



RESEARCH PAPER

A Historical Context of Radicalization in Pakistan through Media and Education During Zia ul Haq Era

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the fact that the era of General Zia ul Haq remains significant period in shaping the socio-political discourse of Pakistan based on religious identity. The notion of Islamization was coined to rejuvenate the religious, socio-cultural, and political landscape of Pakistan. There is a common narrative that how the policies of General Zia were embryonic in setting the roots of indoctrination and radicalism. The objective of the study is to analyze how the media and education sector were controlled by the government of General Zia to bring a controlled particular version of Islam. Following the contextual nature of radicalism, this paper explores the ways through which soft means including education and controlled media were used by a military dictator for indoctrination. With in-depth interviews and qualitative data analysis, it was observed that media and education were controlled, exploited, and articulated by the state with a radical rhetoric by the state.

KEYWORDS Education, Islamization, Media, Pakistan, Radicalism, Religion

Introduction

The Ideology has been an important factor in the socio-political and cultural landscape of Pakistan. The era of Zia ul Haq (1977-1988) has significant placement in the history of Pakistan to understand how ideological indoctrination was institutionalized at the micro and macro level to completely change the orientation of the society. The roots of indoctrination can be traced through a qualitative analysis of the media and education sector, both being important sources of communication, influence, and connectivity. The state as an institution was involved in transmitting the overall orientation and thinking pattern of society. Religion was used as a strong source of articulation to imbed a particular religious thought in the society. As a result, religious zeal combined with power, heroism, sectarian hatred, and radicalization set the stage for religiously grounded radicalization and militancy in Pakistan in the 1980s (Karamat, Muzaffar, & Shah, 2019). In this context, it is significant to understand the concept of radicalization and its relationship with ideology.

Literature Review

McCauley and Moskaleiko (2008) defines radicalization as, "Change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in direction that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defense of the intragroup" (McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008). The writer further divided the radicalization process into three levels i.e. individual, group, and masses. In this context, social and political settings are mostly used at the group level and on the masses in an attempt to reorient society. Consequently, Radicalization is a contested and context-based concept, particularly due to the factors that are involved in triggering the radicalization process including religious, theological, political, socio-economic, and personal factors (Vidino, 2010). Therefore, radicalization involves

individualized and group patterns where people tend to opt for an extremist posture in their thinking and actions. The process of radicalization may evolve gradually but at times a sudden shock or transformation factors may trigger radical views within individuals and masses. In the case of Pakistan, it is being observed that education and media praxis have been two main factors that were controlled by the state which in turn had negative repercussions on the state and society of Pakistan.

Khan, (2018) has explained that radicalization was triggered after the Soviet intervention of Afghanistan in 1979 as it brought a particular mind set with the state security apparatus. In addition, in the aftermath of the invasion, Pakistan had to face social, political, economic, and religious fall out. The influx of foreign money from Middle East and US fueled the ethnic and religious sentiments of the people of Pakistan. Pakistan gradually became a breeding ground for extremist ideologies and groups under state patronage. Similarly, (Yaseen, & Muzaffar, 2018); Basit, 2010) is of the view that deprivation, marginalization, politically controlled environment and denial of rights are some of the main patterns of radicalization in each province along with the geographic proximity of Afghanistan with Pakistan. These areas with ethnic linkages connects with the people of FATA, the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan with the Pashtun in Afghanistan were subject to radicalization as compared to the areas that do not share border with Afghanistan.

Hussain, (2010) illustrates that General Zia gave a new meaning to the concept of Jihad, war, and conflict. The Islamization of institutions particularly armed forces had a deep rooted impact on the security apparatus of Pakistan. The impact of islamization on the socio-political landscape of Pakistan was so intense that even in the era of 1990s, every democratic government framed political Islam to get popular support within the system (Muzaffar, Khan, & Karamat, 2017).

Furthermore, identifying the process of radicalization in media in Pakistan, (Kalansooriya, 2010) explains that during the period of General Zia-ul-Haq, militants were able to penetrate in the main stream media to an extent under State patronage. Activists from Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) entered into media to propagate and glorify the Afghan Jihad War. This is how radicalized mind sets were planted within the media houses by political parties, militant groups, and even by the security establishment for narrative building.

Material and Methods

This study is based on an exploratory and historical research design. In-depth interviews along with speech act was analyzed to understand the main discourse of Zia-ul-Haq education and media policy. The main purpose was to collect, synthesize and verify the past events to develop an understanding and rationale of using media and education has a tool to indoctrinate an ideological and theological perspective.

Results and Discussion

Zia ul Haq in his speech on television the day after the imposition of martial law used the word, 'momin', i.e. Holy or pious for the armed forces of Pakistan. In addition, while explaining the causes of the imposition of martial law, he said that he has accepted this challenge as a soldier of Islam. The use of such religious symbols was practically manifested by Zia when he started to reshape the ideological doctrine of Pakistan. He narrated the official discourse of the Pakistani state exclusively on religious identity. It is pertinent to note that Muslims living in the sub-continent before 1947 defined their

identity in terms of religious, cultural, and historical similarities which have not only roots in the Persian Gulf and central Asia but also in local cultural factors (Ahmed, 1987). The popular statement of Jinnah while addressing the constituent assembly on 11th August 1947 endorsed coexistence and the recognition of diverse ideologies. Zia's perception and policy execution were not in alignment with the ideological foundations that were set at the time of independence.

In this context, the Zia regime gave its national education policy in 1979 to ensure the inflow of the Islamization process in the education system. The main goals of the policy were to strengthen the bond between Islam and the people of Pakistan by emphasizing the Islamic identity as the sole identity of Pakistani citizens. In addition, it was ensured that the revised curricula must be designed in such a way as to give awareness that Pakistan is a part of the greater Muslim Umma and every Pakistani must contribute to its development and well-being (Muzaffar, & Javaid, 2018). Furthermore, special emphasis was given to the Pakistani movement and the role that religion played in it. Along with this, the policy was also aimed to link the cultural heritage of Pakistan with Islamic identity. The educational policy also aimed to encourage scientific education, research, and development (UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 1992).

A report from a committee on the education sector reforms in Pakistan published by the Higher Education Commission states that,

“ The primary objective of this policy was to “Islamise” education in Pakistan and to develop a curriculum more suited to the national aspirations and a minimum level of literacy was to be ensured. Another significant decision in the policy was the recognition of Madrassa, or Mosque school, as an educational institution per se” (Muzaffar, Hussain, Javaid, Khan, & Rahim, 2020).

Under the new education policy, five thousand mosques (schools) were announced to be built. Moreover, Islamic studies were to be taught as a compulsory subject at the primary level of B.A. Arabic teaching was made compulsory in schools and colleges. Textbooks were reconstituted by giving special space to the principles of Islam (Saleem et al., 2014). The curriculum in the 1980s was instrumental in indoctrinating society. Textbooks of Islamiyat, Urdu, English, and social studies in particular were redesigned by the military regime. (Muzaffar, et. al., 2020). Textbooks of primary and secondary school level content demonstrated war stories and war heroes in a glorified manner. An indigenous historical narrative was distorted and history related to the culture, religion, and civilization of other countries was not given much space in the curricula. Biographies of different personalities were included mostly based on their religious belief and not on their intellect and contribution. Even the ideology of the Pakistan and the Pakistan movement was narrated in a very narrow and isolated way. As a result, this controlled deliverance of knowledge fueled intolerance in society as it attempted to exclude historical discourse (Hussain, 2014).

Another distortion was excluding the names of renowned personalities belonging to the minorities in Pakistan. They were not given any major recognition for their work in the textbooks. This legacy which extensively started in the Zia era remains till now. For example, Zafarullah Khan was not only the first foreign minister of Pakistan but he served as the only Asian and Pakistani who became vice president of the International Court of Justice (1958-1961), president of ICJ (1970-1973), and president of UN General Assembly (1962-1964) (Admin, 2016) as well. But because he belonged to the Ahmadi community, he was not much recognized by the writers and the state as a whole.

Dorab Patel belonging to the Parsi community, a jurist who refused to take oath under the Chief Marshal Law Administrator (CMLA) Zia ul Haq (Yusuf et al., 2015) is not a known personality for a new generation. Similarly, Alvin Robert Cornelius can be termed as the finest legal philosopher in Pakistan as despite being a Christian, he supported some Islamic tenets in Pakistan's legal system. Moreover, in the famous Justice Munir report he gave a dissent note regarding the dissolution of the constituent assembly (DAWN.COM., 2011).

In 1984, there were deliberate efforts to renew the concept in books that Pakistan was made on a similar religious basis rather than other characteristics like race, language, and culture. In addition, the new education policy had drastic effects on the teaching mechanisms and overall environment of schools and colleges. The policies of General Zia created a troika between education, national identity, and religion (Lall, 2008) which in the following years backfired the society because it failed to incorporate cohesion, flexibility, co-existence, and diversity of thought.

Another important change occurred in the field of print and electronic media. As media has a profound influence on the perception building of society, electronic media in this context was largely controlled by the government. It was used as a source to proliferate the notion of Zia's Islamization in all tiers of society. Pakistan Television Network (PTV) was the only source of electronic media in Pakistan established in October 1963. At that time, people used to get together to watch television as everyone did not have the facility of television in their homes. It was a source of inspiration and information for the public. Changed themes of drama, news, documentaries, songs, and current affairs reflected the impact of Islamization in the 1980s. Headscarves were made compulsory for girls in schools, and colleges, and women working in media like news and television show anchors were asked to observe headscarves. Female newscasters were ordered to cover their heads and male newscasters were ordered to wear *Shirwani*- a traditional dress. For instance, Mehtab Rashidi refused to cover her head and as a result, she was fired from PTV based on directives coming from the president's house. It was after Zia's death that she was again approached by PTV to conduct an election transmission of 1988. It was then that she again joined PTV. Sharing her views with the researcher Mehtab Rashidi expressed that during the regime of Zia-ul-Haq, it was a suffocated, oppressed, and closed society for women especially. She shared that she was banned on PTV for eight long years for not abiding by the directives came from the president's house to cover the head as there was a lot of pressure on PTV from the president's house.

According to the policy, the host was required to cover her head but this was not a restriction for the guest on the show. According to her, it was an attempt from the government to redefine the image of Pakistani women across the globe in which women had a very limited and restricted role in society, which in turn according to her was contradicting the cultural and societal traits of Pakistan. Mehtab further said that for her it was a mere act of hypocrisy to cover her head just for a limited time, when she was aired on television and after that, she would have uncovered her head. Such double standards as she narrated were not aligned with the principles of morality and Islam as well. Zia's Islamization was a new word coined by the military regime not to just get legitimacy among the people but also to get direct control of the lives of the people. It was mostly unrealistic and not by the ground realities which is the basic reason that it faded out from society after the end of Zia's regime.

Remembering that time Mehtab shared that she completely refused and resented such dictatorial policy imposed by the government and took a position that being a

responsible, educated, and active member of society she knows well how to dress and move in the society. Thus nobody has a right to impose a particular mindset, which lacks the support of people and their will. During the conversation, she further highlighted the strict censorship policies of the then military regime which directly affected art and literature. Multiple scenes were taken in dramas in which a female actress was drowned in water and came out of the water with her head covered. Another example quoted by the respondent was how in dramas female actresses stood up in the morning from bed with their heads covered with a scarf. All such cosmetic changes were unrealistic and did not depict the normal and daily life of a citizen (Mehtab, 2017).

Samina Peerzada sharing her views with the researcher quoted multiple incidents that show strict restrictions and the hard approach of the Zia government. The respondent shared that she was pointed out for not covering her head in a music show aired on television and when she refused to accept this she had to leave the show by force. She said that General Mujeeb-ur-Rehman himself asked her to cover her head otherwise she had to face difficulties in her career. In addition to it, she was also pointed out and criticized because of her dresses, especially *sari* because it was considered as an Indian dress. *Chori dar pajama* was also not considered an appropriate dress. Eventually, she was banned for almost four years. She termed these episodes with psychological indoctrination as she said there was no freedom and it was a deliberate attempt to dislodge thinking television. Such minute things were monitored and censored.

For instance, a male and female cannot talk alone in scenes and there must be some third character in the scene. She shared that she was even not allowed to sit together in a scene with her real-life husband. Such tactics to indoctrinate and dictate the society on a particular pattern had far-reaching effects on Pakistani society in the following. It created an acute, intolerant, and controlled society instead of a forward-looking, modern, and free society. As according to the respondent the backlash was immense and long-term. Talking about the themes of the show she connected the pattern of writing with the environment in which a particular piece of script is written. Story writing in that era was unconsciously affected by the controlled environment that Zia tried to sketch according to his thinking about Pakistan ideology.

Usman Peerzada recounted that the era of Zia-ul-Haq deeply affected the cultural traits and norms of Pakistani society. While sharing his personal experience he shared that it was an asphyxiated environment for work and performance. It was monitored by a three-fold censor check. In the first place, an unidentified observer used to sit on the set of shooting to monitor the work and recording. Then that recording was reviewed by a censor committee. At the last stage, before one hour of telecast, it was again reviewed by the committee to ensure that every final product was in alignment with the government's Islamization process. He said that he was banned from 1980-1983 to work on television, and was never given any written notice or reason for such ban. Usman Peerzada while recalling the era said that indoctrination was architect in such a way that it targeted common and simple cultural norms to redefine the image of a Muslim. For example, a policy was circulated that bad characters like villains should wear coats and pants while good characters should wear *Shalwar Kameez*, whether it suits the role or not. He further revealed that even the Quranic verses and statements of Jinnah were deliberately picked and chosen which provided legitimacy to the government.

The ideas of the Caliphate, Jihad, Muslim Brotherhood, and sacrifices were used as main themes. Whereas discussing the authoritarianism in the regime, the respondent quoted one dialogue for which he had to face a lot of resentment. Despite such strict censorship, this line was skipped which according to the government directly targeted

the armed forces. "*Jab hath mei band ho to thori se aqal aa hee jati hey*", meaning that when there is a weapon in your hand, it may bring some wisdom too". He was of the view that control and radical changes sabotage the thinking pattern and give rise to mindless entertainment, pretense, and intolerance. Pakistan according to him was not a sole ideological state but was made where Muslims could live according to their ideology along with others. The unfortunate migration according to him was not the idea in the creation of Pakistan.

It was gradually made into an ideological state that reached its climax in times of Zia-ul-Haq and the role of religion in statecraft was redefined. In addition, he also highlighted the way the soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 changed the politics of the region and the US's role towards it. He claimed that the US has played a particular role in supporting the Islamization process of Zia for their political end which consequently increased radicalization in society. Moreover, the role played by Saudis and Iran further complicated the discourse of religion in society. As a result, it took a grave posture which is termed as militant Islam.

The themes of TV shows were also changed. Dr. Israr Ahmad, an Islamic cleric, having links with Zia ul Haq was given a TV show *Al Huda* to lecture about the Islamic teachings. Interestingly *Al-Huda* transmission was on air and lectures related to the formation of the caliphate, Islamic teachings, and principles were taught. In addition to it, programs related to Quranic teachings were considerably increased. This kind of state-sponsored ship for a particular religious discourse and preaching i.e. mainly the Sunni (Wahhabi) version negatively the sectarian balance among the population. As 90 million PTV viewers (*Caught between five extremes: Reporting Pakistan*, n.d.) also contain a large chunk of the population which was subject to incitement as they were shown only what the state wanted them to see. It was a deliberate attempt to eliminate religious diversity in Pakistani which has always been indigenously manifold. Such tactics of controlling perception and dictating the minds of the population eventually increased extremist tendencies in Pakistan (Azam, 2019).

Moreover, dramas and documentaries magnifying Afghan Jihad were produced. For example, *Panah*, a film on Kashmir and Afghanistan, and *House without Foundation* based on Afghan refugees with the collaboration of Holland were telecast. History-based dramas like *Akhari Chitan* based on the expeditions of *Chengiz Khan* were telecast (PTV,1994). Even pop music was restricted and controlled but it was not completely banned. Three popular songs of that time were banned. Comparatively folk and Sufi-based songs were telecasted more in Zia's era. One of the much-talked reasons is that Zia-ul-Haq himself enjoyed music. It was evident from the fact that singers used to perform in the President's House. Nazia's Hassan and Zoheb's songs were stopped to play on radio and television reflecting the control and psych of the regime.

Religion was not utilized well for a progressive society rather it was negatively used to reinterpret the society. That was the reason that despite such radical changes Zia was unable to completely change the theme of television and radio because the movement of free thinking and freedom had already gained strength in the previous era. The above observation of the respondent and facts illustrate that Zia's regime very briskly tried to infiltrate the society instead of completely containment. Such selective filtration on religious lines drastically affected the roots of the culture, Islam, and identity of Pakistan.

Print media also came under the Islamization process. Four journalists were trailed in military courts and were lashed and eleven were sentenced by military courts

on 13th May 1978 (Dawn.com, 2017). It was on 17th October 1979 that six daily newspapers, *Daily Sadaqat* and *Daily Musawat* from Sindh, *Aafaq*, *Sahafat*, *Tameer*, and *Hawat* were banned (Bhutto, 2010). It was a well-planned and systemic campaign to control the perception and thought ways of society. The censorship policy was very strict and controlled. Officers used to monitor every news item and if it was objectionable, that part of the newspaper was published blank as a protest against censorship. Journalist Abdur Rauf, in this regard, shared that, "There was no major electronic media at that time. Other than film and government radio and TV channels, Print media was the main source of information. There was a lot of fear among the publishers of newspapers. Even though newspapers had their censor board, Lt. Mujeeb ur Rehman had a major role, as he was considered an expert in psychological warfare. He was given the authority by the Zia regime to control the media. He did not only control the media, he used to give directions to print and electronic media. PTV was particularly used to indoctrinate Afghan Jihad and the concept of Mujahedeen at that time".

The special ordinance was passed for the holy month of Ramadan. Eating and drinking in public places during the fasting period was prohibited and was subject to a penalty in the form of a fine of rupees five hundred to imprisonment for three months. It was ordered in the month of Ramadan to cut off the water lines of Karachi during the fasting hours to ensure the fast of citizens. Intolerance in general was on the rise in Pakistan, Dr. Anita. Weiss in this regard told the researcher that it was in 1983 that I was in Lahore, and waiting in a checkout line in a grocery store in the Gulberg area. Two people ahead of me was a woman was wearing a Shalwar Kameez like I was with no scarf (*Dupatta*) on her head some Molvi came up to her and slapped her face and asked her to put a *dupatta* on her head and he walked out. I asked her who was he, and she said that I didn't know him. He was completely unknown to her. This made the point that the man was completely wrong as he had no right to touch or condemn a woman whom he was unknown to. That's not the Pakistan we knew before. She further narrated that during Zia's time, there was a greater sense that it was acceptable to impose your views of religion on others and this is what started to chip away at the social contract between Pakistanis and one of the main standpoints of that chipping away was used to on the grounds of religion".

Therefore, the era of Zia contributed to embedding religious extremism in Pakistan, when people tend to impose their religious beliefs on each other. This was mostly acceptable to the state structure as the state itself was part of this indoctrination and mindset. Education and media were both used as effective tools to proliferate Islamization by changing the minds and thinking patterns of the people across Pakistan. From 1979 to 1982 151 new madrasas were opened. A new education policy was introduced through five thousand mosques, a school development fund was approved, and the curriculum of schools was rewritten. The United States Agency for International Development known as USAID provided funds to the University of Nebraska, Omaha \$ 5.1 million to develop and design Jihad-related educational textbooks. More than \$13 million worth of textbooks were distributed in Pakistan refugee camps (*The Islamization of Pakistan, 1979-2009, n.d.*)

Conclusion

Pakistan's media and education sector was controlled by General Zia. These two mediums are significant for any nation, and they play a vital role in shaping the social, political, and religious contours of any country. Zia fully utilized this medium, and it created a specific image of Islam. In Pakistan, different groups were formed especially in the education sector the student wings were formed. Pakistan, one of the top countries

with the highest youth population became a victim of it. The roots of radicalization embedded in the social construction of Pakistan still persists in its socio-political structure. Along with electronic and print media, now social media is one of the major sources of information and narrative building. Therefore, media and education is still used as a source of indoctrination but the means to execute them can target a larger number of audiences mainly because of internet.

Recommendations

- After mapping out the role of media and education in indoctrinating the society, it is evident that a rigorous education policy needs to be adopted that should incorporate the new trends, intellectual discourse and diversity of thought
- Material based on exclusionism and hate needs to be identified through a consistent monitoring system
- All provinces needs to promote education based on national integration, inter-faith, peace and harmony
- The cyber domain of Pakistan needs major institutional and legislative reforms to detect, intersect, and response to any illicit material and radicalized agenda

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