Abstract
This is a study of the socio-political attitudes amongst youth in elite universities in the three major cities in Pakistan: Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi. The primary objective was to see whether better education and access to resources made any difference in the thinking of the youth. This was achieved through a set of three survey forms. The primary conclusion of the study is that youth respond to popular opinions expressed through the media or on the basis of inherited bias. This set of respondents followed a conservative thought pattern that may be construed by some as bordering on radicalism. The study shows that attitudes and behavior cannot be analyzed through using a reductive approach and putting ideas or types of ideas in boxes. Youth from affluent socioeconomic background and those, who have better career opportunities can fluctuate between being socio-culturally liberal but have a closed approach in matters pertaining to geo-politics, geo-strategy and identity politics. There is, in fact, evidence of the presence of pop-politics which itself is highly reductive and tends to follow a thought pattern which then feeds into ‘clash of civilizations.’ The problem, therefore, is absence of intelligent thinking and an alternative narrative discourse in the society which would allow the youth to think ‘out of the box’.
Acknowledgement

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Introduction

Pakistan faces a predicted rise in the number of youth as part of the total population. According to a 2000-2001 report, it then had the largest cohort of youth in its history with a number of 25 million between the ages of 15-24. It is accessed that the total numbers will rise to 230 million by 2030 and further increase to 280 million by 2050. This means an additional 85 million young people for which the state has to cater for.

It is also believed that the population bulge in terms of the youth will peak around 2045 after which the number of older people will increase. Such population explosion is sufficient cause for concern because additional numbers of people will overstretch the state’s existing capacity to cater for its people. The dearth of electricity, water, jobs and social development can only exacerbate problems that the country seems to be suffering from. Greater numbers also mean more competition for limited national resources.

Besides the obvious pressures, mentioned above, the impact this will have on the people, especially the youth, is a matter of great concern for observers inside and outside the country. The international community, in particular, is interested in assessing the degree of religious conservatism and extremism, and Islamism in the society particularly the youth as they represent the future of Pakistan. There is an underlying assumption that social conservatism or religious conservatism reflects restrictive thinking, which, in turn, does not bode well for inter-civilization relations. A clash of civilizations does not bode well for world peace and is likely to add to the grim scenario that the world and the South Asian region confronts with the war on terror in Afghanistan and the Middle East. The international community and South Asian region in particular cannot afford to see other equally ungovernable spaces
emerging. The possibility of Pakistan becoming ungovernable, of course, is an extreme scenario. But the major concern of most at the moment is to ensure that youth in this region does not drift towards extremism and, in turn, violence, especially terrorism. Does the state have sufficient capacity to cater for the dreams and desires of its youth? Or can it produce positive thinking youth, which is well trained and adapted to using national resources for its own, and the country’s social and economic mobility are important queries. These questions cannot be answered without first analyzing the attitude or mindset of the youth.

In the past decade, the academic community, media and various other stakeholders have tried to indirectly gauge the source of religious extremism. They have keenly looked at education, especially madrassah education as a source of religious and social conservatism in the country. The International Crisis Group (ICJ) report of 2002 considered madrassah education responsible for growing extremism in the country. Although the World Bank study by Tahir Andarabi challenged ICJ’s figures of the number of madrassah students as not being factual, the ICJ report indirectly cautioned about the growing menace of extremism amongst the nation’s youth. Written in the aftermath of 9/11, the report drew international attention and raised concern about the inability to counter Al-Qaeda and Taliban threat particularly if the youth continued to be indoctrinated in extremist ideology.

However, as more information trickled in regarding the social and educational background of extremists, especially the Al-Qaeda cadres, it became apparent that madrassahs were not the only issue worth analyzing. Subsequently, area experts and counter-terrorism experts started to examine the extent of extremism amongst Muslim youth. Therefore, analyzing youth attitudes in Pakistan has emerged as a new area of
interest. Although the emphasis continues to be on linking poverty and madrassah education with extremism, it is hoped that greater movement in this direction might one day produce a more objective analysis that will include non-madrassah educated youth as well.

**Pakistan’s Youth – The Existing Analysis**

In the past couple of years, five studies have come out on Pakistan analyzing youth attitudes, especially understanding the link between youth and extremism. These studies are:

- Radicalization Amongst Educated Pakistani Youth by Saba Noor (Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies - 2008)
- Pakistan: The Next Generation Report by the British Council (November 2009)
- Youth’s Review of Counter Extremism Policy in Pakistan by the Center for Civil Education (2009)
- Beyond Madrassas: Assessing the Links between Education and Militancy in Pakistan by Rebecca Winthrop and Corinne Graff (Brookings Institution, 2010)

The underlying conclusion of four out of five of the above-mentioned studies is that Pakistan’s youth is getting radicalized. None of the above five studies defines radicalism. However, they use different framework and data set to arrive at their conclusions. The basic premise of all these studies is that radicalization amongst the youth is connected with poverty, poor governance, political instability, poor quality of education and absence of the link between education and social mobility.
Moeed Yusuf’s study published by the Brooking’s Institution is based on a dataset of roughly 350 people in Swat and Malakand. It’s not clear whether it includes female opinion too. The conclusions extrapolated from this data in two areas of NWFP were later applied to the rest of the country. The study links radicalization amongst youth with poverty, poor education; including religious education, poor governance and Pakistan’s poor image abroad especially after 9/11. Yusuf also tries to argue that the education system is class oriented which results in youth schooled through the state system of education being unable to gain employment in the job market. The lack of gainful employment is a huge issue in a limited job market. Although Pakistan’s employment figures are 5%, experts believe that this category also includes a lot of self-employed people as well. The agriculture sector, where people have small farms, or the small to medium sized trader/merchants often utilize their children in family business. So, official figures are hardly a correct representation of what the economy offers to the youth.

Furthermore, Yusuf stipulates that given the inbuilt disparity in the education system, a lot of young people end up going to religious seminaries (madrassahs). Such schools attract poor youth and an under-paid and under-qualifies faculty (even on religious issues), thus generating a poor understanding of religion, religious principles and limited worldview. Such upbringing compounded with the country’s problematic socio-political culture is bound to reduce options for poor youth then to divert to extremist ideology. The study does not explore problems of madrassah education or contest the nature of ideology that the youth seem to subscribe to. For instance, the author argues that the insistence on secularizing Pakistan should be discontinued as it creates a wedge between the west and the Muslims in Pakistan. He believes that Pakistan “…abhors secularism and extremism at the same time.”
The main audience of this report seems to be the US government which was then implored to invest in Pakistan and relax its visa policy towards its South Asian ally. Such changes, it is claimed, will alter the perspective and stop the flow of Pakistani youth towards radicalism and then extremism. Although Yusuf does not delve into the issue of Pakistan military’s involvement in the war on terror or its support to some segments of the Taliban and jihadis (both past and present), he suggests that the US must help solve the Kashmir issue and desist from supporting India in Afghanistan as this creates anxiety amongst the youth. So, there are no real lessons for Pakistan since Yusuf views the military as not having the intention to radicalize the society or to see it go in this direction. Hence, the major flaw is that of the inefficient political leadership, especially of the non-religious parties that have not created an alternative for the society. Radicalism, as it appears between the lines from this report, is essentially a temporary problem which can go away with adopting a tactical approach such as greater aid for education and more job creation. Focused mainly on poverty; Yusuf does not explore the reason why youth from affluent families choose religious seminaries for education. This shortcoming in his study gets highlighted as he quotes Christine Fair’s study on madrassa education in which she claims that 11.7% of madrassa-going youth are from affluent families.

One of the gaps found in all the four studies mentioned above is that these do not focus at all on the affluent or resource-efficient strata of the society and their linkage with extremism and religious conservatism. Extremism and radicalism, hence, is treated as a temporary phenomenon caused due to problematic domestic politics, poverty and global politics.
Diagnostically, the British Council report titled: “Pakistan: The Next Generation” was written on similar lines. Released in November 2009 this report highlights lack of human and socioeconomic development infrastructure as the key issues behind youth radicalization. Analyzing a sample, which fell within the age bracket of 18-29 comprising of both literate, semi-literate and illiterate youth, it was larger than the Brooking’s report. Conducted all over the country and both in rural and urban areas, the survey highlights the dissatisfaction and frustration of the youth with lack of systems in the country. The report demonstrates the lack of employment opportunities, poor education and lack of good governance as some of the primary concerns of its sample. The report touches upon the issue of the quality of education as well. The gradually depleting quality of education is a factor that tends to make the youth less competitive in the national or international markets. Resultantly, there is greater frustration. The British Council report, which also drew the attention of international media, presented the lack of faith of the youth in the political leadership, a trend that one can find in all the four reports. Sixty percent of those surveyed preferred to trust the military than the politicians. This, the report argues, compromises the confidence of young people even amongst those that hail from elite backgrounds. The confidence problem could also be linked with a sense of isolation, which was reflected from the opinions, regarding Pakistan’s image as a state caught in the whirlpool of violence and extremism. So, while the youth considered their country as the best, they were also conscious of the external threat as one of the reasons for the poor conditions. The primary conclusion of this report, therefore, was to invest in education and energy resources which would naturally contribute to creating opportunities for the young generation.
The Center for Civic Education, Islamabad wrote a third report based on a survey of 1855 people from 13 districts all over the country. According to this study, 69.6% of the sample said that there was an increase in extremism amongst the youth. But about 85.4% were hopeful that the situation could be changed through playing a positive role, especially by the youth. The report very systematically laid out reasons for extremism such as poverty, illiteracy, lack of conceptual clarity, unemployment, intolerance, denial of fundamental rights and absence of a solid system of governance. The last problem becomes apparent through looking at the policies of various parties on fighting terrorism. The suggestions presented by the CCE were to improve socioeconomic and political development and initiate a debate through the media.

The fourth report produced by the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, Islamabad (PIPS) took a slightly different approach to arrive at the same conclusion that education made a lot of difference in changing public perception and turning the youth away from radicalism. The author Saba Noor arrived at her conclusion on the basis of a survey conducted at the Department of Defense and Strategic Studies, Quaid-e-Azam university, Islamabad. The sample of 70 comprised of students from ages 20-35 and represented youth from both rural and urban social backgrounds. This categorization was fundamental to the conclusions as it was found that students from rural background had greater tendency towards radicalization as compared to those from urban background. The sample appeared liberal especially when it came to social and political matters. For instance, they rated scholars and intellectuals as more trust worthy than even the military which got 7% support. The support for military rule, however, was greater than politicians who were supported by only 4% respondents. Noor’s study seemed to indirectly conclude that education is necessary
to fight radicalism and, perhaps, political apathy. The marked difference between the response on military versus political obtained from the three earlier surveys and the final study also claims that education can result in political emancipation as well. This also contradicts one of the conclusion of the earlier studies that youth tend to support the military despite that the sample represented the lower-middle and middle classes. The bulk of the respondents considered scholars and teachers more reliable. Such conclusions could be driven by environmental influence rather than representing a genuine response. However, the study did not comment on such variations and failed to question the reason behind this particular response.

Finally, the Winthrope-Graff study highlights the poor quality of education in Pakistan and its impact on conflict and violence in Pakistan. The study does not touch upon tertiary level of education but is restricted to primary and secondary education. Furthermore, the study is not based on any survey or data collection but uses existing studies to draw its conclusion that education or literacy does not have an impact on increase or decrease in violence. It challenges the popular conclusion that most militants are madrassa educated only. Therefore, the study recommends that education reforms must not be conflated with counter-insurgency measures and should be limited to conflict-sensitive educational programming. Such a conclusion draws upon an earlier research conducted by Christine Fair of Georgetown university that emphasized problems in Pakistan’s schooling system in general. Since there are structural flaws in Pakistan’s education system including corruption and a lack of will to implement reforms, the study also recommends private sector education as an option that international donors might consider investing in. Clearly, the biggest shortcoming of the study is that it is driven by the objectives of western policymakers and the donor community and hence does not explore the depth of problems. There is
no emphasis, for instance, on the importance of changing the national narrative and making it more tolerant. Since the peculiar narrative is same in both the public and private sectors, it might not make a lot of difference even if foreign governments partnered with the private sector instead.

In a nutshell the earlier studies link extremism in youth being caused by the following factors:

- Lack of education both in quantitative and qualitative terms
- Socioeconomic factors such as poverty and unemployment
- Problematic governance and rampant corruption

Since assessing the attitude of the youth is a fairly new subject, the existing studies tend to use a simplistic framework. The analysis is reductionist as it tries to establish a linear relationship between poverty and radicalism or lack of education or poor standards of education and extremism. Nor is there any analysis of what aspect of the education system breed extremism. Furthermore, researchers tend to draw a linear linkage between social conservatism and extremism. So, if respondents make socially conservative choices such as preferring hijab, believing in God or observing religious rituals then they are deemed as politically conservative with a likelihood of becoming extremists. The present study aims to analyze the question of whether extremism or radicalism can be defined so narrowly. More important, there is no definition of radicalism given in any of the studies. What are the perimeters used to label an attitude as extremist or its opposite.
Red Hot Chilli Peppers – From Pop Music to Pop Islam

Red Hot Chilli Peppers Islam debunks the argument of radicalism being a natural by-product of poverty and/or lack of education. Its basic conclusion is that radicalism, especially in terms of the popular perspective of the outside world or the ‘other’ world is part of the social pop culture reflected in the political views of youth from all socio-economic categories. Youth have a tendency to embrace radicalism or ideas which tantamount on radicalism not necessarily because they understand the underlying ideology or comprehend the religious principles, but due to the fact that such ideas have become popular in the society and are not challenged by an alternative discourse. The radical ideology does not necessarily indicate the willingness to change ‘their’ world internally and make it better. The youth are part of a social drive to create stereotypes of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ which empowers a limited number of people rather than changing social reality substantially.

More important, the ‘us versus them’ categorization, which is popularly viewed as evidence of radicalism, is driven by an identity issue or crisis of ego rather than an understanding of certain morality which would bring about a fundamental change within the society. In this respect, religious, social and political conservatism is part of a popular culture which is not necessarily a response to a particular event or a factor, but the culmination of a process that dates back to the 1980s (this will be discussed in the later segment of the paper).

The study offers the following argument:
Radicalism is not linked with poverty alone and can, in fact, be found amongst youth from affluent background as well. The basic conclusion drawn from the study was that a ‘clash of civilizations’ is unfortunately a popular notion which is not limited to the less educated, illiterate or poor youth.

Due to lack of effort to de-segregate political and ideological issues at a domestic, regional and international level, even the youth from upper-middle class backgrounds tend to view the world from a black and white lens in which reference to the theory of clash of civilizations becomes prominent.

Better educational facilities and access to ‘other’ worlds does not necessarily bridge the civilizational gap. The political ideology of the youth from affluent social background, hence, is not markedly different from the poor youth. While the possibility of these young and women studying in top class universities physically joining jihad and waging war may be less, their underlying thinking is not very different.

The views of the sample regarding domestic politics did not necessarily indicate any difference vis-à-vis attitudes expressed by respondents from lower-middle class. The study had specifically selected two particular samples from IBA, Karachi and Iqra University, Islamabad to assess whether improving educational environment had any bearing on the ideological and political mindset of students. These two samples pertain to lower-middle class students, who were brought to these universities to
improve the exposure of the students, their knowledge base and qualification. Their thinking, however, did not differ from the rest.

➢ The sample of the study was taken from some of the top universities (mostly private). Yet, the respondents reflected a tendency to see Pakistan and the Muslim world from the prism of a ‘victim’ which was being targeted by an ‘unfriendly’ and ‘hostile’ west. This demonstrated that poverty might not be the driving factor.

➢ The study also indicates a difference between social attitudes and political views.

➢ The political attitudes of the respondents reflected pop Islam also because religious morality was subsequently not found in their sensitivity towards poverty. Majority tended to equate poverty with radicalism without appreciating that their views on political issues were not very different.

➢ The views of the respondents was no necessarily driven by a deep understanding of religion or religious morality but a popular division of the world into that of Islam versus the rest.

➢ There was no difference in opinion on the basis of gender. One of the parameters used by the study was to see whether opinions were different in families where the heads were females. About 5% of the sample had females as family heads versus 92% with male heads. However, there was nothing observed which differentiated opinions on the bases of gender.
Introducing the Sample

➢ The study used a sample from the three major cities of Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi. The sample size of this survey is 608 comprising of 228 responses from Karachi, 168 from Lahore and 132 from Islamabad.

➢ It was conducted in the following educational institutions:

Karachi:

1. Baqai Medical College – 20 students
2. Zabist – 50 students
3. Indus Valley School of Arts and Architecture (IVS) – 38 students
4. Greenwich University – 62 students
5. Institute for Business Administration (IBA) – 88 students

Lahore:

1. Kinnarird College University – 50 students
2. Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) – 62 students
3. Lahore School of Economics (LSE) – 57 students
4. National College of Arts (NCA) – 49 students

Islamabad:

1. National Defense University (NDU) – 13 students
2. Bahria University – 35 students
3. Iqra University – 28 students
4. National University of Science and Technology (NUST) – 25 students
5. Shifa College of Medicine – 2031 students
These institutions are known for their high fees, better educational standards than most private sector and public sector universities, and are known to attract youth from affluent backgrounds. Although a direct question was asked about their family income, majority did not favorably respond to the question. For example, 42% did not disclose family income, 4% did not know the answer and 39% gave a range of Rs. 50,000 – 300,000 monthly. The students were found less forthcoming in responding to questions about their socioeconomic backgrounds. The term elite does not necessarily use excellence as a criterion. However, the fact that these cater for middle to upper-middle classes also means that these youth have relatively better opportunities once they qualify. A glance at chart 1 shows that a significant amount of respondent’s belong to families falling in the middle to high income groups.
Most of the respondents came from elite school system except for the 28 from IU, Islamabad and 30 from IBA, Karachi. This set of respondents were from lower-middle class backgrounds and brought into elite universities as part of the policy to provide a better environment and opportunities to the less affluent segment of the population. This sample was inserted to assess the impact of education on the mindset of youth from less affluent backgrounds.

The responses comprise of 47% females and 53% males.

Majority were domiciled in Punjab 39.8% followed by Sindh 36.8%; Khayber Pakhtunkhwa 4.4%; Islamabad 3.1%; Baluchistan 1.3%; Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) 0.5%; Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) 0.3% & Gilgit-Baltistan 0.2%. 13.5% did not respond. Domicile, however, does not necessarily reflect the actual ethnicity.
The age bracket ranged from 16-31 with maximum number falling in the range of 21-25.

14% listed themselves as Punjabis; 14% Asians; 4% Sindhis; 8% Pakistanis; 3% Pathan; 8% Mohajirs; 8% Muslims; 1% Memon; and 5% Others.
52% listed Urdu as their mother tongue, 21% Punjabi; 12% Pushto; 5% Sindhi; 2% Saraiki and 8% others.

The above did not necessarily mean that they spoke their mother tongue. 84% spoke Urdu at home; 40% English; 25% Punjabi; 6% Sindhi; 6% Pushto; 2% Saraiki; and 1% Baluchi. Urdu, which was traditionally a language of
socioeconomic mobility, has been replaced with English, especially amongst the upper and upper middle classes. In Pakistan, the choice of language spoken at home or amongst peers also fits into the urban versus rural debate. Those living in cities tend to opt to speak either Urdu or English. The lower number of youth speaking other national languages, nevertheless, could also be attributed to the lack of development of the areas where those languages were spoken due to which lesser number enrolled in these universities.

Figure 6: Ethnic origin in terms of language spoken at home

- Most of the institutions were private sector except for NCA, Lahore and IBA, Karachi which were selected because of their standing as elite institutions in terms of their performance in specific fields. For instance, NCA is a primary institution for fine arts and architecture. The IBA, on the other hand, is a center of excellence in management studies.
Why Study a Particular Group?

A popular notion in Pakistan is that radicalism is linked with poverty. A new study was needed to further explore the linkage and see if radicalism or political conservatism was limited to a particular social class only. Another generalization pertains to linking radicalism with conservative or traditional norms. For instance, wearing hijab or a beard is considered a symbol of conservatism bordering on extremism. I admit that one of the reasons, which compelled me to undertake this study, was observing the conservatively dressed youth in elite universities in Pakistan. Observing these youth, who had access to resources and better education, and were exposed to the outside world, opting for orthodox religious ideology seemed like an odd choice. Why were they opting for social, cultural and political conservatism? Other evidence such as youth getting attracted to the message of televangelists such as Zaid Hamid, who propagate the need for khilafaat and jihad against India, support the notion that the thinking amongst the young people is getting influenced by notions based in religious traditions and even puritanical ideology. Such attitudinal changes are important to de-cipher and understand because its these attitudes or norms which will determine their future thinking and relationship with their own kind and others. Also, it was essential to unpack the nature of this conservatism-radicalism and apply a nuanced approach in reading the results.

Furthermore, there is a tendency to link radicalism with poverty, lack of education or madrassah education as a sign of greater religiosity. Such notions indicate a simplification of social norms and trends rather than a clear understanding of what is happening in Pakistan, especially amongst the youth.
Such an understanding was vital to imagine the future direction for the young minds of the country.

**Perimeters and Design of the Survey**

A survey versus qualitative interviews approach was adopted to be able to reach out to relatively larger number of youth. These surveys were conducted personally and involved informal discussion and interaction with the respondents. The survey comprised of a rather long questionnaire which was divided into three parts:

1. Personal information (to be referred as questionnaire a)
2. Personal Preferences (to be referred as questionnaire b)
3. Political Opinion (to be referred as questionnaire c)

These three sets were used to determine the link between socioeconomic background of an individual and its impact on ideas. The primary research question was whether

Broadly, There were six themes explored by the survey:

1. Categorization of self
2. Social norms
3. Structured religious behavior
4. Perception of religion
5. Domestic politics
6. Perceptions of threat
The length of the survey (143 questions) did pose a problem as students were initially reluctant to spend more time on filling out such question form. However, problem was solved through persuasion and help from the faculty. Though the length was a major issue, this design was imperative to understand the thinking of the youth, especially those that had greater exposure to better education, facilities and the outside world. A long questionnaire to capture the extent of thinking, sense the inherent contradictions and pick out the nuances. A research on the subject has to be based on teasing out the tilt of mind of the respondents. There should be benchmark questions to tease out the real thinking of the participants. A well-defined strategy is necessary due to the sensitivity of participants or related people towards certain issues. This resulted in the longevity of the survey. For instance, some institutions such as Beaconhouse National University management refused to allow the survey as they were worried about their image and that of the country. They also thought that students may not be able to do justice to the questions. The institution was, thus, withdrawn from the sample due to the proclivity of the management to produce ‘safe’ results. Besides the issue of length, the students did not have problem with the survey forms. This study can best be described as an experiment in analyzing young minds in a particular environment and the lessons drawn will also help in producing a more efficient design in future.

**Detailed Survey Results**

The survey results present multi-layered trends in thinking of the youth. So, it would be unfair to consider this as definitive answers to the question of whether this sample was radical in thinking or not.
Latent Radicalism

Studying radicalism amongst a society is a difficult issue especially when there is a lack of a clear-cut definition of term. Is it being religious or observing religious rituals? Is or about being socially conservative? Or should it be defined as a mindset that encourages violence against others on the basis of different religious, political or ethnic identity? A major shortcoming of most existing studies is that there is no clear definition of radicalism. The CCE study, for instance, talked about 69.9% respondents claiming that there was radicalism amongst the youth without explaining how was such a conclusion drawn or what was the opinion based on. In most cases, people tend to define radicalism as a peculiar social attitude. A popular trend, especially after 9/11, is that those sympathetic towards militancy or militant organizations, or with propensity towards religion, are considered radical. From this definitional standpoint, we may not find the youth in most samples as fitting the category.

However, radicalism must be carefully defined. The opinion gathered from the youth in elite institutions indicates the presence of latent or passive radicalism. This kind of radicalism is defined as the tendency to be exclusive instead of inclusive vis-à-vis other communities on the basis of religious belief. Such an attitude forces people to develop bias against an individual, a community, a sub-group or a nation on how faith is interpreted for them. In its extreme form it can take people towards violence as well. In some respects, such an attitude is similar to west European fascism except that the later was based on a political ideology rather than religious belief. From the standpoint of this study it means that majority of those surveyed made a clear distinction between the Muslim world or Pakistan as representation of the Muslim world and other civilizations. Such a perspective is compounded with the problem of
an inability to review the behavior of one’s own group and hold the other responsible for all ills. Such a view may not necessarily cause people to naturally embark on violence. Nevertheless, this prepares the mind in a certain fashion which could at a later stage turn towards violence or active radicalism. The inability to challenge traditional notions and viewing the world through a bias lens, especially coated with religious overtones or padded with religious belief prepares the mind to accept the message from militant organizations. Although conservative attitudes do not necessarily propagate violence and in this case the youth are likely to measure costs versus benefits of abandoning their status and opportunities to actively participate in jihad, the possibility cannot be ruled out. The several cases of young Muslim men engaged in violence such as the hijackers involved in 9/11, the Jaishe Mohammad (JeM) – Al-Qaeeda operative, Omar Saeed Sheikh, or the 23 years old Nigerian Umer Farouk Abdulmutallib, who tried to blow up an airliner through the devise hidden in his underwear, are some of the cases in which youth from affluent backgrounds were involved in terrorist activities. These cases underscore the fact that radicalism may not necessarily be confined to the poor and less educated. In fact, radicalism is an outgrowth of a peculiar mindset which does not have to be linked with cultural conservatism. Hence, this mindset requires attention.

A Case of Liberal-Religiosity

The description of the various phases of Pakistan's journey towards religiosity was necessary to establish the fact that the survey sample denoted one end of the social spectrum of Pakistan's society which is labeled here as liberal-religiosity. This attitude is defined as one in which individuals exercise their choice in following traditional behavior pattern. So, while individual may
have liberal views on certain issues, they could confine themselves to conservative or even radical perspective in regard to other matters. The emphasis in this type is the relatively greater choice an individual can exercise in forming opinion. The upper class, upper-middle class and a select segment of the middle class belong to this category. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the latent-radicals whose social choices are pre-formed with lesser space to exercise choice. The lower class, lower-middle and bulk of the middle class are situated at this end of the divide.

**Attitude towards Religion and Religious Identity**

Representing the affluent segment of the society the respondents were deeply connected with their religious identity and took religion seriously which is not the norm of western-liberalism. Majority of the respondents believed in God and religion and 56% were opposed to the idea of Pakistan becoming a secular state.

*Figure 7: Are you believer or non-believer?*
In order to make sure how they interpreted secularism, a number of options were provided. The majority considered secularism as a condition in which state allows all religions to operate without associating with a single one.

Figure 8: What is a secular state?

Similarly, in another question about if they were religious 85% said yes, 14% no and 2% did not respond. 84% said they prayed. A further clarification regarding how many times did they pray showed the following results.
93% said that they kept fast, 80% said that they had read Islamic history, 95.39% stated that they had read the Quran. A further clarification showed that 50.33% had read the Quran with translation as opposed to 47.37% that had not done so. Another 49.67% versus 48.85% said they read Islamic books. However, 81% said they had not read literature of militant organizations but 16% said that they did. While following religious rituals is not an evidence of religiosity, it indicates a bias for religion and religious practices which are inbuilt in the socio-cultural system. Therefore, a large number considered Islam as their primary identity.
A large percentage also considered religion as very important for them personally.

There was an inclination to follow religious norms. For instance, 51% agreed with the policy of prohibition of liquor and 74% did not agree with the suggestion that sale of alcohol should be allowed for the government to generate additional revenue. Such an opinion comes as a surprise since majority of the sample come from an
affluent part of the society which is not known for strictly following religious moral norms. In Pakistan’s society liberalism is perceived mostly in cultural terms as freedom to pursue a certain life style which is popularly understood as western lifestyle. It is no secret that despite prohibition on alcohol it is freely available to the members of the elite who have the capacity to acquire tools for intoxication and power to escape prohibition. This lifestyle is in stark contrast to the views expressed in the course of the present survey. Another example relates to the response to a question regarding gender segregation in the society. About 33% believed that segregation saved society from evil influences while 57% did not agree to this proposition.

Table 1: Does segregation save the society from evil influence?

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The general tendency is to subscribe to the conservative and often puritanical religious tenets, which have permeated the cultural identity as well. This was obvious in the questions regarding the state ruling against Ahmedis. This is a community of people who were declared as non-Muslims by the state during the 1970s and have suffered persecution since then. About a hundred Ahmedi worshipers were killed in a mosque in Lahore on May 28, 2010 as they offered their prayers. Another twelve people were killed and injured on May 31st, 2010 when the terrorists attacked Ahmedis under treatment after the first attack in a local hospital in the city. The bias was reflected in the thinking of the youth as well the majority of whom agreed with the government’s historic decision to declare Ahmedis as non-Muslims.
Interestingly, quite a visible part of this sample also considered Shiite as non-Muslims.

This could possible be due to their sectarian identity as quite a large proportion was a mix of Sunni, Deobandi and Ahl-Hadith.
Sectarian tension has been on the rise in Pakistan for the past two decades or more and expresses itself in a spate of violence. Diehard religious clerics, especially those that belong to militant Islamic groups like Siphae Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) do not consider Shiite as Muslims. Possibly due to the socioeconomic background of the respondents many did not agree with the proposition. However, the fact that 18% agreed with it is indicative of how thinking could be influenced by the political environment. Saleem H. Ali’s study on the madrassa education in Pakistan points towards the fact that orthodox religious attitudes harboring on extremism inculcated in madrassah students are reflected in reality through their sectarian bias.\textsuperscript{xiii}

Considering this sample, we may have to extend Ali’s conclusions to other socioeconomic classes as well. It would be worthwhile to gather a larger sample to access the extent to which sectarian bias can be found in other socioeconomic groups as well.

Responses to questions regarding religious-political identity also exhibited similar conservatism. Majority of respondents thought seriously about the concept of
Muslim Ummah. Majority considered Muslim Ummah as a concrete reality which could also mean that they felt connected with the conditions of Muslim in other parts of the world (see more discussion on this in the later section).

**Figure 15: Is Muslim Ummah a Concrete Reality or an Abstract Idea?**

The response to another question regarding if they considered their national identity as dependent or independent of Islamic identity further confirmed a bias towards religion.
The affiliation with religion and religious norms had a political expression as well since the majority of respondents viewed Islam as the right formula for governance.

They also believed that Islam could be an alternative form for social justice.
The above responses indicate an emotional connection with religious identity which in itself is neither good or bad. It is just a reflection of how religion is part of the national narrative in Pakistan and thus engrained in the society. The respondents, nevertheless, could tell the difference between what suited their social standards. For instance, despite associating with religious identity, the bulk was not inclined to become religious scholars which is generally a vocation that the elite do not care to join.
The respondents were by no means irrational or close-minded. 81 percent did not believe that the Taliban could bring social justice. Similarly, the majority agreed with the notion of Al-Qaeeda being a terrorist organization. 73% versus 19% respondents considered the organization as a terrorist entity.
In another question to whether Pakistan should declare Al-Qaeda as terrorist organization 67% said yes against 23% who responded in a negative.

Figure 21: Should the government of Pakistan declare Al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization?

The respondents did not favor other militant organizations either. Majority believed that all jihadi outfits must be banned (see following chart).

Figure 22: Should the government ban all jihadi outfits?

Majority of respondents also supported military operation in Swat.
Figure 23: was the state right in conducting a military operation in Swat?

Should this then be taken as a sign of liberal thinking? Or do these answers merely reflect the influence of media, especially electronic media? In the past ten years Pakistan has witnessed an exponential rise in television channels which primarily broadcast political commentaries and talk shows. The programs have contributed tremendously in opinion formation in the country, particularly in building a sense of nationalism amongst the urban population. Youth from the upward mobile segment of the society have turned increasingly nationalist. There are two angles to the development of a nationalist attitude. These youth generally disapprove of terrorism directed against Pakistan and Muslims and are keen to subscribe to a top-down national perspective. Under the circumstances, terrorism hurts them as far as it negatively influences the image of the country. It is seen as a major impediment to economic development and reaching the same scale of geo-political significance as India or other upwardly mobile countries. Unfortunately, this attitude towards terrorism does not necessarily consider the issue in greater details and find the connection between this brand of nationalism and latent-radicalism as a factor which
eventually generates terrorism. In any case, the devastation caused by terrorist attacks and its projection in the media resulted in anxiety amongst the general public. The youth are affected as well and, so, reject groups identified with violence. The unacceptability of the Taliban, however, cannot be deemed as a sign of deeper understanding of what causes violence and its rejection by the youth. A popular perception in the country created by segments of the media is that the Taliban are actually not Muslims. Thus, even if people get anti-violence, their anger is not directed towards the Taliban or any particular group of religious bigots. The above responses, hence, do not tell the real story regarding attitudes towards religion or religion effecting political attitudes.

These responses may not by themselves indicate a propensity to radicalism since what bulk of the respondents professed may not be something they would practice themselves. The opinion about madrassah and madrassah education, or the politics of madrassah education in Pakistan is a case in point. 63% respondents did not agree with the idea of abolishing madrassah education.

Figure 24: Should madrassa education be abolished?
The majority also believed that madrassah reforms were being imposed by the US and hence were a ruse to manipulate traditional institutions.

Figure 25: Are madrassa reforms an American conspiracy to manipulate traditional institutions?

Similarly, 31%, which is a visibly large number, didn’t subscribe to the idea that madrassahs were fanning sectarian hatred and violence.

Figure 26: Madrassas & Sectarian Violence
Such responses were strange coming from youth who themselves opted for secular and modern education which raises the possibility that the answers were influenced by opinion formulated through popular media. Clearly, the sample did not draw a connection between their own views and radicalism or terrorism. In fact, majority were of the view that people engaged in terrorism due to poverty or religious ideology.

**Figure 27: Why People Engage in Jihad?**

A glance at another response pertaining to which socioeconomic class was involved in jihadism, most believed it were the poor. The two responses read together probably indicate that the respondent did not see their own group inclined to violence in the name of religion.
The responses regarding questions pertaining to jihad did not indicate a close-mindedness or radicalism. For instance, majority of the sample were of the view that it was a struggle against evil.

A large segment also believed that jihad was a struggle against social evils inside the country.
65% didn’t believe that jihad was a constant militant struggle, a notion popularly held by the jihadists.

62% said that private citizens or non-state actors should not be allowed to wage jihad (in reference to military conflict)
For further clarification they were asked if the state was the sole authority for
launching a military campaign or jihad against a perceived enemy and the majority
agreed with the proposition.

The above display of open-mindedness also extended to the question of whether
sharia should be re-interpreted. 51% believed that it should.
However, the majority wanted the task of re-interpretation to be left to trained theologians or legal experts with knowledge of religion. This response falls in line with the general pattern of understanding of Islamic jurisprudence in the society, especially amongst the elite who have traditionally considered religion as the forte of the religious class.
Political Attitudes

It would not be fair to review the earlier views in isolation. Latent radicalism or an attitude, which harbors exclusivity, reflects in other areas as well, especially political perception. The responses of the sample regarding domestic politics did not reflect a predominant attitude of agreeing with the popular or the state perspective. The majority was not keen to challenge existing socio-political norms of the state and society. One clear example relates to the question regarding the issue of secularism and Pakistan. The majority were not inclined to question the state’s linkage with religion.

Figure 36: Should Pakistan become a Secular State?

The majority of the sample was also averse to any ‘outs of the box’ thinking on political issues especially that pertained to altering the existing structure of the state in any shape or form such as making new provinces. The bulk opposed the idea of new provinces.
69% were of the view that newer provinces would weaken Pakistani nationalism.

79% were opposed to the idea of Baluch making a separate state. A further reflection of conservative-nationalism was obvious from responses regarding the military. Majority of the respondents considered the military as a national force, an argument that is counterpoised to what minority ethnic groups believe is the case.
The respondents also agreed with the notion of Pakistan’s military being a national force, a view that is contested by nationalist leadership of smaller provinces.

**Figure 39: Is Pakistan military a national force?**

Instead of outrightly rejecting military’s role in politics, majority believed that the military’s role in politics was acceptable during peculiar circumstances. This in itself is an indicator of conservative political views.

**Figure 40: Should the military’s role in politics be accepted?**
66 percent didn’t like the idea of placing the notorious military intelligence organization, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) under civilian control. This question was significant since controlling the ISI seems to be one of the critical matters that may indicate the relative strength of civilian institutions vis-à-vis the armed forces.

Figure 41: Should the ISI be placed under civilian control?

In any case, quite a high proportion of respondents were of the view that Pakistan’s survival depended upon a strong military. A lot of people opted for the judiciary as well possibly as a result of the lawyer’s movement in which students, especially from elite institutions, played a role.
Interestingly, fewer opted for strengthening of Parliament or devolution of democracy. The general opinion pattern showed similar trends on politics as in the earlier cited studies. Not surprisingly, majority considers politicians as corrupt.

Although a larger number did not agree with the proposition that a military government was more capable of solving the country’s problems, quite a visible
number agreed with the suggestion. This not only represents the sorry state of Pakistan’s politics but also the gradual erosion of faith, especially amongst the more capable upper class and upper-middle class in the political process.

Figure 44: A Military government is more competent of solving Pakistan’s problems?

Hence, it was not surprising to find that 40% of respondents didn’t believe that imposing military rule was an act of treason, which in the 1973 Constitution, is punishable by death.
A very small percentage believed that politicians were better than generals.

Consequently, the respondents were not connected with the political process. A large number were not part of any political party.
Nor were their families formally part of the political parties process.

The majority did not want to become members of a political party.
Figure 49: Given a choice would you become member of a political party?

The depoliticization of the population is a behavior that dates back to Zia-ul-Haq days when restrictions were imposed on students unions and trade unions. These two bodies are traditionally the nurseries for politicians. In any case, majority of the respondents belonged to the politically well-connected segment of the society which is generally averse to the political party process. This behavior is certainly a reflection of the poor reputation of politicians. However, these statistics also reflect the unwillingness of the present and future generation of the elite in investing in the political process. The educated youth definitely desire change which is partly reflected in the choice of leader who, they believe, should govern Pakistan. Since Imran Khan of PTI seems to challenge the current questionable political leadership, the bulk of respondents opted for him.

Table 2: Who would you want to be Pakistan’s leader?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Base</th>
<th>608</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aitzaz Ahsan</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altaf Hussain</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ardeshir Cowasjee</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In a response to another question regarding whom would they prefer as Pakistan’s leader, the majority supported Imran Khan and, to a lesser extent, Pervez Musharraf.
Table 3: Name your favorite political leader?

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Col %</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Adolf Hitler</td>
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<td>Afrasiab Khattak</td>
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<td>Ahmedinejad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aitzaz Ahsan</td>
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<td>Alex de Tocqueville</td>
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<td>Altaf Hussain</td>
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<td>Asif Ali Zardari</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ayub Khan</td>
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<td>Baitullah Mehsud</td>
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<td>Benazir Bhutto</td>
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<td>Che Guera</td>
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<td>Choudry Nisar</td>
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<tr>
<td>fidel castro</td>
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<td>0.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ghaffar Khan</td>
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<td>Hazrat Abu Bakar and Hazrat Umar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hazrat MUHAMMAD (SAW)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hitler</td>
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<td>Imran Khan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lenin</td>
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<td>Liaquat Ali Khan</td>
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<td>Mahatir Muhammad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makhdooom Javed Hashmi</td>
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<td>Mammon Zaakir Naik (Delhi walay)</td>
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<td>Mao</td>
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<td>Mehmood Khan Achakzai</td>
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<td>Naseer Ullah Babar</td>
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<td>Nawaz Sharif</td>
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<td>Nelson Mandela</td>
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<td>Obama</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pervaiz Musharaf</td>
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<td>PPP Leader</td>
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<td>Quaid-e-Azam</td>
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<td>Shahbaz sharif</td>
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<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaukat Aziz</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Given Imran Khan’s views, this choice looks conservative. However, it could be driven by both a general conservatism and an understanding that politics and corruption are linked. Indeed, a large number of respondents considered corruption as one of the worst problems faced by the country.

Figure 50: What’s the biggest problem faced by Pakistan?

Corruption of leaders was one of the major issues pointed out as the cause for the perceived backwardness of most Muslim states.
The earlier responses may reflect a sense of frustration amongst this set of youth with the current state of the country’s politics. However, their inability to imagine politics to bring about changes in the state reflected the general apoliticization of the youth especially amongst the middle and the upper-middle classes. This segment of the society and youth have the knowledge, the exposure and the social comfort to become politically active and bring some change.

**Regional and Global Issues**

The perception of the outside world was no different from that towards the inner world. There was little inclination to challenge the views generally held by powerful stakeholders. The questions posed can be broadly categorized: (a) approach towards India, (b) approach towards the rest of the world, and (c) attitude towards the Muslim world. The responses will be presented accordingly.
India – Viewing the Enemy

Being Pakistan’s traditional enemy, India or anti-Indianism is well entrenched in the country’s national narrative. This was most obvious from the question regarding the threat to Pakistan in which India figured significantly. 69% were of the view that India is the greatest threat to Pakistan’s security.

**Figure 52: What's a bigger threat to Pakistan's security?**

Hence, it was not a surprise that the majority considered the two-nation theory, which had caused the separation of Pakistan from India, as being valid. This is despite the fact that the separation of East Pakistan in 1971 partly challenged the assumption which created Pakistan. Perhaps, the reason for such political conservatism is owed to the nature of education of history, particularly relating to the state itself. The curriculum of history taught at schools or the media images over-emphasize the two-nation theory. For instance, the history of the people of Pakistan is actually about the advent of Muslims in the region in 718 BC. Similarly, the 1971 breakup of Pakistan is explained primarily as a Hindu conspiracy to breakup the country.
Views regarding India, however, demonstrated a certain level of ambivalence which could be due to a general understanding that improved relations were necessary for the region and country’s peace and stability. Nevertheless, the underlying tone was that of suspicion of the larger neighbor. For instance, 53% didn’t believe that Pakistan should adopt an aggressive stance towards India.
57% were also of the view that Pakistan and India could live relatively peacefully.

Figure 55: Can India and Pakistan live relatively peacefully?

But were not willing to compromise on issues such as handing over of Lashkare Taiba's leader Hafiz Saeed to India. This particular response could possibly be connected with Pakistan’s eagerness to be treated on par with India and have an equal status rather than being coerced by the larger neighbor. In the context of India-Pakistan relations Hafiz Saeed is not just an individual but denotes the issue of terrorism between the two neighbors.
The youth, who formed part of the sample, belong to the segment of society which has greater access to the world including India. The upper and upper-middle classes have been the main beneficiaries of the peace initiative started by the two states after 2004. However, the suspicion of India runs so deep that the enemy perception has not improved at all. The most significant part of national memory relates to the breakup of Pakistan in 1971 with the final blow being dealt by New Delhi. Therefore, 38% held India responsible for Pakistan's breakup which means for launching the war which gave a fillip to the civil; war in the Eastern wing.
The earlier response was despite the fact that being the products of a better schooling system the respondents had a better picture of the domestic political issues which also caused the crisis in 1971. As is obvious from the following chart, 45% believed that it was poor governance which resulted in the particular domestic crisis.
The mistrust was further highlighted in the opinion that India wanted to ultimately eliminate Pakistan.

**Figure 59:**

![Pie chart showing trust in India](image)

Given the perceived Indian designs on Pakistan and popularity of the concept of India's hegemony, 71% of the sample were not willing to trust India in the long-term.

**Figure 60: Can Pakistan trust India in the long run?**

![Bar graph showing responses](image)
The depth of insecurity from India could be perceived from the responses regarding the causes for the poor state of bilateral relationship. Over the years, the India-Pakistan rivalry has acquired ideological overtones as well.

**Figure 61: How do you describe India-Pakistan rivalry?**

A natural sense of competition could also be noticed when asked to compare the status of Pakistani youth vis-à-vis Indian youth. 48% were of the view that the Indian youth were no better than Pakistan’s.
The above opinion was clearly a result of a sense of competition because otherwise the respondents believed that India was economically and socially better off as compared to Pakistan. Since economic conditions have a bearing on social development, it could be extrapolated that the earlier response was driven by the same sense of competition that state functionaries have. This in itself is not necessarily an evidence of radicalism. However, it is part of the conservative national narrative which directly feeds into latent-radicalism.
Attitude towards the West

Besides India, another area where the views of this set of youth were unaffected by their better education and exposure, related to the west. Since the bulk of the age group grew up during the late 1980s, the 1990s and onwards, their world view seems to have shaped by the domestic debates on various international crisis. This generation has had an exceptional access to information and thus more exposed to the media debates which have largely been suspect of the west. A popular notion in Pakistan, generated primarily by the media, is that the crisis facing Pakistan is owed to some conspiracy by American or Israeli intelligence. Moreover, the 1990s witnessed major world events/crisis such as the Palestinian intifada, American attack on Iraq, and the crisis in Bosnia and Chechnya in which Muslims appear to be in dire straits. To top it all, the tension linked with the Danish cartoon controversy, which took place in the past 5-6 years, has formulated a negative opinion of the west which came out clearly in the respondents defining the biggest threat to the Muslim ummah.
It were only 7% respondents who were willing to look inwards and hold themselves and their own politics and socioeconomic problems as a major cause.

Figure 64: What's the biggest threat to the Muslim ummah?

Since the beginning of the war on terror (WoT), public perception in Pakistan regarding the US has deteriorated exponentially. This anti-west or anti-US sentiment feeds directly into the latent-radicalism amongst the public, particularly the youth. Due to the popular notion of the US as an imperialist force, which must be resisted, there is a tendency of the media to project the Taliban and the jihadists as an anti-imperialist force. A segment of, what was known as the liberal-left, also tends to look at the jihadists as a force whose religious ideology may not meet the approval of the left, but their agenda of fighting the US gets a sympathetic hearing. Clearly, American intervention in Afghanistan and the drone strikes in Pakistan. Interestingly, the opinion formation regarding the US or the west is not based on critical analysis of various issues. The public in general is willing to endorse the notion that the WoT is basically an American ruse to take control of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons or to destroy the only Muslim nuclear weapon state in the world. Given the nature of debate on US-
Pakistan relations, bulk of the respondents were convinced that continued American presence was harmful for Pakistan’s security.

Figure 65:

And 62% considered America is a bigger threat to the country’s security.

Figure 66: What’s the biggest threat to Pakistan’s security?

Not surprisingly, the beginning of the new century is marked with heightened suspicion of the US amongst average Pakistanis. The war in Afghanistan or WoT in general is not considered as Pakistan’s war. This situation is despite the spate of
terrorist attacks inside the country. A possible explanation for such seeming
disconnect is because the popular perception regarding Taliban is that these are
elements parachuted into Afghanistan to harm the country. The respondents of this
survey echoed this opinion as well. Despite better education and exposure to the
world 46% were willing to believe that the Taliban were sponsored the US.

**Figure 67: Who are the Taliban?**

In response to a more pointed question regarding the creation of Taliban, 77% were of
the opinion that these were created by the US.

**Table 4: Who is responsible for the creation of Taliban?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent base</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Count</td>
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<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pakistan army</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ISI</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>India</strong></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan / Pakistani / Saudia Arabia</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia / Israel</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taliban themselves / Mujahideen / Un-united Muslims</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Response</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, 71% were of the view that American withdrawal from Afghanistan would have a positive impact on the region.

**Figure 68: Would the US withdrawal from the region have a positive impact on Pakistan?**

When asked again if American withdrawal will result in greater violence, the majority answered in a negative.
Pakistan and the Islamic World

One of the reasons for selecting this particular sample for study was due to the relative concentration of the seemingly liberal segment of the population amongst this particular group. As mentioned earlier, while a lot of youth in these elite institutions have now adapted conservative attire, the bulk continues to freely follow a western-liberal life style. However, their attire and habits cannot be deemed as representing socio-political liberalism or absence of ideological conservatism. The majority of respondents appeared sympathetic to the idea of a Muslim Ummah (Muslim nationalism).
Figure 70: Do you think it is right to consider Pakistan's nuclear weapon as an Islamic bomb?

Figure 71: Do you think Muslim societies are backward?
Figure 72: What is the reason for the backwardness of Muslim Societies?

- No Response: 9%
- Internal social inequality: 15%
- Colonization (both historical and current): 6%
- Lack of tolerance: 24%
- Lack of rational thinking: 34%
- Lack of science and technology: 28%
- Deviation from Quran & Sunnah: 36%

Figure 73: Why is democracy not a strength in most Muslim countries?

- No Response: 5%
- Others: 5%
- Neglect of religious values and traditions: 21%
- Conspiracy of the colonial masters: 8%
- Manipulation of west: 19%
- Corrupt and authoritarian leadership in Muslim States: 56%
Explaining Latent Radicalism – The Four Waves

In the case of the sample under analysis, the multiple layers of conservatism – social, religious, political and geo-political – is easily observable. The youth from financially secure backgrounds or those studying in these institutions, which will make them more capable in securing their future, are as prone to the overall rise in conservatism, and in some cases latent radicalism, as the rest of the society. Over the years, Pakistan’s society has gone through four distinct waves of conservatism:

- 1947-77
- 1977-90
- 1990-01
- 2001-to date
First Wave: 1947-77

Religion has a deep connection with Pakistan’s state and society due to religious identity being the basis of the country’s creation in 1947. During these twenty-one years, the state and society were systematically injected with greater doses of religious narrative especially in politics. The anti-Ahmadi riots during the 1950s, the constant reference to Islam by both the civilian and military leadership culminating with religiously motivated laws and rules by the Bhutto government set the scene for further Islamization brought later by General Zia-ul-Haq’s government. The Munir Report on the anti-ahmadi riots held in Punjab in 1953 indicated how political parties including the Muslim League indirectly supported Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam which was responsible for in fanning riots. A senior police officer, Qurban Ali had stated before the Justice Munir Commission that the Ahrar were keeping the anti-ahmadi movement and sentiment alive so they could capitalize on it later and build greater influence in the society. These events, which resulted in the first martial law in the country, was beginning of the trend towards religiosity that was demonstrated at the lower rungs of the society but with support provided by the ruling elite.

No political force (civil and military) tried to curb the religious right or provide an alternative narrative. Partly due to the fact that the ruling elite, especially the educated ‘salariat’ class, which was not particularly religious, was uncomfortable with the religious discourse and so there was a tendency to appease religious clerics or the religious political groups and parties. The ‘Objective Resolution 1949’ was one of the first cases of such accommodation. The above document laid out the grand plan of Pakistan’s state as a religious entity that would confine itself to the principles of Islam. Moreover, this document became the guiding principle for all three constitutions of the state. Initially, the first military government of General Ayub
Khan made some effort to keep religion away from politics by declaring the country in the 1962 constitution as a republic rather than an Islamic republic. However, in face of public pressure the general had to withdraw from his stance. The liberal-educated elite of the country could not stop the onslaught of religious right especially when the former had voluntarily surrendered the right of ownership of religious discourse. The lack of educated input into religion left it to be defined by the right-wing religious elite or the army of illiterate mullahs. Those, who could challenge the religious right such as Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, also surrendered to the religious right and its discourse in the name of political expediency. He was responsible for declaring the Ahmedis non-Muslim, introducing prohibition and changing the weekly holiday from Sunday to Friday.

**Second Wave: 1977-90**

From the perspective of the ascendancy of religious right narrative, General Zia-ul-Haq’s military government (1977-88) can be considered as a watershed in Pakistan’s social and political history. Zia’s Pakistan used American encouragement, support and assistance to build the religious right especially create jihadis that could fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The decade of the 80s is a major watershed in consolidating the religious right and enhance their influence on social norms in the country. Zia played a major role in transforming both the state and society. He brought in religion into both the state and society. In case of the former, the general brought changes in the economic and legal system of the country through the introduction of his controversial ‘Nizam-e-Islam (system of Islam). Laws such as the Hudood ordinance primed the society towards a divine logic of gender disparity. A glaring example of such disparity pertains to a legal case in 1983 of *Safia Bibi*, a 13-year-old blind girl, who was allegedly raped by her employer and his son. She,
however, was convicted for adultery under the Zina Ordinance whilst, the rapists were acquitted because she could not provide four male witnesses to bear out her claim as postulated by the new law. The society, on the other hand, was influenced through enforcing religion through the introduction of an institution of nazim-e-salat (prayer manager) meant to enforce religion on people and push faith from the domain of private to public. Similarly, over 800 changes were brought about in the academic text books in a period from 1977-79. Although protested by many liberal scholars, the text books were never changed.

Some of the changes, especially the top-down enforcement of religion was resisted by the liberal-educated elite. However, the 1980s is known for achieving two changes:

- shrinking of the size of people with liberal values or who were willing to treat religion as a matter of personal faith
- increasing distance between the liberal ruling elite and the ordinary people (in any case, the liberal ruling elite always kept a distance from religion thus loosing any control of the religious discourse) While the former maintained their distance from religious discourse). The latter were drawn towards religion through government propaganda and greater activity of the religious right
- initiation of the middle and upper-middle class towards religion. Since religion was supported by the state, a lot of people in the civil and military bureaucracy began to adapt to religious views. Military officers in particular joined social movements such as Tableeghi Jamaat.
Religiosity was perpetuated further through a parallel process of turning society towards becoming apolitical and adoption of neo-liberalism as a guiding principle for the economy. Hence, the only dominant discourse pertained to religion. Although people resisted Zia’s enforcement of religion, his efforts managed to bring a subtle change in the environment which became much more obvious in the third phase.

**Third Wave: 1990-01**

Although there are hardly any studies available to link the rise in religious conservatism with the Zia period, the impact cannot be undermined. The propagation of religion through print and electronic media, the publicity of the Afghan war, conscious co-option of the public through proliferation of Deobandi and Wahabi madrassas (representing puritanical Islam) and Islamizing the overall social environment is bound to have left an impression on people. Moreover, the process of Islamization did not end with Zia’s death in a mysterious air crash in 1988. Jihad was still popular at state level and was aided and abetted by the army and its intelligence agencies.

It was during this decade that conservative religious forces began to engulf the society and market puritanical Islam. The popularity of preachers like Farhat Hashmi and others who converted the upper class, upper-middle and middle class women and households to puritanical interpretation of Islam, grew rapidly in most urban centers.
The process of greater move towards religiosity in a cosmopolitan city like Karachi or a metropolis such as Lahore began during this period. This was a decade when religiosity expanded through a top-down process rather than just bottom-up. The increase in the number of hijab-wearing or burqa-clad women (both young and old) started during the 1990s and continues to date. The excellent analysis by Pakistani social scientist, Sadaf Ahmed of Al-Huda talks about how the organization was involved in Islamic revivalism amongst the urban Pakistani women, especially from the upper crust of the society. Al-Huda is part of those institutions that penetrated households and for various reasons revived the faith of individuals in puritanical interpretation of religion and made religiosity fashionable. Women, who earlier followed a western life style changed the way they lived. There were even cases where mothers were driven to religiosity by their daughters.xvii

The Tableeghi Jamaat was another organization-cum-movement that gained greater popularity during this period. The Tableeghi Jamaat is a social force, which encourages Muslims to not only join them, but also propagate Deobandi Islam in the world.xviii TJ teams are known for traveling all over the world in pursuance of their organizational objectives. They also hold a congregation in Lahore which is known all over the world. One can measure the influence of TJ by looking at the number of respondents who had attended its annual congregation. While 67% said that they had heard of TJ, 21% also claimed that they had been to its annual congregations. Apparently, TJ creates the perfect ideological climate which could later benefit militant organizations. Interestingly, analysts tend not to clearly see the connection between social movements like Al-Huda and Tableegi Jamaat and militancy in the country. The significance of such movements cannot be undermined since they
increase societal threshold for accepting norms and values that may otherwise be rejected or challenged by those subscribing to liberal norms.

It was during this period that the military establishment used the media to propagate incompetence of the political parties and actors. There was a constant reference to corruption of politicians on the basis of which four governments were sacked. The propaganda and the general inefficiency of the political system made the youth suspicious of politics to a degree that they consider it as a bad or evil activity. Such an attitude turned the youth apolitical which also meant that they were unwilling to challenge the stereotypes, be it religion, society, education or politics.

Fourth Wave: 2001-to date

The tragic events of 9/11 mark another major milestone in the society’s journey towards greater religiosity and latent radicalism. A number of events such as the American bombardment of Afghanistan, Iraq’s invasion and ethnic profiling by western countries played a role in pushing the people especially youth towards subscribing to the ‘clash of civilizations’ framework. Unlike the ‘children of lesser gods’, member of the ruling elite or people from the upcoming middle class felt effected by their negative profiling outside their own country. Profiling in the West after 9/11 produced an identity crisis, especially amongst the youth. There was a growing consciousness of being ostracized and not treated as equal by the west. This sense of inequality also made the bulk of population in most Muslim states conscious of the fate of people suffering in various conflict zones, particularly in the Middle East, Russia and India. Moreover, a sense of insecurity and identity crisis was bolstered by a sense that Pakistan was being targeted. This obviously resulted in an upsurge of nationalism mired in the country’s religious identity.
The above developments took place in a politically repressive environment. During these years, the state governed mostly by a military dictatorial regime clamped down upon relatively liberal political forces and built linkages with parties of the religious right. The military and its intelligence agencies also continued to tactically engage with militant outfits. The overall environment sustained influence of the right wing with deep impact on overall environment of the society. There was growth of religiosity bordering on radicalism on the one hand, and, on the other, was a growing chasm between the self-acclaimed liberal ruling elite and the rest of the population.

The above-mentioned developments have a deep impact on the society and in making it socially more conservative. A trend towards religiosity was also found amongst those surveyed for this study. The sample, however, was difficult to analyse since there were variations in their attitude towards matters that effected personal life versus issues relating to politics and geo-politics.

Conclusion

Societal attitudes are a response to multiple events and forces that are taking place in a society, its region and the world at large. The developments, which took place in Pakistan and the geo-political developments have impacted socio-political attitude of its people, especially the youth. In Pakistan, there is a tendency to bifurcate the society between the liberal and the conservative or the religious. People accepting religious norms are considered as conservative or religious. Those that don’t are considered as liberal and secular. Furthermore, a popular assumption is that religious conservatism or radicalism is directly linked with poverty and underdevelopment. The results of this survey-based study question the above assumptions. It is based on
examining the attitudes of youth in elite universities which are defined as a category with greater access to resources and opportunities. The existing literature on the subject has not specifically looked at this group.

Based on the survey results it can be concluded that there is a rise of latent-radicalism amongst these youth. One of the popular perceptions about Pakistan is that radicalism, which forms the basis of terrorism, is a trend most likely to be found amongst madrassah going youth or those educated in public sector schools. Although the leadership of militant organizations has links with madrassahs, radicalism is not a phenomenon confined to the religious seminaries only. In fact, militant organizations are keen to recruit relatively educated youth. These could also be converted far more easily to the jihadi agenda on the basis of ideology rather than being lured to money or other resources. However, the latent-radicalism, which is highlighted in this study does not necessarily drive an individual towards terrorism. This study does not argue that the majority of these youth will become militants in their later lives. Nevertheless, they suffer from a closed mind or are prone to exclusivity rather than inclusivity. The ‘us’ versus ‘them’ divide compounded with greater insensitivity towards social and political issues has created an elite generation which may be incapable of mending fences with other groups. Being affluent these youth may have greater stakes in not turning towards active militancy. But then, cases such as Faisal Shehzad or Afia Siddiqui can always happen. These two cases, in fact, indicate the possibility of latent radicalism transforming into radicalism and militancy.

This study did not find any remarkable difference between the thinking of the youth going to elite institutions. Access to better education did not necessarily produce better quality thinking. Besides the fact that the youth are generally apolitical
and feel insecure in geo-political terms, their attitudes also reflected a growing aversion to reading books and gathering deeper knowledge. These youth are products of neo-liberalism that generates a market-driven attitude, a greater militarism, and ignorance of societal or cultural traditions. Reading books, which is one means of acquiring knowledge and information, has reduced dramatically and is replaced with modern gadgetry such as computers, mobile phones, etc. While embracing new technology is necessary, it has generally changed the thinking pattern of youth all over the world. The negative impact of reduced reading habits becomes even more serious in societies facing conflict. This lack of knowledge feeds into building barriers between individuals.

The sample exhibited greater sense of nationalism and affinity with their religious identity. Such attitudes were linked with their perception of their country and religion being under attack from outside. The majority identified the threat to the country and the Muslim world as coming from outside, particularly the West. Nationalism meant that they were unwilling to be introspective and look at domestic reasons behind the problems being faced by the state and society. As for the attitude towards religion, a general affinity for religious identity did not necessarily indicate greater knowledge or understanding of religion. Irrespective of the fact whether an individual actively embraced religious values and rituals, most respondents were keen to own the politics of religion. Their attitude towards religion, religious identity, politics of the state or geo-political issues was quite conservative. In fact, it reflected almost the same bias as one would find amongst less privileged youth. Such bias does not necessarily come from knowledge of religion. In fact, like majority of Pakistanis the elite youth are ignorant about religion. The politics of religious identity does not
necessarily indicate greater ownership of religion or an active involvement in the religious discourse.

Respondents followed popular trends as far as their opinion on political issues was concerned. During the process of undertaking the survey I did not find that the respondents were not capable to answer questions, as was feared by the BNU management. They were not briefed about any particular ideological preference. They were asked to use their imagination and understanding of these issues. One of the primary trends was the sensitivity towards the country’s negative image. Resultantly, most responses for questions around popular issues had predictable answers. However, the meat was in the answers to questions that drew out the perception regarding identity issues, be it national or religious. The division between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ followed the same pattern as is generally prevalent in the society irrespective of the socioeconomic background. The respondents subscribed to a clash of civilizations paradigm and in spite of their privileged position were unable to rise above their bias towards regional or global competitors.

This set of youth was also caught inside the identity crisis which seems to have enveloped Pakistan and the Muslim world especially after 9/11. Clearly, the respondents, despite that they had come from elite school systems into elite universities, were not exposed to a more mature analysis regarding various issues. The thinking generally reflected the same conservatism and preference for military, a lack of understanding of democratic principles and rejection of the political system without making an effort as would be found amongst the youth in other classes as well. The respondents did not show any desire for contributing to the political system through
giving funds which could then result in pressure on a political party to become more accountable.

The survey reflects the increasing conservatism in the society banking on radicalism. These opinions reflect the changes that have come and are being brought in Pakistan’s society. What’s most interesting to note is that the radicalism of the affluent class is far more difficult to define. It is more modern in fact post-modern as it replaces the state with a religious identity. In the imagination of these youth there is a Muslim ummah which is connected together despite the differences in historical experiences of individual Muslim states. The ummah has to be guarded by all its members who must contribute towards its growth and security. This mindset was essentially not very different from what was produced by General Zia-ul-Haq’s regime during the 1980s. Conservatism, radicalism and extremism are factors which date back to the decade of the 1980s. Pakistan’s government then had encouraged greater religious orthodoxy and entered into partnership with several religious parties. The Zia period is known for creating institutions such as ‘Nazim-e-Salat” or the prayer police who would make sure that male members from every household came and prayed in the neighborhood mosques. The military dictator also brought changes in the curriculum. It is believed that over 700 changes were brought about in the text books. This trend could not be reversed by any of the successive leaders. Furthermore, the continued political instability fed into this process of radicalization and militarization of the society.

These results carry an important message of the need for enlightenment in the society through liberalizing the national and religious discourse. Therefore, the underlying conclusion is that radicalism is one of the rising trends in Pakistan’s
society that may not be eliminated or disappear by itself unless there is a conscious effort to change the popular narrative. The changes in Pakistan’s society touch the elite class as much as the under-privileged. In fact, the country is gradually turning into a new laboratory of extreme views which do not necessarily restrict themselves to a particular class or shape. Its not just those with a certain attire that adopt a conservative view and select extreme options. The new radicalism in the country follows modern trends. One of the best examples of the aforementioned transformation is in the form of televegilists like Ahmed Qureshi or Zaid Hamid. The later, in particular, does not require his followers to adapt to a rigid code of dressing and conduct. Resultantly, some of his ardent followers include fashion designers like Maria B or pop singers such as Ali Azmat. Hamid, nonetheless, makes up for the absence of conservatism and radicalism in dress and cultural norms by encouraging his followers to support khilafat as a preferred form of governance ion the country and get involved in jihad against what he calls the ‘judo-Christian’ neo-imperialism. The new ideological brands are getting popular day by day.

One of the critical areas of concern pertains to media. Despite lesser restrictions and access to greater technology, the media has generally confined itself to adopt a conservative thinking. This, in turn, has effected the society, especially the youth. The media’s peculiar attitude and lack of liberalism becomes even more problematic in an environment where the society has limited capacity to analyze situations and events. The poor quality of social science in Pakistan is one of the many causes of radicalism. The public sector universities have fledgling capacity to create a generation of thinkers that could rise above bias.
The Way Forward

A natural question for the liberal segment of the society and the international community is what could be done to stop Pakistan from slipping towards radicalism. Besides the usual recommendation to invest in education, development and generation of economic activity, the study proposes the following action:

Long-to-Longer term

- Radicalism cannot be fought without altering the popular national narrative. An expert on Pakistan’s politics and Associate Fellow of the Chatham House, London, Dr Farzana Sheikh believes that a major shift will require de-linking politics from religion as was envisioned by the founding father Mohammad Ali Jinnah. The present national narrative is based on a tight coupling of religion with the country’s national identity. This results in forming a peculiar kind of a worldview. Such a change, however, is not going to come very easily. It will require political will and commitment which is absent at the moment. If it has to happen at all, it will only be possible through advocating secularism which has roots in Islam rather than a foreign or western construct.

Medium-to-Long Term

- The narrative on religion in Pakistan predominantly follows two strands: (a) ignorance of religion or (b) a gradually growing puritanical interpretation. Although Sufism is also a part of the local culture, it’s the more puritanical versions which are getting popular in urban environments. This can only change through providing the
society access to alternative interpretations within the religious discourse.

- Its vital to seek partners in the society and amongst the religious scholars with the objective of constructing a peaceful alternative. Thus far, religion is largely imagined in terms of stereotypes. For instance, Barelvi school of thought and Sufi Islam is considered more tolerant. However, there is a serious need to search for the narrative within these schools of thought to develop tolerance in the society. There is an urgent need to conduct research to seek out sources within the different religious traditions which would then be used for developing an alternative narrative.

- Encouraging inter-faith dialogue with an emphasis on developing understanding between different sects and religions is essential. Youth conferences, festivals, seminars and conferences to explain the ‘other’ and build confidence amongst various civilizations is essential to avoid a ‘clash of civilizations’ and the resultant violence.

- People should be enlightened through facilitating access to alternative views in local languages

- Since the media seems to be predominantly captured by radical elements, it is necessary to create alternative media options such as magazines, newspapers, radio programs which generate alternative thinking
Short-to-medium term

- The international community and Pakistan must cooperate to develop an alternative narrative. This could be achieved through series of conferences and seminars ringing together moderate Muslim scholars from all over the world to generate a modern message or interpretation of religion which could compete with the post-modernist puritanical narrative

- The Muslim states especially Turkey and others should cooperate to develop and alternative consensus (of sorts) amongst the Muslim community to stop violence and intolerance

- Greater interaction between Pakistani students and western scholars and/or diplomats to explain each other’s perspective

- Establishing programs in western universities to educate students in religion and theology. I believe that such a training will be different from what they eventually learn under the influence of puritanical scholars in the Muslim world.

These measures require cooperation amongst the international community and the civil society in Pakistan. Counter-terrorism or military measures is one option. However, latent-radicalism or and end to terrorism requires an engagement between segments of a society and amongst different societies. It’s not George W. Bush’s ‘crusade’ but a softness of attitude based on building inter-faith and inter-civilizational dialogue and harmony that may help the world succeed in this war.
i Discussion with Moeed Yusuf (February 2010)
iii Ibid., p. 27.
iv Ibid., p. 29.
v Ibid., p. 25.
ix The enhancement in numbers is not a discrepancy but because a large number selected more than one language.
x Two questions of similar nature were asked to cater for the confusion in a respondent’s mind. Clearly, the trend is that the majority does not support the sale or consumption of alcohol.
xv Majlis-e-Ahrar-e-Islami was established in 1931 from the remnants of the Khilafat movement in India.
xvii http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zia-ul-Haq%27s_Islamization#Adultery_%28Zina%29_Ordinance
xix TJ is a transnational social movement started in united India in 1926 by Muhammad Ilyas. This is considered as an offshoot of the Deobandi movement to build support amongst people for fighting Hindu revivalism. Its members volunteer to travel to other cities and countries to spread the word of Islam and convert Muslims to Deobandi ideology.