

National Narrative for Peaceful and Moderate Pakistani Society Based on Islamic Principles

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan has been facing the issues of extremism, radicalization and intolerance in society since decades, which has led to a destabilized and a divided society. Our youth is misled by anti-state elements which delude them that the democratic system of Pakistan is un-Islamic and the constitution of Pakistan is not in accordance with the teachings of Islam. APS attack in December 2014 has been a turning point for Pakistan's military and civilian government to strengthen its resolve to combat terrorism and the extremist views behind it. Solution to these problems is now provided by *Paigham- e- Pakistan*, a declaration drafted in the light of *Qur'an & Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) by Islamic Research Institute, Islamabad. It supports the constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan and aims at eradicating extremism, hatred, violence & terrorism from Pakistani society and promoting enlightenment and peace through this intellectual *Jihād*. It provides a counter narrative for Pakistani youth adhering to violent and radical Islamic ideologies. It gathers religious scholars from all schools of thought, intellectuals, academia & civil society on a joint declaration which reflects the collective thinking of the State of Pakistan. Through this declaration it is aimed to bring peace and stability within the country, and develop an inclusive society and to project Pakistan as a strong and stable modern nation in the international community.

Keywords: *Islam, Peace, Radicalization, Extremism, Violence, Jihād, Khilāfat.*

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Introduction

Pakistan was created in the name of Islam and it was aspired that the foundation of Pakistani society will be based on principles on which the city state of Media was built. That Muslims will have a separate homeland where they will be free to practice their religion and where their lives and property will be protected. Where there will be freedom of religion and rights of religious minorities will be safeguarded. Justice will be supreme and human rights will be upheld.

Pakistani nation is religious by nature; love for religion is a national character of the Pakistani society. In Pakistan people are religiously sensitive and religion remains a core element of people's belief system. Pakistanis take pride in being Muslims but a true Islamic spirit is largely missing in the society. According to a study conducted by PIPS in 2011, 93.4% of respondents maintained that religion played a very important role in their lives.

Pakistanis tend to observe Islamic festivals and rituals but majority is unaware of true meaning of *Qur'anic* text and its teachings. Traditionally Qur'ān is taught at homes at a very early age and almost all Pakistani children can read Arabic text of Qur'ān fluently by the age of ten years but this informal learning of recitation of Qur'ān is stopped at the age of thirteen or fourteen years when a child is burdened with certificate exams of Matric or O & A levels. By this time Pakistani youth have recited Qur'ān two to three times and have memorized some *surahs* of last *juzz* but are deprived of learning the meaning of *Qur'anic* text for the rest of their lives until and unless they make extra special effort for it and they have hardly touched upon original classical sources of Islam.

The organizations, institutions and individuals who impart religious education in Pakistan have been nurtured in a specific manner. They either belong to a specific religious sect or are politically motivated. Thus they are firstly concerned with promotion of their religious sect and personal benefits and only after that with Islam. Thus the resultant Islamic education is teaching of selected texts interpreted in a manner which suits their primary concerns. Politically motivated interpretations of Islam take place of the true universal message of Islam.

Islamic teachings that promote modernity and moderation are neglected and understated. Thus religious discourse is confined to selected texts and biased interpretation and universal message of Islam based on moderation, spirituality and peace is lost in this human struggle to achieve their worldly agendas through religion. In doing so values and norms which support peace and harmony in society are compromised and in the process of Islamization radical ideologies and practices are supported by use of religion.

Lack of education and critical thinking coupled with promotion of radical literature confuses people on issues of religion, related to radicalization

such as *Jihād, khilāfat and nifāz e Sharī'at*. Though international community and international media declares Pakistan as a terrorist, extremist and radical state however it is worth mentioning here that Pakistani society is neither extremist nor violent. But presence of non-violent radicalism in Pakistani society serves as ideological support and recruitment base for violent radicals.

General Causes of Radicalization in Pakistan

There is a popular assumption that radicalization is directly linked with poverty and underdevelopment but radicalization in Pakistan is driven by multiple factors. In the areas of low income group which include tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, nearby districts of Khayber Pakhtunkhwa, parts of southern Punjab and interior Sindh poverty, inequality and loose administrative structure spur radicalization. Madrassas and networks of sectarian organizations serve as catalysts of radicalization in our country.⁽¹⁾ The problem is even deeper, besides above mentioned reasons an overriding reason of radicalization in Pakistan is lack of opportunity to get one self properly educated, which is central to the promotion of radicalization. This lack of opportunity often comes from being poor, moreover, the phenomenon of radicalism has been found in elite and well-to-do class of Pakistani societies, too, rather in the students of modern education, in universities, who are fed with the ideology of political Islam or Islamism during their religious education at *Madrassa*.⁽²⁾

Religious-political discourse has continued parallel with militant one throughout the history of Pakistan. Political agenda of negatively radicalized elements has been transformation of Pakistani state and society into purely Islamic state. Religious organizations and *Madrassas* in Pakistan have played an important role in the politics of Pakistan. These seminaries and *Madrassas* have been instrumental in promotion of radical and extremist views garbed in religion. This justification of violence and extremism in the name of religion has had critical implications on Pakistan. These religious institutions seminaries and *madrassas* have failed to provide an alternate narrative to people of Pakistan to counter violent, non-tolerant and extremist trends prevailing in the name of Islam. Affiliation of religious institutions and *madrassas* with political parties, sectarian and *Jihādi* groups has further added to the problem.

Religious Radicalization in Pakistan and its Evolution

The extremist tendencies based on religion in Pakistan, labeled as religious radicalization developed along two levels in Pakistan: National & International level. Misuse of religion by national political powers was instrumental in introducing religious categories in politics which resulted in

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- (1) Muhammad Amir Rana, PIPS research study; 'Radicalization in Pakistan' narratives Publication, 2012, 6-7.
 - (2) Zahid Mughal, 'Aṣr e Ḥazir main Khurūj ka Masala and Shubhat ka Jayza', *Al-Shairah*, Gojrawanwala, Pakistan March 2012.

sectarian division. On the other hand growing intervention of foreign powers for their vested interests in the local affairs of Pakistan and in the process of internationalization of *Jihād* during the Cold War era fostered structured and organized violence, based on religion.

During the tenure of Gen. Musharaf major cause of terrorism was religious extremism and the two incidents; Lal Masjid and murder of Akbar Bugti also became the major causes of extreme radicalization in Pakistan.

In 2012 Pakistani leadership was forced to sit together and find a solution to this menace of violent radicalization in the name of *Jihād* internationally labeled as terrorism. They wanted the true teachings of Islam to take place of biased and selected interpretation of Qur'anic text.

In December 2014 Pakistan had to witness the tragedy of Army Public School massacre. Pakistani government and the military, after the tragedy of APS in 2014 intensified their efforts to eradicate the phenomenon of violent radicalization in educational institutions in the name of Islam. The present Army Chief General Qamar Bajwa admitted that

"the country is harvesting what we sowed 40 years back"⁽¹⁾

and he is determined to go beyond the polity of counter terrorism to de-radicalization of the society.

Growing problem of radicalization of youth at universities, colleges and other higher educational institutions in Pakistan demands serious attention. For instance, the killing of Mashal Khan, a student of Abdul Wali Khan University, on fake blasphemy charges by a raging mob of university students in 2016. Revision of the current educational curricula and a broader involvement of both the Higher Education Commission and the Ministry of Education in the affairs of universities, are equally important.⁽²⁾ It is need of the hour that such radicalized elements be encouraged to change their behavior first rather than forcing them to change their ideologies. Change in behavior is possible by way of harmonious interaction and lessening the communication gap between two extremes. This will pave way for better understanding and tolerance for each other.

It has been observed that committed ideologues may never give up their beliefs but might change their behavior. Even the Saudi rehabilitation program, which historically treated religious dialogue as primary, has gradually adopted more behavior focused components, such as education, vocational instruction, and post-release reintegration efforts.⁽³⁾

(1) Samaa.tv. Feb, 18, 2018. <https://www.samaa.tv/news/2018/02/few-countries-have-been-as-successful-as-pakistan-in-war-against-terror-coas>/retrieved Sep 15, 2018

(2) Zahid, Farhan. "Radicalisation of Campuses in Pakistan." *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 9, No. 11 (2017AD),12-15.

(3) Stern, Jessica, and Marisa L. Porges."Getting Deradicalization Right." *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (2010AD),155-157.

Paigham e Pakistan: A Solution to the Problem of Radicalization

There has been a dearth of academic and research work on initiating de-radicalization process and identifying need for it. There have been very few empirical studies to understand the phenomenon of radicalization. With launch of *Paigham e Pakistan* a de-radicalization tool is presented in the form of national narrative for peace based on Islamic teachings.

National narrative evolved by IRI is a powerful resource to justify alternative rational to counter deeply rooted religious beliefs and culture. It in fact is a national strategy manifested into action at every level for shaping out the local events in order to counter the negative impacts of so called terrorism or violent radicalization in the name of Islam. In evolving this narrative the inspiration has been drawn from the teachings of glorious Qur'an and the magnificent era of the Prophet (ﷺ)'s life. The agreements conducted by the Prophet (ﷺ) *Mithāq e Madina*, treaty of *Hudaybiya* and negotiations with non-Muslims are the cornerstones duly supported by magnificent qualities and facets of Prophet's life. Positive interpretation of *Qur'an* and *Sīrah of Prophet* has been intricately incorporated for reshaping the prevailing mindset to achieve and support the ideology of Pakistan in true spirit. *Paigham e Pakistan* provides a narrative in accordance with Qur'anic precepts for six major challenges faced by our homeland Pakistan.

Challenges Faced by Pakistan

Paigham e Pakistan discusses following six challenges in its narrative building and supports the correct Islamic point of view on the issues stated below. It supports its arguments on the basis of Qur'anic verses and the sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Following discussion proceeds from this national narrative developed by Islamic Research Institute, Islamabad prepared with the assistance of Wafāq ul Madāris, Tanzīm ul Madāris, Rābita tul Madāris and eminent religious scholars from Dār ul Ulūm, Karachi, Lahore & Islamabad.

1. Waging war against Islamic State (*Hirābah*)

Waging war against an Islamic State is termed as *Hirābah* in Qur'an and its punishment is stated in surah Al-Maida.

﴿إِنَّمَا جَزَاءُ الَّذِينَ يُحَارِبُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا أَنْ يُقَتَّلُوا أَوْ يُصَلَّبُوا أَوْ تُقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ أَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ ۗ ذَلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْيٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ﴾⁽¹⁾

(1) Sūrah Al-Mā'idah:33

Indeed, the penalty for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive upon earth [to cause] corruption is none but that they be killed or crucified or that their hands and feet be cut off from opposite sides or that they be exiled from the land. That is for them a disgrace in this world; and for them in the Hereafter is a great punishment.

According to Qur'anic injunctions Muslim *Ummah* is bound to obey a Muslim ruler. However in case of conflict or disagreement, the problem is to be resolved in the light of precepts of *Qur'an & Sunnah* and it is strictly prohibited to resort to an armed conflict against the state or ruler. It is stated in Qur'an :

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۚ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا﴾⁽¹⁾

O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result.

2. Terrorism against State Institutions and General Public:

Muslim scholars are in agreement that targeting innocent citizens through terrorist acts is strictly against the teachings of Islam. Terrorism and suicide attacks have no place in Islamic history. Such cruel and inhumane attacks started in 1789 during French revolution but in 1973 they were declared crime as per International Law. Terrorism & suicide bombing has no place in Islam. Qur'an says:

﴿وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ ۚ وَأَحْسِنُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

And spend in the way of Allah and do not throw [yourselves] with your [own] hands into destruction. And do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good.

Also after the demise of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) when Abū Bakr (RA) became Khalīfah he ordered his troops heading towards Sham, not to hurt women, children, old age people. He further instructed them not to destroy a fruit giving tree and do not kill animals except in case you want to eat its meat then sacrifice in the name of Allah.

In the past years due to Suicide bomb attacks in the name of Islam so many innocent people, men, women, children have lost their lives which is completely against the teachings of Islam.

3. Sectarianism:

Surge in sectarianism is another challenge for Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Although the Constitution of Pakistan allows people to follow their own juristic school but this privilege should not be used to spread sectarianism. Juristic schools are symbol of diversity in Islamic jurisprudence but when such differences become

(1) Sūrah Al-Nisā:59

unchangeable and inflexible beliefs then they cause deep divides in the society. Qur'an says:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا لَسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ ۚ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ﴾⁽¹⁾

Indeed, those who have divided their religion and become sects - you, [O Muhammad], are not [associated] with them in anything. Their affair is only [left] to Allah; then He will inform them about what they used to do.

Also at another place in Qur'an Allah says do not associate others with Allah and do not divide into sects.

﴿مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ وَاتَّقُوهُ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۚ مِنَ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا ۗ كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ﴾⁽²⁾

Adhere to it], turning in repentance to Him, and fear Him and establish prayer and do not be of those who associate others with Allah [Or] of those who have divided their religion and become sects, every faction rejoicing in what it has.

﴿وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا وَاخْتَلَفُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ﴾⁽³⁾

And do not be like the ones who became divided and differed after the clear proofs had come to them. And those will have a great punishment.

All the above stated verses clearly prohibit sectarianism. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) clearly said that difference of opinion among my *Ummah* is a blessing thereby accepting opinions of all schools of thought as valid if based on sound judgment and on the principles stated in Qur'an & Sunnah.

4. Misinterpretation of Jihād:

Terrorists do not differentiate between Jihād and traditional wars. The concept of Jihād is monumental; which encompasses personal and social aspects of Muslim's life. This process continues throughout the life in various forms. Jihād must not be confused with **qitāl** and **ḥarb**. For traditional warfare the Holy Qur'an has used the term "ḥarb." And Life of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) teaches us that qitāl is an exception, whereas, peace and reconciliation shall prevail under normal circumstance. Islamic Jurists are of the opinion that qitāl should only be declared by the State. The Treaty of Medina reflects the same example in which the authority and announcement of war was in the hands of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). According to Islamic jurists, no activity leading to war can be initiated without the consent of the

(1) Sūrah Al-An'ām:159
 (2) Sūrah Al-Rūm:31-32
 (3) Sūrah 'Al-e-'Imrān:105

state ruler or his appointed commanders. Islamic jurists also say that war cannot be waged without the permission of the government. And resort towards peace having faith in Allah.

﴿وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ﴾⁽¹⁾

And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing.

5. Privatization of Law:

Privatization of Law is totally unacceptable in Islam that a certain group takes law into its own hands and declares people infidels, starts killing them in the name of commanding good and forbidding from evil. While doing this they completely overlook the Islamic principle of exhorting people toward goodness. These trends, in any given society, lead to anarchy and chaos. Islam has clearly set the path for commanding good and forbidding bad by upholding the rule of law. Only the State has right to implement punishments on citizens and regulate their characters in accordance with law.

6. Trend of Disregarding National Citizen Charter:

It is obligatory on every citizen of Pakistan to respect its Constitution and international treaties rectified between Pakistan and other countries and do not violate geographical boundaries in the name of helping other groups outside Pakistan as it is not allowed to disrespect national charter. Pakistan has entered into several international agreements and treaties which aim to protect fundamental human rights. Moreover, the five objectives of Shari'ah also guarantee these fundamental rights. These rights include (1) preservation of life, (2) preservation of religion, (3) preservation of intellect, (4) preservation of progeny and (5) preservation of property. Therefore, any attack on innocent people that violates the above-mentioned ends of Shari'ah is prohibited and is a crime.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ﴾⁽²⁾

O you who have believed, fulfill [all] contracts.

﴿وَإِنْ اسْتَنْصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ إِلَّا عَلَى قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُم مِّيثَاقٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ﴾⁽³⁾

...And if they seek help of you for the religion, then you must help, except against a people between yourselves and whom is a treaty....

Through Paigham e Pakistan solution is provided to counter the above mentioned six challenges faced by Pakistan in the name of Islam. Correct interpretation of the verses of Qur'an based upon general principles of Islam

(1) Sūrah Al-Anfāl:61
 (2) Sūrah Al-M'āidah:1
 (3) Sūrah Al-Anfāl:72

gives a fruitful solution to radicalized mindset. Paigham e Pakistan is not against any sect. or group instead it is against the extremist mindset. It is against hatred which comes from wrong perceptions and irrationalities. Corrective methodologies are used to encounter this mindset. Islam embraces diversity in society and culture and this task is taken up with a missionary zeal. It supports democratic values. This national narrative has been endorsed by all religious, political, civil and military factions of Pakistan.

Thus realizing the hard reality that religio-political discourse has been running parallel with militant and sectarian culture in Pakistan Islamic Research Institute has come up with a de-radicalization plan through an intellectual discourse. Same religious text which was being indoctrinated to promote extremism and violence is now to be used to indoctrinate peace and moderation.

Conclusion

To understand radicalization in Pakistan's context it is essential to discuss it in religio-political context of Pakistan. Pakistanis are religiously sensitive people and take pride in being Muslims but true Islamic spirit is largely missing in society. Madāris ,Maulvīs and religious political parties play a dominant role in providing religious education to people in Pakistan. The dilemma is that they all have their own vested interests backed up by ideological and political agendas. This results in promotion of Islamic education based on selected texts interpreted to suit their primary concerns. Thus politically motivated interpretations of Islam replace the true spirit based on tolerance and moderation. Promotion of radicalized religious material on *Jihād, khilāfat and nifāz e Shari'at* confuses general public on issues of religion and acceptance of such norms nurtures violent radicals and serves as recruitment base for them.

2013-2014 was a turning point in the history of Pakistan. Operation *Zarb e Azb* was launched by General Raheel Sharif in 2014 as a result of which Pakistan had to witness the massacre of APS children. After this Pakistan's government intensified its efforts to eradicate the phenomenon of violent radicalization in educational institutions through military operations of *Zarb e Azb* and *Radd al Fasad*. Poverty, inequality, underdevelopment and loose governance has also been instrumental in aiding radicalization. Madrassas and networks of sectarian organizations further promote radicalization in Pakistan. Radicalization in Pakistan is also influenced by internal and external political developments. Misplaced religious notions of Jihād and establishment of universal Khilafa and legitimacy of armed insurgency by so called agents of change have largely influenced the upper middle class of Pakistani society who in turn nurtured violent radicals in the country.

Today radicalization of youth at universities, colleges and other

higher educational institutions in Pakistan demands serious attention. Pakistan's first Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) policy formulated by the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) is highly welcomed development in this regard. It is also seen that focus on change of behavior of radicals is more effective than forcing them to change their ideologies. This paves way for better understanding and tolerance between two extremes. The need of academic research for de radicalization is presented in the form of *Paigham e Pakistan* which has served as a tool for a de-radicalization based on Islamic teachings. This national narrative is making its headway to curb violence, extremism and violent radical mindset in Pakistan and gaining a lot of popularity among general masses. Despite criticism from various ends *Paigham e Pakistan* seems to make its way on ideological and intellectual front to control radicalized elements in Pakistan and in educating Pakistani people on more tolerant and moderate image of Islam. An inclusive tolerant Islamic society on the pattern of city state of Medina is the aspiration of new Pakistan Insha'Allah.

