan was provided with a blueprint of an Islamic state and its aftershocks were seen during Lahore riots of 1953, thus the extremist mentality started drifting the country towards extremism and last nail in the coffin was penetrated during Zia-ul-Haq (r. 1977-88) regime when Pakistan participated in Afghan war/Jihad (Hassan, 2008), thus, transformed the existing version of Islam from fundamentalist to a Radical one (Crone, 2016).

Cold War in the Episode of Afghan Jihad

After World War II (1939-45), the world was divided into two blocs, Capitalist vs Communist, the former being headed by United States of America (USA) whereas the latter was commanded by former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Post 1945 era witnessed proxy wars between two mighty military giants to dominate the world through their wealth, power and ideology (Robertson, 1997), so it was in such a scenario that in 1979, the USSR intervened in Afghanistan to setup a communist government by toppling the Islamist one (Kellner, 2003).

Initially, the Afghan forces resisted the Soviets but failed to sustain their strike thus they cried for help from the world and especially from the Muslim world (Barber, 2015). Fearing the defeat of Afghanistan against USSR, Pakistan intervened into Afghanistan through her Pashtuns areas located parallel to Afghanistan borders (Shirkey, 2016). Sensing the war to be slipping out of hand, Pakistan looked towards America for help, it was also looking for a chance to normalize its relationship with America and to ask her to lift the sanctions upon its country imposed due to ongoing activities in Nuclear plant KANUUP (Kalinovsky & Daigle, 2014). America under Truman doctrine felt that if they did not come in aid of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Russians will be able to establish their pro-communist regimes and the US will lose their allies into South Asia (Apostolov, 2004).

Role of Pakistan in Afghan Jihad 1979-89

Pakistan became the frontline ally of US against USSR, it allowed the US to use Pakistani territory against the Soviets (Kukreja & Singh, 2005). With the assistance of America, Pakistan set up training camps along its borders to train the Afghan and then send them back to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets. The Americans provided dollars, weapons, information, training, food and backing to both Pakistan and Afghanistan. (Riedel, 2014).

Similarly, Pakistan received a large amount of cash to host the Afghan refugees within its borders and failed to restrict the movement of refugees near its borders (Khan, 2010). The Afghan refugees were no more different than the Pashtun speaking Pashtuns of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formally North West Frontier Province NWFP) (Chatterjee, 2013). They were having the same color, the same dress, the same language (though their dialect of Pashto was a bit different but they speak Urdu with the same dialect as the other Pashtuns), they ate the same food, they practiced the same religion, in short they appeared more Pakistani than that of Afghani. (Chatterjee, 2013) Such a similar identity posed a thread but was hardly sensed and if sensed, it was ignored against the biggest enemy the Russian.

Militarily, the Afghan Taliban were trained by forces of both America and Pakistan, though the major part was being played by Pakistani forces (Kellner, 2003), thus they developed a direct linked with the military of Pakistan-one of the most influential and powerful institution in the country (Abbas, 2015). They were given the same weapons and sometime advanced one and were trained on the same footings as of Pakistan army which in coming days challenged the same forces (Kellner, 2003).

The efforts and preparation of war continued for 10 years but ended in favor of Afghanistan, Pakistan and US, but its aftermath were yet to be judged at that time. The first shock of installing Taliban government in Afghanistan was felt by Pakistan within its territory. (Adelman, 2016).

Events that led to Radicalization of Islam

Pakistan supported the Taliban who were fighting against the Soviets in their homeland, for outsiders, it was just a war like other wars, but for Taliban, it was not an ordinary war, but an Islamic one (Jihad), which is to be fought against the enemy of Islam till victory (Afzal, 2018). So, they won against one enemy of Islam the Soviets, but what about those of Americans and those who supported them? The answer was obvious (Williams, 2013). So, the Taliban started to preach their version of Islam and jihad in Pakistan and radicalized the insane minds (Muehlenbeck, 2012). They attracted the *Tabula Rasa* youth by providing them money, vehicle, weapons and a heroic training but with a solemn oath to obey their *ameer* which means they were challenging the state laws and setting up their own government and they did it thus Pakistan still regrets its folly (Ali, Banks and Parson, 2015).

Two deadly weapons of that time, Heroin and AK47 (Kalashnikov) were smuggled to Pakistan and both were deadly for human being (Hilali, 2017), the former controlled and insane the mind/intelligence and the later destroy the body. Both of these were frequently used to numb the body and minds of pro-Taliban supporters (Hilali, 2017). The Taliban smuggled heroin to generate wealth but at the same time made their followers addict to it so as to command infallibility of leader. Being addicted/intoxicated, made the extremists merciless assassins, whereas AK47 was used as a solution to every sort of disobedience and negation of command. That weapon became a symbol of fear as guillotine became a symbol of death during French Revolution (Hilali, 2017).

The government appreciated the success of Taliban as being helpful to her against her war with India, thus were patronized in Pakistan for proxy wars (Hashmi, 2014). The government started funding them and strengthened them by allowing them to setup their own educational institutions/*Madrassah* (Noor, Sikand & Bruinessen, 2008). In such institutions, doctrine of Jihad was widely taught and misinterpreted, the *Talibs*/Students were groomed to be violent and deadly against anti-Taliban groups. They were trained to remain only loyal to Taliban (Marsden, 1998). Their brains were so controlled that they were ever ready to end their life upon the orders of their leaders (Marsden, 1998).

To make the situation worse and to patronize the Taliban as hero, the media of that time sang heroic songs for the Taliban. They were hailed as the true Muslims and custodians of Islam, an urge was shown for Taliban model government in Pakistan (Matinuddin, 1999). The media was helping the Taliban to catch the ignorant minds through the media. To the surprise of media, the same Taliban banned it as being pro west and anti-Islam, that's why it is said as you sow, so shall you reap (Matinuddin, 1999).

Foremost Explanations for Radicalization of Islam in Pakistan

The moot question arises why Islam was radicalized in Pakistan though there were many other Muslim countries in the world? There are numerous answers to this query but owing to its limitations, the research will put forward the following answers.

First, it was Pakistan who provided Yeoman's service to the Taliban when their (Afghanis) territory was attacked by the Russians, because they share a border of 1510 mile which is porous (Collins, 2011) Similarly, across the border, the people shares a common culture, there are families and properties of people on both sides of the fence who are still in touch with each other. So, the families in Pakistan and its state had to welcome them, finance them, trained them and then supported them (Malik, 2016). That attempt was to get the sympathy of the Muslims Pashtuns across the globe against the non-Muslim countries. In the back door, Pakistan was trying to create a group by help of whom, she can avenge her wounds of 1971 war with India (Malik, 2016) So, she supported the Taliban with least bothering that they cannot be relied up and will surely bounce back, and they did and with a great force in 1999 (Fazli, Johnson and Cooke, 2015).

Second, Pakistan is an underdeveloped country witnessing poverty and illiteracy to the extent that the families carry out child marriages, force their children into child labor and even sell their children just to keep the wolf out of their doors (Yasmeen, 2017). Whereas, they are also suffering from intellectual poverty, they do not have finances to acquire worldly education, so those who want to teach their children are forced to admit them into religious institutions (Aziz, 2015) which are mostly inclined towards Taliban's ideology of Islam, thus bringing an end to Taliban in Pakistan becomes a serious issue. There are hundreds and thousands of them (Bayefsky, 2006). When compared to modern education, the Taliban have a very narrow world view, which lacks teaching of tolerance, their education has no place for religious harmony, they follow the ideology of Nazism, i.e. rule the world through sword (Bayefsky, 2006). Moreover, they are not ready to listen to anyone except their own religious leaders, thus they challenge

every law and authority (Marsden, 1998). Therefore, to control them through modern state law becomes an uphill task.

Third, during Afghan Jihad, Pakistan experienced a martial law in shape of Zia-ul-Haq, who introduced Islamization in the country, which attracted the Taliban of Afghanistan, as they were also fighting their war in name of Islam (Rakisitis, 2012). Such experiments of implementing Islam in Pakistan, making it a laboratory for use of Islam radicalized the society; people were forced to become Islamic in public; Islamic laws were documented and were used to crush opposition; non-Muslims felt threatened in Pakistan (The Middle East Institute, n.d.), these were steps which gave a new interpretation to Islam in Pakistan and diversified the sectarian identity in the country.

Fourth, since inception, Pakistani society is engulfed with the flames of religious hatred and animosity (Rafiq, 2002). The Muslims are divided into numerous sects, each claiming to be the true representative of Islam and its custodian. Who is a Muslim and who is not is a hot debate and is decided by the sects; its result? Every other Muslim in Pakistan is labelled as a non-Muslim (Rafiq, 2002). So, when the society is already broken and is divided how can one expect them to counter an outsider force? Nay, but they will welcome the intruders and align with them to weaken the members of other sects, thus it became easy for *Talibanised* Islam to Radicalize Islam in Pakistan.

Possible Solutions to De-Radicalize Islam in Pakistan

First, the state needs to educate the illiterate masses and then substantiate them. Though acquiring education in Pakistan till primary is compulsory and free but still reforms are needed to get the positive result (Johnson and Maclean, 2008). Pakistan is considered among those countries with least expanding in education. Least paid teachers with least respect and facilities, corporal punishment is day on, day off practice in educational institutions, unqualified and untrained teachers are there to use the policy of might is right, ghost school and ghost teachers exists, thus education department presents a symbol of worst corruption in its every form (Johnson and Maclean, 2008).

Second, the state must initiate poverty alleviation programs to bring an end to Poverty because the country is witnessing joblessness, kidnapping, suicides due to poverty and terrorism to get money. Tough it has initiated a number of program like yellow cab (Mujtaba, 2018), Benazir income support program and *Ehsas* program but at the end they were meant to make the ruling elite rich (Hussain, 2020).

Third, system of justice need to be rectified in Pakistan, there must be supremacy of law and justice should be speedy (Jamshed, 2018). Pakistan falls in category of low income countries, and its poor citizen could not afford expensive justice system, thus they prefer Taliban's version of justice, i.e. speedy and free; in case of non-availability of Taliban's model of Islam, the aggrieved takes the law into his own hands (Sajid and Siddiqi, 2014), therefore, Pakistan needs to focus on its judiciary.

Fourth, the state must manage its borders especially with Afghanistan as it is one of its worst porous border and crossroad for Taliban (Durward & Marsden, 2009). The state needs to demarcate its citizens as citizens of Pakistan instead of Muslims. Policy of citizenship will keep outsiders at bay especially those who are hiding under the mask of ethnicity. Then the state of Pakistan need to focus on syllabus and teachers of *madrassah* as they have become breeding and mushrooming ground of/for Taliban (Riaz, 2008). The state needs to check the contents of subjects taught and should analyze the mentality of the faculty members to ensure no radical, fanatic and hotheaded faculty should be there to inculcate intolerance among the students. The state needs to revise the pre-Taliban version of Islam in Pakistan, the vision that was held by Iqbal and propagated by Jinnah, the version that was modern and was tolerant, the version that was Islamic but peaceful (Sonn, 2010). When the above steps become concrete then the state need to finally introduce Schism and Secularism, because there is no shortcut and haste, if done the ignorant minds and pro-Taliban groups will bounce back and do more harm, so slow and steady wins the race (Phares, 2020).

Conclusion

When the Russians invaded Afghanistan, they not only disturbed the world peace by destroying Afghanistan but also disturbed the whole region especially Pakistan. The Russians fought for implementing their communist ideology but indirectly encouraged another ideology in that domain, an ideology which was more lethal and long lasting, the ideology of radicalization of Islam. It was the Russian invasion of Afghanistan that transformed the peaceful version of Islam in Pakistan into a radical one by allowing the radical groups to enter deep into Pakistani society and were funded and trained by Americans, thus to blame Pakistan and Islam for terrorism is a sheer myth but an unseen and unpredicted nefarious design of the then superpowers. As they helped the Taliban to radicalize Islam in Pakistan against their interest so it was also their responsibility to kill the evil mentality when they have gained their success. What they taught was that the radicalized ideology will soon die when left unfinanced, but they forgot and failed to analyze the literacy rate of Pakistan, they failed to judge the cultural dimension of Pakistan, they failed to see the perils of a porous border, in short, they

failed to calculate everything but witnessing a temporary victory against the Russians in Afghanistan.

The Muslims hardly sacrifice their lives until motivated by the spirit of Jihad and when motivated they do not stop until they die or achieve their aim. The West flamed the spirit of Jihad among the Muslims against the Russians but failed to consider the concept of *Ummah* which will bind the Muslims to fight against their enemies, though they can hardly be united on small religious issues but in name of Jihad they are ready to be united without thinking much. Thus war in Afghanistan radicalized peaceful version of Islam in Pakistan into a jihadist one and the country is still burning in the flames of that ideology and the super powers instead of helping their ally are blaming it for mushrooming Taliban against the West.

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