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National Commission on the Status of Women
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National Commission on the Status of Women

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Sahar Gul Bhatti

**Research Coordinator
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II. Executive Summary

The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) organized a two-day conference in Islamabad on **'Extremism and its Impact on Society: Implications for Women'** (on 18-19 August, 2009). The themes of the conference were **Symbiotic relations between State and Religion, Patriarchy and Extremism, Mobilization of Women for Extremist Causes and Consequences of Extremism**

The participants of the conference included Bushhra Gauhar MNA /Chairperson Standing Committee on Women Development, Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Special Assistant to P.M on Social Issues various academicians, and civil society activists.

Speakers of the conference, focusing on the above-mentioned themes shared their candid views on the open gaps in the social, cultural, political and economic systems of the country.

Speakers, in various sessions, shared their critical analysis on the history of Pakistan (from the independence of Pakistan to-date) the inception of Pakistan to-date, that since the last 62 years the country has delivered to its citizens are sectarianism, ethno-centricism, religious extremism, gender insensitivity, sustenance of gory tribal practices in Sindh and Baluchistan especially of burying women alive or killing them in the name of honor. The grievances of the provinces were highlighted in the conference that how Bengalis' majority was rejected, Baloch leaders killed, Pakhtunkhwa's social fabric torn, Sindh's peace and security jeopardized nourishing terrorist groups, and Punjabi military bureaucracy dominated over the



The Quaid said

"If you change your past and work together in a spirit that everyone of you, no matter to what community he belongs, no matter what relations he had with you in the past, no matter what is his colour, caste or creed, is first, second and last a citizen of this State with equal rights, privileges and obligations, there will be no end to the progress you will make."

"You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed - that has nothing to do with the business of the State."

"Now, I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State."

11 August 1947





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resource of the provinces. Abid Minto endorsed in the conference that the theoretical sketch (1940 Resolution and Jinnah's speech of 11th August 1947) of Pakistan was rather secular and tolerant that never translated into practice and on the contrary, Pakistan's constitution was Islamized to perform a particular role.

Asma Jahangir, Chairperson Human Rights Commission Pakistan, stated that State does not have any justification to propagate Islam and its supremacy in a country where there are diverse religious and ethnic groups.

Ms. Farida Shaheed, Shirkat Gah, stated that women had been in double jeopardy, because they were targeted to prove their brand of Islamic credentials. She also said that the culture is the first victim through which the social fabric of society is changed. So happened in Pakistan, dress code was changed, language transformed, rather practices, dress code and language were arabized/Wahabiased during the inflow of Saudi money for the making of Jihadi factory in Pakistan.

Mr. Khadim Hussain, Executive Director Aryana Institute for Regional Research and Advocacy, focusing on 'Construction of the theocratic mindset through education' said that the curriculum was fashioned in way to create one-dimensional minds to perpetuate lack of analytical, critical and objective approach to State and society, universe and relationships between citizens from diverse backgrounds. Society is segregated badly within sects, ethnic and religious groups to 'otherise' the other being because the cultural and social space was snatched from the democratic political parties and civil society and handed over to the non-secular, religious groups.

Farhat Taj, columnist in The News and a researcher in the University of Oslo Norway said that the issue of religious extremism and Talibanization was resolved irrationally through signing on Nizam e Adl—the provincial government of Pakhtunkhwa perhaps was in oblivious of the reality that either there should be no dialogue with the extremist or on our own conditions.

Bushra Gauhar MNA /Chairperson Standing Committee on Women Development suggested in her speech that the solutions could be, first of all, to entirely transforming the policies that are for Afghanistan and Kashmir and mainstream all the zones where there is the writ of the extremists.

Presenting the findings of a study conducted by NCSW, Ms. Sahar Gul, Research Coordinator NCSW said that the long-cherished space for Talibanization could be narrowed down and finally rooted out through replacing the old prejudiced and extremist narratives and discourses with the secular and pluralistic discourses and debates—so that the transformation should start in the consciousness, in the mind-set.

Concluding, on the final day of the conference NCSW formulated resolutions with the consent and agreement of the speakers and members of the Commission; in nutshell the Resolutions included:



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1. Violence against women (killing them in the name so called honor) is inexcusable; NCSW bound the District Police of the District to give weekly progress report to the NCSW
2. Regarding relationship between Federation and Province it was resolved that Provincial Autonomy would be achieved systematically on the basis of 1940 Resolution; religion would be separated from State and FATA/PATA/Northern areas should be mainstreamed.
3. For religious extremism repeal of blasphemy law and other laws that cause extremism should be immediately repealed.
4. For Nizam e Adl was rejected on the grounds that it not only excludes women from the judicial system, but a parallel judicial system within one State is not acceptable.
5. The women among the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) of Malakand Division should be treated equally in the rehabilitation programs and the Provincial Government of Pakhtunkhwa should include civil society organizations into implementation and monitoring of the policies and plans for the IDPs.
6. Parliament should be with its paramount role; judiciary and Executive should be separated and military should restrict itself to its actual role.
7. Role of media was suggested to be unbiased, voice for the under-privileged/oppressed, especially women and expose the policies governing gender-blindness.

In nutshell, the resolutions of the conference bring forth result that this is the time for the State of Pakistan to contemplate over its foreign policies, internal and external strategies, which played insidious role at the borders and divided the nation on sectarian, religious and ethnic basis respectively—the sustenance of the State depends on its multi-dimensional restructuring.



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National Conference Extremism, its Impact on Society: Implications for Women

*Organized at: Best Western Hotel Islamabad
August 18-19, 2009*

III. Conference Proceedings

August 18, 2009 Day One

1. Inaugural Speech by Ms. Anis Haroon (Chairperson NCSW)

Ms. Anis Haroon, Chairperson National Commission on the Status of Women and a Senior Activist Women's Rights welcomed the participants of the 2-day National Conference on "Extremism, its Impact on Society: Implications for Women".

In her inaugural speech Ms. Haroon said that the National Commission was committed to improve the lot of women and to their empowerment as a watchdog body of their rights and recommended policies to promote development and equal status of women in the society. She said that we were aware to the fact that in order to achieve our goals it is quintessential to have peace, internal and external Justice, harmony and democracy.



Ms. Haroon endorsed that the development of women goes hand in hand with a just, peaceful and liberal democratic dispensation in the society. The Commission's recent recommended to the Constitutional Committee is a reflection of NCSW's commitment to promote an egalitarian Society.

Focusing on the current period in Pakistan, Ms. Haroon said, 'it is perhaps the most crucial time the country has ever passed through. Pakistan has experienced ethnic, patriarchal, political, sectarian and religious conflicts at different times in its 62 years of existence, but the challenge is of religious extremism. The country faces a serious threat to the security of people, democracy and to our very existence. The rights of women are being seriously under eroded, threatened by violence, intimidation and terrorism. We have seen innocent women harassed, publicly flogged, beaten to death, murdered and



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ousted from public spheres. Hundreds of Schools burnt and destroyed denying the basic right to education’.

Describing how women of Pakistan took up the challenges Chairperson NCSW said, ‘I am proud to say that women of Pakistan, as usual, have taken up the challenge to face it badly and stand in defiance to all those observed forces who want to push them back. They will never succeed but the shadows of terrorism looms large over our heads and it is an uphill task to surmount but we shall not use our hearts. We have organized 2-day event to seriously deliberate on this extremely important issue and explore strategies to counter extremisms and fund a way forward towards restoration of peace, justice and stability in the country’.

Ms. Haroon further added, ‘Let me reiterate that women of Pakistan are very brave, resilient and Shaded Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto proved it by sacrificing her life to defy extremism and promote democracy. The will of people shall prevail and we shall overcome. In the end once again I think you all to be here in spite of the weather and thank Asia Foundation for their support.’

Following the inaugural speech by Ms. Anis Haroon, Chairperson, National Commission on the Status of Women, eminent poetess and women’s rights’ activist Ms. Kishwar Naheed was requested to recite her poem.



The title of Kishwar Naheed poem was ‘Mujhay Bin paani machhli na bana’. The theme of the poem based on resistance against patriarchy and religious extremism.



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2. Mr. Khadim Hussain: Construction of the theocratic mindset through education

(Since Mr. Khadim Hussain was stuck in curfew in Mengowara, his paper was presented by Dr. Fouzia)

Mr. Khadim Hussain's presentation focused was how we learn through our education system in Pakistan; he emphasized upon curricula, method of teaching and learning environment. He stated that the **Curricula of social sciences, history and Islamic studies** *contain abundance of material on 'Glorification of perceived Muslim ummah', 'a peculiar kind of "jihad"' and 'Hatred against other religions and beliefs'.*



He told that a particular construct of history, where people from Middle East were made our heroes and the Muslim monarchs were glorified in the society of diverse religions. In that result the leadership of the other nations was demonized and war heroes were glorified. Along with all this change the religious and cultural stereotyping was done in even Urdu fiction as well.

About methods of teaching Mr. Hussain told that it was devoid of thinking; questioning was discouraged, difference of opinion was not given space—(not only that the teachers had lack of skill for logical development of an argument).

Quoting Paolo Ferrier, for learning culture he said that the cultural of silence is appreciated, hence space for creativity is compromised. He said that the lack of tolerance and diversity boiled down to isolationism, marginalization of civic rights and responsibility. He said that the perpetuation of the status consciousness, feudal behavior and morbid individuality was the very much part of learning culture.

Finally, the presentation of Mr. Hussain emphasized on the education system as a whole perpetuating dogmatic worldview that is prone to a theocratic mindset that sees only one-dimensional reality. The presenting and indoctrinating one-dimensional reality perpetuated only lack of analytical, critical and objective approach to State and society, universe and relationships between humans generally.



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3. Ms. Farida Shaheed: The occupation of mainstream cultural space in Pakistani society by politico-religious parties and groups¹

Finding the nation in the state

Ms. Farida Shaheed, Shirkat Gah and Senior Activist was asked to address the question of how politico-religious parties and groups came to occupy - and dominate - mainstream cultural space in Pakistan— Ms. Shaheed presented the following paper:



“In considering cultural spaces it is necessary to first clarify what is understood by culture. For the purpose of this discussion, I posit culture as a prism through which we see and react to the world around us, and through which others view and respond to us. As such, culture is inseparable from collective identity and it is important to understand that there can never be an accurate plural for the pronoun I; not even identical twins make up an identical *we* due to differentiated experiences. The term ‘we’ is therefore redundant in a vacuum; it only comes into play to distinguish one set of individuals from another. Consequently, every time the pronoun ‘we’ is used, it is through the selection one or several but never *all* the markers of possible identity a specific individual has. So *we* is a selective process that defines the boundary of a particular group outside which lie all those who are not ‘us’ and therefore constitute the Other(s). For example if I say ‘we on this side of the room’ I am also saying that those on that side of the room are not *us*, they are somehow different. The culturally defined collective *we* establishes rules and guidelines for how ‘we’ should react to ‘them’, the Other, as well as how members should engage with each other – the rules of belonging. (Membership of course, does not imply equality however.) (See Shaheed 2007)

Second, it would be a mistake to see extremism as an isolated phenomenon; extremism is only one end of a continuum, and unless we see and address the continuum we shall not be able to deal with extremism. Even if all politico-religious parties and groups are not extremist, it is still important to consider the role they play in this continuum. It is equally important to understand that politico-religious groups are entities that define their *political* and societal agendas in religious terminology. Their main aim is not to make people good Muslims but to gain political power. For example, in 1953 the Report of the Court of Inquiry— commonly referred to as the Munir Report - tasked with investigating the first religious riots in Pakistan’s history had the following to say about the Jamat-i-Islami, a key player amongst Pakistan’s politico-religious groups:

¹ This paper draws upon research done for the research report: *Gender, Religion and the Quest for Justice in Pakistan* for the UN Research Institute for Social Development’s Religion, Politics and Gender Equality Project. See [http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/\(httpPublications\)/0B1B12A22917ACCEC125755A006AE4FF?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/(httpPublications)/0B1B12A22917ACCEC125755A006AE4FF?OpenDocument)



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The ideology of the Jama'at-i-Islami is perfectly simple. It aims at the establishment of the sovereignty of Allah throughout the world which, in other words, means the establishment of a religio-political system which the Jama'at calls Islam. For the achievement of this ideal it believes not only in propaganda but in the acquisition of political control by constitutional means and where feasible by force. A Government which is not based on the Jama'at's conception, as for instance where it is based on the conception of a nation, is...a Satanic Government, and...*kufir*, all persons taking part in such Government, whether as administrators or otherwise, or willingly submitting to such system being sinners. The Jama'at was...professedly opposed to the Muslim League's conception of Pakistan, and since the establishment of Pakistan, which it described as *Na Pak-istan*, [the land of the impure] has been opposed to the present system of Government and those who are running it. (page 252)

Two important points made in this Report are (a) that the politico-religious groups as represented by the Jamat-i-Islami at the time, question the very concept of nation-states and (b) that such groups aim are not content to try and seize political control by propaganda and constitutional means and will also use force.

Eliding a state for Muslims into a Muslim state

If politico-religious parties and groups managed to assume control over the mainstream cultural, social and political spaces, it is thanks to the opportunities provided by secular and non-religiously defined political actors and power brokers. Had these elements not used Islam so consistently in their own pursuit of power, politico-religious groups could not have steadily pushed their agenda to the point where they dominate the political and social discourse.

The question of national identity has plagued the polity from the start. At independence Pakistan was more a state-nation than a nation-state. There was no 'imagined community' considered necessary for a sense of nationhood amongst the ethnically and linguistically diverse population.(Anderson) Against the backdrop of Pakistan's genesis and the massive transmigration that slashed the non-Muslim population in the western wing from one fifth to a marginal 2 percent (especially voiding cities of non-Muslim voices),² Pakistani nationhood came to be defined in oppositional terms to a far larger, hostile, 'Hindu India'. Debates over the contents and contours of this 'Muslim nationhood' allowed the politico-religious elements to gain ground. Mostly having opposed the creation of Pakistan, the politico-religious elements initially enjoyed little support. That they still managed to elide the call for a state for Indian Muslims into a Muslim state and society results from the instrumental use of Islam by others.

Using Islam was convenient for entirely secular reasons: the arithmetic of democracy did not suit those acceding to central power. The Punjabis and Urdu-speaking Mohajirs from

² From almost a fifth of the population (18.5%) non-Muslims dwindled to less than 2 percent (1.6%) Population Census of territories comprising West Pakistan in 1941 and 1951. (Jillani) In Lahore for example, only 1,000 of the city's 500,000 Hindus and 100,000 Sikhs remained.



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north India wielded considerable power in the new state by virtue of their presence in the military and civil bureaucracies. Nevertheless the majority of the state's citizens were Bengali-speaking East Pakistanis (now Bangladeshis). Considerable time and effort was thus spent finding ways to circumvent the logic of universal franchise. In a country created in the name of federalism, the invented parameters and imperatives of a 'Muslim nationhood' have been regularly flourished to deny a share in power to the ethnically diverse units constituting Pakistan and to reject the demands for autonomy articulated by Bengalis, Sindhis, Baluch, and Pakhtoons. Towards this end Islam was even interpreted "as favouring a unitary form of government." (Ahmed, 95) The reluctance to institute a democratic system of governance and power sharing was masked by the language of Islam and a 'Muslim' national identity. Democracy became 'unsuited to Pakistan,' requiring abridging modifications to be "true democracy" or a "democracy suited to Pakistan" as often stated by the last military ruler, General Pervaiz Musharraf. The centre-province relationships and regional autonomy remain central and volatile issues even today. Political manoeuvring and manipulations seeking to concentrate centralised power and side-step the logic of democratic processes have left the country osculating between a presidential and parliamentary form of government, between long periods of martial law and short bursts of unstable civilian rule.³

Two examples suffice to illustrate the early instrumental use of Islam. The first is the adoption, soon after Jinnah's death, of the Objectives Resolution as a preamble to the new Constitution in March 1949. This was a first key victory of marginalized politico-religious actors in which Maulana Abu-Ala Maududi, who called Jinnah Qafir-e-Azam (leader of the infidels) played a pivotal role. Its passage - despite the opposition of all non-Muslim members (and one solitary Muslim member⁴) - did not reflect any power wielded by the religious groups that were only nominally represented in the assembly. Another prime example is the first religious riots in Pakistan which led to the imposition of the first martial law, albeit a short-lived one in 1952-1953. It was the political ambition of the western-educated Punjab Chief Minister, Mian Mumtaz Daultana who, refusing to act "despite appeals by his chief of police, Mr. Qurban Ali Khan," (Abbas, 23), helped to convert what started as a secular issue of food scarcity into a religious crisis. The JI instantly seized this opening to vociferously support the demand that the Ahmedis, be declared non-Muslims. The problems were hardly insurmountable: similar protests in Karachi in the Sindh province had been quickly curtailed. The Report of the Court of Inquiry (Munir Report⁵) concludes that riots in Punjab were instigated by the Majlis-i-Ahrar, a marginal politico-religious group that "consistently exploited religion for their political ends...left the Congress on grounds of religion, and...opposed the Muslim League and Pakistan."⁶ It also blames Daultana for actively encouraging the inflammatory statements and actions made by these politically marginalized religious

³ Islam was also used to counter largely imaginary socialist threats, especially after the failed 1951 conspiracy.

⁴ Hussain Shaheed Surawardhy

⁵ The report of the Court of Inquiry comprised of Justice Muhammad Muir and Justice Rustam Kiani, came to be referred to as the Munir Report.

⁶ Government of Pakistan 1953, *Munir Report*, p.256



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groups.⁷ Additionally, the Report expressed concern that the Objectives Resolution, referenced by the Prime Minister to argue for the equality of all citizens, was now being used by the *ulema* to argue the exact opposite, i.e. that non-Muslims could not be equal citizens.(page 249) Also of concern to the judges was that, when asked whether they accepted the Quaid's conception of a modern nation "everyone one of [the ulema] replied in an unhesitating negative" and that "if evidence correctly represents the view of Jama'at-i-Islami,"

"a State based on this idea is the creature of the devil, ... confirmed in this by several writings of ...Maulana Abul Ala Maudoodi, the founder of the *jama'at*. None of the *ulama* can tolerate a State which is based on nationalism and all that it implies..."

To the everlasting detriment of Pakistan, the Report's recommendations were ignored by the authorities who did not even censure politico-religious elements for inciting people to violence in the name of Islam. Impunity for politico-religious elements violating the law and challenging the writ of the state in the name of religion thus started long before the arrival of General Zia ul-Haq's military dictatorship.

Shifting the boundaries of state and society

Contrary to what is commonly assumed, the push by those in power to make Islam the central privileged reference point for state and society did not start with Zia in 1977. Moreover, as elucidated by three recent books, the initial target was neither civil nor political society but the armed forces.⁸ As early as July 1969, it was General Yahya Khan, not known for any religious leanings whatsoever, who promulgated Martial Law Regulation 51 that introduced 7 years RI for "anyone publishing or in possession of any book pamphlet etc. offensive to the religion of Islam." It was he who, confronted with the unexpected results of the first ever general elections held on the principle of universal franchise in 1970, reinvented the military as defenders of 'the ideology of Pakistan,' and it was he who then "privatized jihad" (Hussain) by supporting religious militias to counter and undermine the Bengali independence movement.⁹ Under Yahya's tutelage, according to Brigadier (ret'd) Aziz Siddiqi, the military high command started to sound "more like a high priests than soldiers on Defence Day." (Haqqani, 55)

In Pakistan the transformation of the military cultural outlook is a key element in the appropriation of mainstream societal culture. The military is the state's most powerful institution and the armed forces have ruled Pakistan directly or indirectly for most of its history. Furthermore, the sheer number of personnel of the world's sixth largest military

⁷ Ibid p.386

⁸ Hassan Abbas, *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army, and America's War on Terror*, Hussain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*, Zahid Hussain *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam*

⁹ Yahya declared that the "duty of self-defense (jihad) which Islam ordained" justified the creation of 'irregular forces,' quoted in Haqqani, page 56.



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(more than half a million people¹⁰) means that a changed worldview within the armed forces inevitably filters into and permeates society as a whole. Zia completed the process of transforming the armed forces. He dismantled whatever secularist tradition the officer rank had carried forward from the days of the British Indian Army and launched an all-out offensive to institute a conservative religious-minded officer corps: the army's creed became *Iman, Taqwa, Jihad fi Sabil Allah*, Friday prayers compulsory, and officers were encouraged to lead their men in prayers; religious examinations were instituted for selection and promotions. Islamiat became part of the curricula of the Military Academy and the Command and Staff College; a Directorate of Religious Instructions was established for the officer corps. Deobandi preachers were appointed to work among the troops who were encouraged to attend *tablighi* gatherings. The influence of the Jamaat-i-Islami was especially visible amongst officers from rural or semi-rural areas. (Hussain, Hassan)

Zia went further to bring about a virtual paradigm shift. Previous governments had tended to not actively engage in the social sector and largely kept political manipulations and manoeuvring out of public view. In his take-over speech on 5 July 1977 Zia informed the people that "Pakistan was created in the name of Islam and will continue to survive only if it sticks to Islam...I consider the introduction of [an] Islamic system as an essential pre-requisite for the country." In pursuit of this aim, he set about reconfiguring all state institutions, as well as the social arenas *and* the legal landscape. (The infamous Hudood Ordinances, the blasphemy laws, qisas and diyat, the law of evidence to name a few of the worst laws.) Human rights were suspended; military courts operated; political activists (including for the first time women political activists) were jailed and tortured. All political parties were banned, except the Jama'at-i-Islami; all student unions were banned, except the JI's student wing the Islami Jamiat-Tuleba. The state's monopoly over electronic media, heavy censorship of the print media, the re-writing of textbooks and history, and the political repression all served to silence dissent and diversity. Replacing debate and divergence, the JI's ideological stance - self-serving, misogynistic and bigoted - flourished, dominating the airwaves and filtering into state institutions and societal thinking alike as Islam.

The moulding of a new society characterized by intolerance and bigotry under Zia was not accomplished merely through conducting a war of words or even amending laws. Social institutions were refashioned and realigned. Critically, the state directly supported *madrassahs* through financial infusions, land endowments, and the conferring of the status of a bachelor's degree to *madrassah* graduates; many *madrassah* teachers became government employees. *Madrassahs* became an industry, erupting across the country. Importantly, this political patronage transformed the social standing of the average mullah; from being dependent on social charity and occasional government honoraria whose company was suffered rather than welcomed, many were suddenly far better resourced and linked to circles of influence. It did not help that Zia's regime coincided with the US's proxy war with the USSR in which 'mujahideen' were promoted as freedom fighters, giving an international stamp of approval to religious discourse and

¹⁰ http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/mil_arm_for_per-military-armed-forces-personnel



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actions in the political sphere – regardless of how violative of human rights they were. The support entailed big money. In the end it is estimated that the amount funnelled by the USA and Saudi Arabia into Afghanistan and Pakistan for this war was US \$3.5 billion.¹¹ With much of the arms finding their way back into the local domestic market, military aid left Pakistan awash in state-of-the-art weaponry; accentuating the ‘militarised and violent’ state (Khattak). Groups armed and trained by the US and Pakistan never handed in their weapons and after the defeat of the Soviet Union, far from giving up their agenda for Islamisation, expanded their agenda to encompass the state of Pakistan. (Stern) We are experiencing the impact of a full blowback today.

Within Pakistan, the Zia regime insidiously appropriated and reconfigured the cultural spaces in society, education and politics by seemingly small insertions in everyday life that eventually ended up making citizens complicit in what the state wanted to impose. State sanction in the form of legal changes and official propaganda unleashed the basest instincts of marginal groups and elements whose increasingly rampant acts of wanton violence, bigotry and intolerance were granted impunity. Paralysing the saner elements in society, this enabled the politico-religious elements to relocate from the peripheries, steadily advancing towards centre-stage. Overt religiosity became the newly minted political coin for entrance, appointments and promotions in civil and military bureaucracy; text books re-wrote history to project politico-religious groups as the champions instead of the opponents of Pakistani statehood, recitations of the Quran a mandatory prelude for all public functions. By the time Zia died in 1988, the forced impositions in the name of Islam had transformed into cultural norms, forever changing the social, political and cultural landscape. As never before, ‘true’ citizens were male, Muslim, and largely Punjabi leaving citizenship of all others, especially women and minorities, somewhat suspect and needing to be proved.

Islam was particularly used to control women whose bodies and dress became a means of marking territories for the new Islamic credentials. Sexual mores became a particular focus of state campaigns, gender segregation and female seclusion a central pillar of the new ethos, with many measures lifted directly from the party agenda of the Jamaat-i-Islami. The notion of culturally diverse Pakistani women was replaced by an ‘Islamic woman.’ To this end, the inanimate sari was conferred a religion and became “Hindu.” As the state tried to push women back into the confines of *chador aur chardiwari*, the harassment of women in public spaces grew enormously. Under pressure from a relentless propaganda war and sexual harassment lungis disappeared in South Punjab, dresses from Karachi, female trousers took refuge in upper class drawing rooms.¹² A campaign to eliminate obscenity and vulgarity (a favourite topic of the religion right) managed to suggest that women *per se* were somehow obscene. Women were discouraged from working, the JI manifesto promise of a separate university for women was approved, women were banned from appearing on state owned and monopolized

¹¹ Figure according to Milt Bearden, CIA station chief for Pakistan from 1986-1989, quoted in Jessica Stern 2000.

¹² Where ‘national dress’ was proposed for and made compulsory for men at state functions and offices, ‘Islamic’ dress was propagated and defined for women. The chador became mandatory for female students, their teachers and women in government service.



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television without head covering; refusal led to dismissal. Scripts could no longer show women opting to leave their marital home, even if they were shown as victims of domestic violence. Even when proposals failed to pass muster, they steadily fed the discourse e.g. a prohibition on male gynecologists and a ban on male doctors autopsying female bodies, restricting the subjects women could study. Over-zealous teachers refused to teach female students not 'properly attired'; others segregated their classrooms; a few refused to teach female students at all. An entire generation grew up imbibing the ideas propagated by the military regime using religion and its junior partners in government, the JI. Too many internalized propaganda suggesting that women's only place was in the home, their role that of reproduction and motherhood, and their status and rights in all aspects subservient to men.

There was a state-condoned - if not officially approved - displacement of the state's own monopoly over violence and punishment, especially where it related those relegated to less-than-full citizen status such as women and minorities who, of course, constitute the majority of the state's citizens. The oppressive atmosphere of silenced dissent encouraged the public at large to believe that individuals were licensed to intervene directly, even violently, whenever their personal conceptions of 'Islamic morality' were being violated. Women, Ahmedis and non-Muslim citizens faced the brunt of such attacks. Bred and nourished under Zia through state measures, this mentality continues unabated, as most recently evidenced in the brutal attacks on Christians in Gojra last month. The mind set is also reflected in the belief of too many that the Taliban are basically 'good people,' only demanding a just system.

Collective Identities & Gender

Under Zia, there was no ambiguity in the state setting a new course for radically altering the cultural, legal and political parameters in ways that gave unprecedented opportunity for politico-religious elements to dominate the landscape. The question we need to address of course is why society was not able to resist and why did it not simply bounce back after the dreadful years of Zia? Why is it that the state allows itself to be held to ransom by those who act violently, take the law into their own hands and even challenge the writ of the state under the pretext of religion? Why is it that such elements continue to be granted such wide impunity?

History indicates that the mere presence of religion in the political arena would not have sufficed to inscribe religion into the legal apparatus and social environment. This required the active support or collusion of groups not necessarily defined as having religious agendas as evident in the passage of the Objective Resolution for example. It may be useful to remember that it was Ayub Khan who promoted Islam as a barrier to communism in the international arena (Jalal) and told the US "[o]ur army can be your army if you want us,"¹³ and Yahya Khan who initiated the idea of *jihadi* militias as a response to internal conflicts. Clearly then, a vital determinant of the ability of politico-religious groups to advance their agenda and color the social political and cultural

¹³ General Ayub Khan cited in Abbas 2005, p. 26.



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discourse is the extent to which such groups receive the support of state authority and the instrumental use of religion by others who are not defined as politico-religious entities.

In terms of changing social norms and culture under Zia, perhaps the most long-term damaging impact in inscribing religion into society and state was not the laws, as horrendous as these were, but those seemingly small insertions into everyday life that obliged, rewarded, or instigated individuals to become complicit in the state's self-serving use of religion. This was accomplished through a system of rewards and punishments. One example of coercion is making the issuance of national identity cards and passports (key documents of citizenry) for all Muslim citizens dependent on signing complicity with the state's ex-communication of an entire sect from Islam. More subtly, the incessant airing of Quranic recitations in airports and other government venues under government sponsorship suggested this as part of 'good citizen' behavior. Soon adopted by private shops and enterprises, it became 'culture' and continues today with people forgetting that this was an invention of Pakistan's worst military dictator. Shaping the dominant discourse, such practices enable their message of what are acceptable modes of behavior to be internalised almost subliminally. When the imposed rules become social norms, the enforcer no longer needs to be the state. Penalties are meted out by non-state actors in consequence of state measures. During Zia's period women were penalized more often by men in the public arena than by the state for contravening the 'Islamic' dress code suggested as by the state.

Finally it has to be said that gender relations are critical ingredients in all collective identities and therefore cultures. Regardless of other differences in history, socio-political or economic arrangements, all societies set rules for interactions between their male and female members. Gender relations with a determined focus on controlling women, is often a cornerstone for the endeavours of extremist politico-religious groups to occupy cultural spaces. A possible reason for this focus astutely suggested by Samir Amin, is that these groups do not have a political economy agenda and therefore tend to emphasize collective cultural identity. And, I would posit that it is the manifestations of this cultural identity that link extremists and others in the continuum through similar religious idiom and discourse even when they differ in the degree to which the messages and actions would be classified as extremist. This linkage needs further examination and understanding.

Looking forward

I will conclude with a few points which I think need to be considered for future action on how to reverse the occupation of mainstream cultural spaces.

A first essential precondition is to dispense with any impunity granted and all blackmail exercised in name of religion. We must question and expose the linkages between extremist groups and those considered more mainstream. If some linkages are less direct than others, there are always discursive linkages in their messages. The discourse of less extremist politico-religious groups provide an entry to those who are more extreme in their actions and positions, not least by positing issues in terms of sins and evils rather than merely rights and laws, and condemning any differences of opinion as a questioning of a singular Truth – needless to say as conveniently defined by themselves.



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An important area for the future is to identify and make public the financial sources of support for *madrassahs* and politico-religious groups. Considerable financial support for *madrassahs*, for instance, emanates from Saudi Arabia. For example, in Vehari district alone in the sufiana belt of south Punjab, research found that 187 *madrassahs* had opened up between 2001 and 2007 and that many *madrassahs* receive direct funding from Saudi Arabian sources.¹⁴ Why is this not being questioned and discussed publicly? People object openly – and often vehemently – to the undue influence being exercised by the US, but remain curiously silent on the negative influences of Saudi Arabia and the Middle East.

A separate critical factor is the issue of justice. The inability of the state to deliver justice and to educate people about existing laws and rights has (a) enabled traditional adjudication systems to continue to operate outside the state structures and (b) created a vacuum into which discourses of ‘Islamic justice’ have been inserted by the religious right wing including fanatical virulently misogynistic and anti-democratic extremist groups outside the democratic political party set up. It is ironic that with the passage of time the JI is no longer the extreme; as a political party, it has moved to a more central part of the continuum from extremism to progressive forces.

In the context of nation-states, national identity is an important element and one that has plagued the polity in Pakistan from the start. The absence of a pluralistic territorially-based concept of nation (Alavi) has made it easier for extremist politico-religious forces to promote their version of a collective cultural identity (that has supra-national ambitions) with an alarming degree of success. And if we accept Amin’s suggestion that this focus on identity amongst extremists is due to their lack of a political economy, the question becomes: do progressive forces have a counter proposition for either a national identity or a clearly articulated proposal for a suitable political economy? It seems critical at this point to promote a pluralistic territorially-based concept of national identity and to assiduously promote the politics of ideology over those of identity.

There must be an unequivocal demand that the State assume full responsibility for all its citizens without discrimination. The state must deliver on its promises to its citizens under the social contract; it must ensure education, health and economic opportunities as well as equality before the law to all citizens regardless of gender, religious or other identities. The objective of education must be to nurture critical thinking enabling debates and discussions, not memorization through rote.

There is an urgent need to retrieve our history from the stranglehold left by Zia and make it known to all people, especially our student population. A first important step may be to ensure the widespread reading of the Pakistan resolution, the Quaid’s inaugural speech in 1948 and the 1953 Munir Commission Report on Pakistan’s first religious riots. History is critical to a sense of collective self and it would be well to remember George Orwell’s statement that “He who controls the present controls the past and he who controls the past controls the future.”

Finally, decision-makers must stop seeing critical thinking and dissent as challenges to authority that must be repressed and understand that dissent, diversity and pluralism are

¹⁴ Shirkat Gah- Women’s Resource Centre component of the *Women’s Empowerment in Muslim Contexts: gender, poverty and democratization from the inside out*



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vital and essential ingredients for the survival and growth of any society. We need to replace binaries by cultural diversity and take a lesson from ecology, which is that, when you insist on monoculture, the crops and eventually the very land itself dies. We have to take cognizance of the fact that as a culture we are dying and our only hope is to actively reject the false binary choices being imposed and to celebrate our diversities, which includes differences of opinions and points of view.

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4. Mr. Abid Hussain Minto: Islamisation of State and Constitution of Pakistan.

Mr. Minto, in his speech on “Islamization of the state and Constitution of Pakistan An evolutionary overview”, focused on two points: 1) 1940’s Resolution-the foundation of Pakistan, and 2) Quaid’s address of August 11, 1947 to Constituent Assembly



Sharing his opinion on the of the State of Pakistan Mr. Minto said that its theoretical groundings have been tolerant if we see 1940 Resolution and Jinnah’s speech in the first Constituent Assembly.

Mr. Minto, giving an example told that on the Independence Day, 14th Aug. our Chief of the Army Staff stated to the nation, ‘our army is the defender of Islam’; he questioned the statement and said it was whereas it is nowhere written in our constitution that the army of Pakistan had to defend Islam? About the Army he said this army had been killing Muslims, as Zia killed Muslims in Jordan.

Highlighting the significance of Constitution Mr. Minto said that it cannot be changed easily as it happened in past. He said that the Constitution talked of how State has to be run, what should be the nature of State? He emphasized, ‘the 1940 Resolution ensured autonomy of the Constitutional Units, safeguards for the minorities, protection of religions, frame and proper scheme of the Constitution. But it nowhere talked of religious State or the same of Islam; neither did it say that the State would be made on the basis of religion. Then where has the issue of an Islamic State come from?’

On 11th August, 1947 in the first session of the Constituent Assembly Muhammad Ali Jinnah was made its President who said in this speech, “I cannot emphasize too much, we must begin to work, all the angularities of minorities and Muslim communities. You have to attain the freedom and independence... You are free to go to your temples... or to any place of worship... religion has nothing to do with the State”...

Case quoted by Mr. Abid Minto

In a court of Chief Justice, on the dais I (Minto) was asked by CJ to help him. The case brought in the court was that a young Maulvi had asked for a passport, where he was asked for his ID carrying picture. He maintained that taking picture was Haraam in Islam, and that the court should rule that picture should not be on the passport... In the same court room there were picture of CJs on the wall, including that of Quaid. Despite that a judgment was made that taking pictures is *Haraam* in Islam, but since the conditions have changed, so the picture is necessary. This 200-paged judgment was written by a Maulvi sahib and chief justice.

Despite the strong theoretical grounds, Mr. Minto deplored that Mullah Board was made to put their views in legislation.



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Mr. Minto told the participants of the Conference that Ayub Khan's Constitution had kept up with the name of Republic of Pakistan; word 'Islam' was not there. It was the 1973 Constitution – given by a party that had people's mandate on *Roti Kapra aur Makaan...* that party put the word 'Islamic' in the Republic of Pakistan the Constitution said Islam would be the religion of Pakistan... hence this became the basis of sectarianism... Foundation was laid for the religious State. Council for Islamic Ideology (CII) was made – and its role was outlined in the Constitution. After Bhutto, the religious face of the Constitution surfaced. Later on, Zia made the Federal *Shariat* Court, and gave it the same authority that it can rule over all the laws. Is not it ironic that the judges are scared of the maulvis in the *Shariat* Court'?

Mr. Minto concluded his speech with the words that the current situation demanded that we should be secular, and our tradition that was of 1940 Resolution and Quaid's speech should be restored.

5. Ms. Asma Jehnagir- Chairperson Human Rights Commission Pakistan:

Asma Jahangir, Chairperson Human Rights Commission Pakistan, commenting on the symbiosis of State versus religion said, 'What we have been reiterating that there is no need to have relationship between state and religion; if you make any policy in the name of religion once, then it's very difficult to undo that'. She told how religious minorities suffered here; not only in Gojra but in Sindh too where Hindu girls in Sindh were being forcibly converted to Islam? **(NSCW should take up this issue).**



Denying relation between State and religion- Ms. Asma Jahangir emphasized that State never has a religion, which then propagates and tries to convert rest of the citizenry on the basis of that religion. 'We want a secular society, but for that we cannot depend on political leaders who cannot deliver well to the public. We need to launch a massive movement to restructure the State on the base of 1940 Resolution. Therefore, we must understand that the Talibanization is not the only challenge secularism faces, there are many more challenges as well.

Since we all need secularism, it is the role of State to ensure achieving it. The independence of the Judiciary is so called, for still the judiciary has a long beard inside. In this wake, demand for a secular society is a just demand, a practical demand, and without which **I think the national identity is not going to resolve the rooted issues of this country.**

For the leaders of Pakistan movement Ms. Asma Jahangir said that they changed their dress code into *Sherwani* as the country was established; Fatima Jinnah was asked during



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her visit to Balochistan to cover her head. No one that time understood that playing with religion was equal to playing with fire that is spreading. Fact is that we have missed the cross-road long ago! We are on the wrong road now... We must ask for the repeal of all the oppressive laws, and make our law in conformity with international law- it should be part of our law that anybody who incites hatred on the basis of religion must be punished.

6. Ms. Sheema Kirmani- Patriarchy & Extremism

Sheema Kirman glorified women in her poem with the title – “We the women- are the dispossessed by war”.

7. Ms. Afiya Shaharbano Zia – Patriarchy & Religious Extremism

Ms. Afiya Zia presented the following paper in the conference:

I'd like to start with the disclaimer that I do not, for a second, underestimate the extremist threat to Pakistan and nor do I undermine the trauma inflicted on the people of the NWFP - nor for a moment do I wish to diminish the efforts of the citizenry or indeed, more recently, the state in its endeavor to counter the growing militancy in the country.



However, I do wish to problematize the temptation, on the other hand, to reduce and converge all expression of patriarchy under this umbrella term of 'extremism'. This trend creates a false prioritization whereby all public expressions of male violence are considered extremist and somehow those committed by militants, more barbaric, horrific and dangerous than the routine, hidden, domestic and insidious violence perpetrated by the so-called 'moderate' muslim Pakistani man. I make this distinction between public spectre of violent acts and domestic quietude deliberately because I think this is one of the reasons why we gravitate towards this false polarisation of *extreme* patriarchy and *moderate* patriarchy.

I understand that most activists and feminists in this room know all too well that violence against women is all connected and that you do not discriminate between domestic and public violence when you take up actual cases of women victims and survivors of crimes.

However, over the last few years, there has been a growing persuasion to reduce all expressions of social and political wrongs as the purview of extremists or extremism. Even at this conference there is evidence of such compounding when we see that what used to be understood and referred to simply as 'honour killings' (and which predate religious militancy) is also now being labelled as 'cultural extremism'. It took the women's movement a very long time to highlight the fact that violent cultural practices were executed against women as a norm – as a method of regular, engrained, control over



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women's sexuality and to curb her right to choice, and for control over her material resources. Now it seems, by terming it as an extremist act, we are giving the impression this is not the norm but that crimes of honour are committed only in some extreme situations, or by men who are *extremely* cultural or *extremely* patriarchal. I'm concerned over this blurring of the earlier clarity and the temptation to collapse all expressions of *regular* patriarchy under this euphemistic and ubiquitous 'extremism'.

The concern is also that this kind of analysis invites us to the suggestion that only religious militants commit grievous crimes but more importantly, that this gives a shield to every other shade of violence committed by a moderate so that those who don't commit the crime in the name of religion are perhaps not such barbaric or dangerous men. Also, anyone who is critical of the Taliban for its treatment of women automatically earns the title of being a 'moderate'. One example of how this works is when the MQM, exclusively, stood against the Nizam e Adl Regulation, some people (men) claimed it is the only liberal, secular party left in Pakistan. For those of us who live the MQM ideology and are too well aware of its impact with reference to violence against women in Karachi city, we shudder at such claims.

Let me put it another way; I wonder why the women's movement would fear the Shariah of the Taliban more than it would, the Shariah of the Pakistan Muslim League- Nawaz group. I say this in all seriousness. Consider, that the Shariah of the Taliban has been and continues to be challenged across the board in Pakistan – from Sunni Tehreek and Jamaat ud Dawa to the Women's Action Forum and Labour Party, they are unanimous in condemning the Taliban's interpretation and application of Islam and Islamic law and indeed, their social order. However, the Muslim League's conservative religious ideology has been more legitimate, has democratic credentials and therefore is far more insidious and institutionalised than the Taliban's will ever be.

The question then is, why is it presumed that 'moderate', democratic Islamists are a better option for women and minorities than extremists? Why is it presumed that the recent trend to prop Sufi-ism as a milder brand of Islam will be less patriarchal in its applied form, than the Wahabi brand? Given the radical backlash and the complete challenge to women's rights by male theologians, why do we presume that feminists working within the Islamic framework will be more successful in defeating patriarchal Islam, than the secular feminists?

Part of the reason for investing such hope in the moderate, the culturally appropriate and re-defined brand of religion is because of the belief in a mythical construction of something called an 'authentic cultural past'. Of course there is no consensus in what this authentic past is but there is an agreement to reject modernity and its failure for third world nations and for some feminists this has also created a longing for some mythical pre-patriarchal time. Before one is accused of having a personal problem with this, as one often is when they present a critique, let me put on the record that personally I've been quite sympathetic to such efforts: I recognize that this cultural excavation has contributed in reclaiming women's historical and cultural relevance and even symbolically and



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spiritually empowered some women - but I also think they've been tremendously unsuccessful on a political level. And this is a concern because if anything, such projects have lent political impetus to more radical right-wing Islamist women in Pakistan, who use this approach of pursuing divine rights within Islam to further their own political and often antifeminist understanding of women's Islamic rights and duties. There's no time today to go into details but I'll share a recent quote from a woman activist of Jamaat e Islami in Karachi as told to a researcher who works on the Jamaat women.

The researcher was talking to this senior jama'at woman and kept saying to her "... but the secular feminists say this about you and secular feminist say that about you..." and eventually she says the Jama'at woman turned to her and said:

"ab aise baar baar toh un ko "secular, secular" toh na kayein, aakhir who bhi hamaaree behnein hain to aap aische to na kahein unn ke bare mein"

I think that was a beautiful example of the ultimate co-option of an adversarial ideology – to forgive and absorb into the fold, bring to the righteous path. And exemplary of the kind of inclusive tolerance that moderates keep preaching for.

Those who suggest that this is 'old news' and right-wing women have always been like this, are living in denial or deluding themselves. The right wing has redefined itself and Jamai Hafsa movement was simply a precursor of things to come. I recommend that such deniers read the new scholarship that studies the right wing women, if not for understanding the New Right itself, then at least to learn how the new scholars are attempting to glorify what they call the "agency of veiled women activists" of religious political parties.

Certainly there is a creeping Arabisation of society that can be observed in Pakistan today and which goes beyond the geo-political influence and funding of militancy. For us to pretend that the Jamia Hafsa incident was a one-of, foreign funded, state-sponsored, aberrant incident is being blind to the many pockets of privatised religion that are incubating for similar political activism in the future. After all, personal agency has to convert into activism at some point.

One of the outcomes of using Islam as a political strategy that feminists did not predict when they supported women's empowerment through piety movements and spiritual practices is how these have morphed into informal social policy. So for example, the limitations on women's mobility (including driving) and education, as well as condemning shrines or other perceived 'un-Islamic' practices such *Milads*, listening to music or celebrating birthdays does not emerge from the state nor is it just advocated by the Taliban media but in fact, it is part of and supported by the discourse of mainstream religio-political parties, as well as non-institutional piety movements in the private sector– often women-led. They reject the Taliban ethos as extreme and 'un-Islamic' but imbibe and promote many of the very same principles, only packaged in a less extreme or dramatic version. Such programs to promote Islamic etiquette are also found in upper class clubs and theocratic societies and public and private universities.



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I observe that at private schools and at KU there is often very little difference between the social attitudes (despite the class differences between the students) with reference to what it means to be a young Muslim. On average, 50% of my upper class private school students say it is Haram to listen to music but in the true spirit of elitist hypocrisy, they say they listen to it anyway. The point is that understanding of religion in theory in both cases is increasingly narrow on social behavior required of Muslims. Religious discourse has subsumed all other previously secular spaces and replaced all other forms of theory, philosophy and currency. And it has yet to trickle down its supposed beneficial potential to the rights of women and minorities.

I'd like to touch a bit about another concern here and that is about the role of donors and development assistance in this regard. In an effort to increase their leverage in the global attention on terrorism, western governments and their development agencies are treating Islam as a new brand of their academic and project interests. The new twist of course, is that now rather than focusing on secular resistance against faith-based politics, they are hitching their funding to the kind of research that suggests that women's foremost identities in countries with Muslim populations (however small) are defined and associated only with religion/Islam. Hence, research interest and projects in countries such as Pakistan are now being revised from Women and development generally to Women, Islam and Development; its not 'women's empowerment in Asia' but 'women's empowerment in the Muslim context'; the Islamic Feminist conference is an annual event held in Europe funded by the British Council.

Education reform now means madrassah reform rather than mainstream school reform. My colleague Nazish and I are thinking of submitting a project proposal with the title, Women, Islam and Climate Change. We have no idea what it will be about but we believe donors will be falling over themselves to fund that one. Of course this trend is not limited to women – there is a conference titled Deaf Muslims 2010 due for next year. Apparently, even special needs have a religion now. I find this essentialising personally very disturbing and politically it smacks of neo-colonialism with an apologist twist.

This is not to pretend that as academics and activists, we don't play this to our career advantages. There is an entire generation of young revivalists comprising mostly of diasporic Muslim scholars and many at Lahore Uni Management Sciences (LUMS) who are committed to the project of reinventing right wing or orthodox religio-political parties and organizations. The romanticisation of the *Jama'at ud Dawa* and women's religio-political organizations is based on a redefinition of the standards of women's rights. The argument of these scholars is that, "so what if such religious groups are not committed to feminism? – at least, by being politically active they are exhibiting agency" and the secular feminists do these religious women a disservice by dismissing such activism as retrogressive.

To some extent I agree with this challenge. The reality is that after Jamia Hafsa, it has become increasingly dangerous to pretend that right wing women are mere pawns in the hands of male clergy or that they follow some archaic political agenda. In fact in some



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cases these women exhibit more autonomy than women from so-called liberal, progressive political parties do, against male patriarchal practices within their own parties. Where I don't agree with the new LUMS and diasporic scholarship is in their acceptance that feminism is an undesirable western import or indeed in their project that seeks to seam together culture and Islam as a necessary prerequisite for an authentic Muslim social order in Pakistan.

Lastly, I propose it is dangerous to assign the roots of patriarchy in either the extremist mindset, or the feudal mindset or as intrinsic to the capitalist mode of production. Patriarchy is self-explanatory and to give it all these appendages may help make analytical sense but it merely dilutes a political understanding that then leads us to rely on a soft, Sufi, moderate religious alternative in the hope that this will ameliorate the impact of patriarchy: or that killings in the name of honor will stop once men are convinced of the true status of women in Islam: or that if we reject the post colonial modern nation state and its western inspired discourse of universal rights and replace it with culturally specific alternatives, such as Qazi courts, then social justice will be guaranteed.

The nexus between religion and patriarchal cultural practices is too close, too overlapping for us to rely on the project of sifting out patriarchy from "true" religion and culture and hoping that the leftovers is some purer state from which we can extricate our rights as women and minorities. If women's rights in Pakistan are perpetually dependent on a theoretical debate of whether we get more appropriate rights or culturally relevant rights within Islam, then I submit that as long as we are destined to struggle for only theoretical rights, then rather than being defeatist and apologetic, they may as well be unequivocally, unconditionally, unilaterally equal and non-negotiable in all circumstances including inheritance and property rights, the right to marry and divorce, for child custody, testimony and evidence, in compensation but then also in punishment, as well as in social and sexual relations for women and for religious minorities. This is only possible, even in theory, in a secular state and largely secular social attitudes.

If our struggle is going to be about theoretical rights then lets begin seriously to look at the failure of past projects to just buffer or put a lid on religious militancy and its impact on women and minorities. Instead, given the current backlash against religious militancy in Pakistan today, it is perhaps the most opportune moment for rethinking the possibility of unapologetically promoting more secular changes at state levels and within social attitudes, rather than losing it to something called moderation which is as patriarchal and potentially dangerous as extremism.¹⁵

¹⁵ *Postscript: This presentation is based on research papers by the author carried in The Feminist Review (Feb 09; Palgrave Macmillan) and a forthcoming paper in the Journal of International Women's Studies.*



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8. Ms. Kausar S. Khan & Ms. Amar Sindhu: Presentation on Shazia's murder-Murder the Most Foul

Shazia Abro, a university graduate was killed on April 5, 2009, in village Mulan Abro, Taluka Baqrani, District Larkana, [Police Station Baqrani- the FIR No.41of 2009 U/S 302 PPC] by the brother of his illiterate fiancé in the name honor after she refused marrying in that family.



Dr. Kausar S. Khan (a researcher in Aga Khan University Karachi and Senior WAF member and Amar Sindhu (Chairperson Department of Philosophy University of Sindh and organizer WAF Hyderabad chapter) presented the case in the conference. Dr. Kausar told that Shazia's father's appeals went to seventeen influential persons of the country (including President, PM and CJ of Pakistan) but no one responded him and the killer is still untouched. Sharing the background of the issue Dr. Kausar told that Shazia was four years old when she was engaged to his one of the cousins who never studied in school....Shazia's parents broke the engagement when, Shazia, after graduation, refused to marry the one who was not literate at all.

The tragic story is that, Shazia, with her parents, went to Larkana on a marriage ceremony. Her grandmother living at the home of her fiancé invited Shazia for dinner; Shazia declined the first time, but she went when she was invited again for the dinner. After she had dinner, Shazia was shot dead by her fiancé's brother after being declared *Kari*/adulterous.

[Shazia's body had to be exhumed for the post mortem]. Since the killer is not caught yet, Shazia's mother wants justice: She wants 1) the killer must be tried. 2) He should publicly announce that Shazia was not *kari*. 3) Money taken by the man declared *karo* should be returned.

Anis Haroon ensured that NSCW would take its best efforts to take this case to the Supreme Court...

Scharmene (NSCW member from Sindh) commented on Shazia's murder case that time demands quick action on our part to pass legislation; because judiciary does not take honour killing seriously. There should be a separate court for trying cases of violence against women... we will form a committee.

Dr. Kausar told, 'Shazia's father is a Professor at Agriculture University, Tando Jam. He is being threatened by the killer...He asks from us "If the State can't do anything, what can I do ?" Hence he has decided to withdraw the case! As he says, threats and pressure are difficult to bear with...."I have other children to take care of... what if he (nephew-the killer) kills me or my other children!"

Amar Sindhu, who pursues the case of Shazia Abro from the platform of WAF Hyderabad Chapter told that WAF Hyderabad members visited Shazia's home; her mother kept saying '*koi maira saath dai.*' The Bar Association was approached, and others as well... everybody said that the family must come and speak to us. Everyone



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said that the family should pursue the case... But family resorted to be quiet after being threatened by the killer.

Amar Sindhu told the sad status of the family of Shazia – ‘Shazia’s mother is traumatized... her relationship with her husband is strained because out of fear he has decided to withdraw pursuing the case by settling it outside the court. But the mother says that what difference remains between the killer and the family of the killed one if the family is ready to pardon the killer? She screams in the mid of night and throws her husband out to at least fight back... Two sisters of Shazia have had their engagement broken after this tragedy- the sufferers are being stigmatized. Ms. Amar said to the participants of the conference, “We leave this open to you, suggest us how should we take this case forward And make the State fulfill its responsibility?”

9. Ms. Neelam Hussain: Mobilization of Women for Extremist Causes

Neelam Hussain, Executive Director of Simorgh organization and Senior activist of Women Action Forum discussed new religious practices and performist dimensions of ‘Dars’ of Al- Huda and Al-Nor on Quranic teachings. She told, ‘Dars’ meetings are held in private homes as well as at public places. ‘Dars’ happens quietly... it works with great effectiveness and influences the very much way of thinking. Basically the ‘Dars’ culture is a sub-culture. The sub cultures are smaller, localized...they operate independently but its ideas are drawn from the larger culture. However, among the Elitists the ‘Dars’ culture and jihad are taken differently. As a woman from working class would say she would go for Jihad, the one from elite class will go for the ‘Dars’ only.



Discussing the characteristics of sbu-culture she told, ‘our experience of ‘Dars’ classes where we see how an identity of a cultural group develops is unique. Language is the most impacted if we talk about the development of new cultural identity, for example, there has been liberal sprinkling of Arabic words, Arabic pronunciation. Meanwhile there has been heavy emphasis on ritualistic behavior, like, how to drink water: “sit and drink”, “three sips”... A particular dress code is followed’. Hence, she told that the cultural identity is the main focus of ‘Dars’.

They, Neelam Hussaid told, (Al- Huda and Al-Noor) study Quran at three levels:

- a) Listening to the Quran in Arabic
- b) Literal word to word translation
- c) Linking the text to the contemporary issues

‘Along with the teaching of Quran, some more subjects are made part of the ‘Dars’. Multiple meanings of words are reduced to a given meaning according to their code... As



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their code contains Allah Hafiz instead of Khuda Hafiz, it was popularized by Zia. The discursive space of 'Dars' is reduced, the environment's reality is dissolved (through smoke etc) giving a magical look. The existing society is presented as full of contradiction, as if they are in search of some ideal society, homogenous *Ummah* united under the Jihadi flag.

Discussing the concrete reasons for attraction in 'Dars' Ms. Neelam Hussain told that a society where women are home-bound and powerless, to them the Dars' provides another outlet as well as they are able to make new friends (under new objective). The 'Dars' offers (technically) an equal space for all classes to mix on the basis of a kind of shared aspirations. 'Dars' provides space to arrange marriages, it provides new social space, provides respect in their families- there is no need of permission to go to 'Dars'. Also, it gave boost to self-esteem. A Lady Health Worker (LHW) reported that religion gave her authority to talk of sexuality as part of her work. Despite that according to them a good woman is the one who is ignorant'.

A woman told: "There is a plus side of 'Dars'... and also a down side... it is not easy process... as my husband was not too keen on my wearing the *Hijaab*, but I convinced him and meantime I stopped working. Now he works, and I dress up to the hilt for him at home...the down side is that it is generating tension in the house. The positive side is that women are learning computers, internet, they learn to teaching and get some employment ultimately"—'this is the stated aim of Al-Huda and Al-Noor—to engage with religious text and relate that with the current/contemporary society as well', said Ms. Hussain. If we talk about Al-Huda's originator, Ms. Abida Gurmani, she is from South Punjab having a degree of BA from Kinnaird college. She relates to Maulana Maudoodi's school of thought and has been working in this field for long time, said Ms. Hussain.

Ms. Hussain told that she attended a lecture where she learnt that those who were sitting far from the stage were lower down in the social scale, while the frontline/s were preserved for the elites. Commenting on the pedagogical approach of the teacher, Ms. Hussain told that it was interesting and narrative-based, in between what were right and wrong. 'Also it was a bit of jihad, anti Indian, Anti-US; along with that they were talking of family harmony in which more focus was on women's role to maintain unity at home and keep all happy. However, the key focus was on speaking in the name of God; it was as part of narrative technique... for example, 'Allah said this or that. But in all that narrative there was no comment on social inequality or real issues that matter in the contemporary society'.

Ms. Hussain told that Al Noor – a sister organization of Al Huda, was flashy building as compared to that of Al-Huda, it represented more the elite women. They had Hijab designers. In their 'Dars' there were sofas, Gao Takiyas (fancy cushions), people could sit wherever they wanted. Al- Noor had its organizations in Africa, Canada and Far East. It was Laila tul Qadar, when I attended their 'Dars' program. I thought this was a reflective time to attend and experience how they practice religion on that particular night. Al-Noor had organized the program at Qadafi Stadium; it was well-organized



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program with soft lights, Hijabi women were around. There was their material on display. At the reception every one was asked to register, only name and education level were asked on the registration sheet. There a collective Nimaz was going on which was actually a taped Nimaz. It was a picnic scenario, rather festive. Some women were saying their prayers, others were talking, chatting, children were playing running around... they were told 'don't make noise, angels will run away'. Nighat Hashmi, the cult figure of Al-Noor, all were waiting for her. The most people there were from the middle and lower middle classes, just general Awaam were there. The technical gadgets, like, Multi media/huge screen/Na't/visual images, all were handled by men'.

Suddenly, Nighat Hashmi appeared in her total black Hijab told Ms. Hussain. 'She started talking but what she said I don't remember... her tone was gushy... Na't would come, then visual images... then Nighat Hashmi's gushy voice... this went on till 2:00 a.m. I don't think women were listening, it was just a night out, they had an experience... they had permission to come'. Commenting on the message of the talk, Ms. Hussain told that it was actually to re-enforcing patriarchy, exclusivity... hence the sub culture was reabsorbed in larger culture. This organization has lots of money... a woman gave one hundred thousand rupees there, but far more money is needed especially when somewhere a sub culture is formed... when some parts of culture propagate violence.

10. Ms. Samar Minallah- Extremism and the Collapse of Social Structure

Ms. Samar Minallah's presentation focused on the lives of Pakhtun women. Ms. Minallah emphasized upon Pakhtun culture's being affected by violence; she said it would keep happening unless changes are made in the basic social structures. About Pakhtunwali she said that it was based on Badal (revenge), Melmastiya (hospitality), granting Nanawatay (refuge) and Bakhana (forgiveness), Swara (giving of girls as compensation for dispute resolution). She said, 'cultures are integrated systems; they are not haphazard collections of customs and beliefs; they are integrated patterned systems. If one part of the system (e.g. economy) changes, the other parts change as well. In Pakhtun society culture has become a main victim of extremism in an organized attempt of attack on Pakhtoon society. Mullah Fazlullah gave women a role in society; women were the target of his FM, and he exploited them. They became his devotees, giving their jewelry and espousing his messages. He tried to change the culture; and when the culture begins to change the social structures also begin to change'.



Samar told that there were some activities/cultural space for women in pre-Taliban era. They used to go for spinach picking. Communal water source was exclusive to women outside the home—they used to go to the streams to wash clothes- but when they were



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told to wear full veil, they asked how could they wash clothes in full veil? Women used to compose poems and sing Tappas, they used to go to shrines for Ziyaarat, shrines were the common space for men and women to congregate at. Women's festivals were organized at the famous shrine—it is known as Akhtar Mela, they would go by foot from one shrine to the other shrine. They had the musical instruments which they played, they danced and sang on the way. They used to go for Akhtar Mela on the third day of every Eid. It was around 8 years ago they have stopped going to the shrine, because going to the shrine now is a taboo, after Talibanization. The Taliban damaged Pir Baba and Saifu Baba's Shrines, also of Rahman Baba.

Samar told that these were very hard times when singing is declared as a *Gunah/Sin* for those women who used to sing folk songs and lullabies. Even in death rituals poetry used to be recited. 'One can imagine what happened to the society in which singing on wedding anniversaries is not allowed', she said. She further added, 'Culturally women who needed shelter, when they did not want to live with husbands, were given refuge at the tribal elder's home... these women were called *Maramaray*. Such spaces are no more according to the Taliban as women are the source of all conflict to them'. Samar quoted a sentence from a sermon by a Talib: '*prices have gone up, because women are loitering in the market*'.

Samar shared very interesting thing about Bajawar that there still is a female tribal leader named Malika, she even presides the Jirga; she had killed an enemy and is revered by people there. In nutshell, Samar's presentation focused that the Pakhtun culture was victimized by extremism.

Munezae Jahangir displayed her short documentary Film on Lal Masjid, which she recorded in 2007 – before Lal Masjid operation took place.

11. Dr. Arifa Sayeda Zehra- Concluding Remarks

Dr. Arifa said had we had spread education, we would not have suffered this extremism; she said the extremists express their extremism through banning women. 'I got a letter from Baitullah Mehsud's followers – the letter said, you talk too much, we will cut your tongue'... this is the way they threaten. Hence almost everywhere they express their extremism through deciding the status of women.



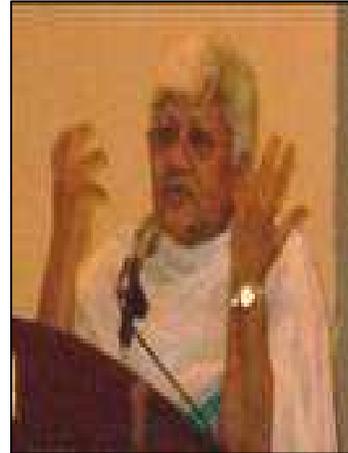
When women in Baluchistan were buried alive, they said it is their 500-year old tradition; they gave edicts that photographs are Haram; in Saudi Arabia they brought an edict that women cannot come to public places wearing high heels... "for this provoke us- (men)"— Dr. Zehra said, 'how high values they have what is their faith that it slips with the sound of high heels... They can Islamize their society by restricting women, as if men cannot err only woman errs. Islam is always in danger because of women'.



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12. Ms. Rubina Saigol: State Centralization and Ethnic Conflict

Ms. Rubina Saigol gave her presentation on State centralization and ethnic conflicts in Pakistan, where since the inception of the country Sindhis, Planktons, Bloch's, Bengalis and Punjabis were no longer having their identities and were integrated into a single identity Pakistan. Succinctly she gave an overview that how conflict of the centre with the federating units began; East Pakistan was lost because the West Pakistan did not recognize the principal majority of the Bengalis. A huge space was created for the racial prejudice- while Punjabis and Muhajis were the most benefited because the economic disparities between the East and West Pakistan. Following was the sequence and content of her presentation:



of

of

How Bengalis suffered in Pakistan?

In 1970 when Awami League won 151 seats out of 153, it was not accepted but the West Pakistan. Instead of (having political prudence), One Unit was made in 1955, and the Constitutions of 1956 recognized the One Unit.

Grievances of Baloch Nation

Discussing the grievances of Baloch nation, Ms. Saigol said that in every decade there were conflicts in Balochistan, which were raised when the State was taking over the resources of the provinces. Baloch nations' resistance movements have been curbed through heavy weapons in which thousands of Baloch nationals and soldiers were killed. 'This is the history', Ms. Saigol said 'but the conflict erupted again as military builds cantonments on Baloch territory. In 2006 – Nawab Akbar Bugti was murdered while resisting cantonments & capture of vital resources of the province. And recently in April 2009 Baloch national leaders were killed. Hundreds of disappearances/missing persons, torture of Baloch nationalists and death in custody are the grievances that make the Baloch carry on their resistance against the State'.

Ms. Saigol told that the political grievance of the Baloch were the absence of provincial autonomy, dismissal of NAP Government barely a year after 1973 Constitution, building of Cantonments/ militarization, unjust distribution of water by IRSA, no consultation before conducting nuclear tests in Chaghi etc. Economic grievances of the Baloch were lack of investment in development of the province, lack of just royalty from Sui Gas, provision of gas to the other provinces before providing the same to Balochistan that owned it, award of work to Punjabi & Sindhi settlers, control over vital resources – iron ore, marble, copper, gold etc and of NFC Award

Grievances of Pakhtunkhwa



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The main grievance of Pakhtunkhwa, Ms. Saigol told was of Plebiscite/referendum that was held to join Pakistan ignoring Bacha Khan. The other grievances of the Pakhtun nation have been absence of provincial autonomy as stipulated in 1940 Pakistan Resolution & Constitution of 1973, lack of just royalty for water & power, establishment efforts to make Kalabagh Dam, lack of control over water/power resources, lack of integration of FATA into Pakhtunkhwa, dismissal of NAP Government in Balochistan and persisting the name of the province North Western Frontier Province instead of what people demanded, 'Pakhtunkhwa'.

Concerns of Sindh

About Sindh Ms. Saigol told that it has been the main breadwinner for Pakistan and contributes 60% to the GDP. In 1983 there was the Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) in Sindh during which Punjab remains indifferent/unmoved in spite of killing of Bhutto and massive repression by Zia-ul-Haq/military. Even there was use of Gunship Helicopters to bombard Sindhis in which hundreds of political activists were killed arrested/imprisoned and tortured to death. Approximately 45,000 Punjabi troops fought makeshift guerilla fighters. In 1986 Zia era, another conflict erupted; 50 students died at Tory Railway crossing. In early-Mid 1990s conflict in urban Sindh between Muhajirs and Sindhis created, terrorism was used that ended up at killing of people. Sindh has been demanding provincial autonomy, distribution of NFC award on the basis of population, proper share of water for the Lower Riparian, infiltration in the nationalist parties to weaken them and weakening grand party—Pakistan Peoples' Party.

Conclusion

Rubina Saigol concluded that provincial autonomy should be given to the provinces; military should start dialogue instead of using guns; NFC Award should be distributed on basis of population, Concurrent list should be aborted; Punjab must concede the water rights of the Lower Riparian. As well as she endorsed that a parliamentary democracy based on sound federal principles with Centre only handling currency, defense, foreign affairs & communication must be created to achieve maximum provincial autonomy. A strong federation cannot be created by weak provinces; only strong provinces will create a strong federation.

13. Ms. Nighat Said Khan- Ethnic Identities: Violations of women's rights

Nighat Said Khan, Executive Director Applied Socio-Economic Research (ASR) said anything can be accepted but never extremism... 'when we talk of it, we are almost saying, we will accept this and that, but not the extremism'. She said that Punjab has articulated its ethnicity through its State which is extremist... She said that Citizenship has been a contested notion since 1947. In Pakistan women's rights have been violated through laws, bringing discriminatory laws.



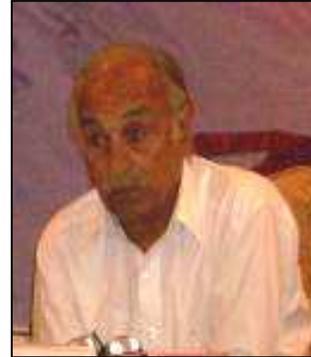


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Women should have equal rights; that is the reason we have never been able to achieve the national belonging. ‘What I want is that women should have her role she should have her identity in this country’.

14. Mr. Mukhtar Bacha: Concluding Remarks

Mukhtar Bacha, Political activist and Advocate High Court said in his speech that it is not Taliban; actually it is army which is inflicting violence on us. That army made the Taliban, we all suffered but more than that women were targeted; it seemed as if Taliban’s real enemy were women... Taliban have been created in robe of Neo-Wahabism. He said that in the history of Islam, it was first time that Wahabism had come in a militant form with the support of Arab money to destroy our liberal culture. Mr. Bacha told, ‘not only primary but we want our women to middle, secondary and higher education and that would be the only way to empower our women folks’. He requested National Commission on the Status of women to promote education.



Mr. Mukhtar Bacha endorsed on the inadequacy of the 1973 Constitution—for which a new social contract is needed- the constitution of Pakistan has to be made anew from the perspective of humanism, for the perspective of Sindhis, Baloch and Pakhtuns. Recalling a conversation between Bacha Khan and Wali Khan, Mukhtar Bacha told that Wali Khan asked his father once that we will have *Hoors* in the paradise, what our mothers will get there? He said such discourse was permissible in Pakhtoon society which now is reduced to extremism only. Mr. Mukhtar Bacha suggested that why women cannot have their own political party?

15. Ms. Farhat Taj- Social Implication of the Nizam e Adl Regulation

Ms. Farhat Taj, a columnist in The News daily and a researcher in the University of Oslo, Norway, emphasized on understanding the sociology of law; she said that Nizam e Adl was a massive strike on society by the democratic and secular political parties like Awami National Party and Pakistan People’s Party. Though the Taliban could have been isolated by bringing quick changes in the systems as there was a popular demand for justice by people, with which the Taliban began to deliver people.



Denying the acceptance of Nizam e Adl within Pakhtunkhwa she said that no one wanted the Nizam.... ‘Who wanted Nizam e Adl in Pakhtunkhwa? People of Chitral did not ask for it, Kailash community felt threatened, people of Buner had animosity with the Taliban; veil had not been culture of Swat. The Pakhtun society had a moderate history; during the time of Wali of Swat, disputes were resolved by bringing the parties together- there was a



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space for negotiation and flexibility- where does then the alien Nizam come from'? However, justifying the role of ANP Ms. Taj said that there was no need of running parallel legal system that actually disconnected and parted the society into pieces as done by Nizam-e-Adl. ANP, under the great threat accepted the pressure by resolving to coming to the terms of the Taliban. For the reason that the Taliban were hounding like dogs, and army was not taking any action- therefore, the provincial government of Pakhtunkhwa tried to solve the issue through dangerous means.

Ms. Taj said, 'Burqa has reduced public space for women. Since I am studying in Norway, let me tell you, there is a conflict of law – Norwegian law and Muslim law... there is discussion that Norwegian law is not against Islam, that Norwegian law has gender concerns and wish to extend it to the Muslims'.

Finally, concluding her speech Ms. Taj said that there has been larger challenge for the political parties and that is how to engage with people at grass roots level, to protect social space from religious groups.

16. Ms. Rukhshanda Naz: gaps in government policies in rehabilitation

Ms. Rakhshanda Naz, Aurat Foundation Peshawar gave her presentation on the status of IDPs and gaps in government policies; she told that out of the population of about 6.5 million (65-lac) almost 3.6 million people had moved out of their homeland due to the military operations against insurgency in the region. Approximately 57% of the local population moved as IDPs during the previous & current military operations.



What people of Pakhtunkhwa wanted, she told, was:

- ❑ Resolution of the issues relating to women IDPs and the conflict should be the foremost priority
- ❑ No Jirga or committees should be constituted without women residing in camps or living in the conflict area.
- ❑ Local people should be involved in rehabilitation plan.
- ❑ The women's right to mobility, education and work should be protected by State.
- ❑ All women, who are government or semi-government employee, i.e. health workers, teachers, etc should be paid by State until they resume their jobs.
- ❑ Widows/heads of households should get training in order to earn livelihood.

2-Rehabilitation and employment Ms. Naz suggested

- ❑ The Geographical Information System (GIS) should be applied to collect authentic data on the losses caused by the recent conflict.
- ❑ Efforts should be made for an early rehabilitation of the displaced persons but they should not be forced to go back against their will.
- ❑ Employment and health facility should be ensured for the IDPs out of camps in city.



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- ❑ All damaged property should be reconstructed and people given the right to return to their homes. (The Taliban families should also be included in the process, they should not be ignored in the rehabilitation process)
- ❑ Government / private sector should train women IDPs at camps in new and indigenous skills (Stitching, embroidery, beads, etc.)

17. Ms. Shehnaz Wazir Ali: Prospects of Peace & Way forward

Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Special Assistant to P.M on Social Issues, said in her speech, 'There are various plans; for example, there is a Malakand plan, a FATA plan, and plan for Pakhtunkhwa... These plans do not have a clear inclusion of women- women's issues can be involved once FATA and PATA to be brought under Pakistan Constitution'.

Justifying signing of Nizam e Adl she said, 'Just to clarify that the idea of Nizam-e-Adl was to have an agreement on resolving the conflict without army intervention, but it did not serve. The situation today with extremism is very volatile and poses threat to the society. For this we must understand the localities where extremism is taking place; if we look at the mainstream of our society, government and non-government bodies, it looks very critical. However, I think it has to be a joint venture to resolve the issue, for there are no short-cuts to the solution'.



We must also be very careful in positioning ourselves with the rest of the world, but before that we have to win the hearts and the minds of the people of Pakistan. The best way to do so is to bring in the financial aids and strengthen the development programs regarding health, education, improving the road network and structuring the social system and judicial reforms. This is the kind of a master plan that is coming to Pakistan and I just feel that this master plan is just like a post Second World War Master Plan that was a total restructuring of the Europe. Nevertheless, for this master plan we need financial aid for the development programs and we need to carefully decide where to take this aid from, and especially how these development programs could cater could the women lot.

18. Ms. Samar Minallah: "Testimonies of Women from Conflict Areas" – A documentary film



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19. Ms. Bushra Gauhar- Concluding Remarks

Bushra Gauhar, MNA /Chairperson Standing Committee on Women Development said that the government has hope is in the people of this country. Awami National Party has been facing challenges since its government. Those who raised their voices were threatened or killed. It was important to understand the complexities and challenges that we have been going through and those are still there. ANP has always maintained that we resolve our differences through dialogue. PPP and ANP are taking courageous steps that should be acknowledged. Responsibility is on the parliament, but you can strengthen the parliament...



Bushra Gauhar said, 'the IDP issues are not been tackled well; there was no proper strategy for the millions who were displaced. NADRA did not recognize women headed families... many women from Malakand and Swat have lost their husbands but they are not being registered by NADRA... visa cards are being issued... and they are to get money from ATM. Moreover, how could such issue be tackled well when the head of the IDP program is an army person? In this context we cannot see the IDP issue in isolation ignoring the roots. Extremists were left at large; military realized when people were being slaughtered. There can be no peace in Malakand without going into the reasons... and the reason is in Islamabad. We are still following policies that are for Afghanistan and Kashmir... unless we deal with them. The same is the issue of FATA that is surrendered to the militants, where they have their complete writ. NCSW can take steps in this regard, if it is independent'.

20. Ms. Sheema Kirmani's presentation & video

Ms. Kirmani showed her performance on how woman suffers in a patriarchal society.

21. Ms. Sahar Gul: Findings of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW)

Perceptions of the (in and off camps) women on Talibanization, Military Operation and Religious Extremism
Ms. Sahar Gul, Research Coordinator NCSW and a columnist shared with the participants of the conference the Perceptions of the Internally Displaced (in and off camps) Women on Talibanization, Military Operation and Religious Extremism.

The purpose of conducting the case study of Malakand Division was, Ms. Gul said:





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- ❑ Understanding the complexity of the phenomenon- In order to understand the complexity of Taliban's extremist ideological/strategic/ operational paradigms on the basis of people's voices, there was a dire need to carry out a field study to collect narratives of the women of conflict area.
- ❑ This, we thought, would give us primary data on the process and phenomenon of Talibanization with special reference to women living in the conflict zones- that how the torn social fabric and broken social institutions have impacted on the minds of women.
- ❑ Secondly, the study also revealed some misconceptions believed and perpetuated outside Pakhtunkhwa regarding Talibanization, Military operation and drone attacks.
- ❑ The camps we visited for study were of Takht Bhai, Jalala, Shah Mansoor, Jalozaï and Salikhkhana in the districts Swabi, Charsadda, Mardan, Peshawar and Naushehra. Also we met some host families in Mardan and Peshawar.
- ❑ The people, especially women, were mostly from Tahsil Babuzai, which is mostly urban centre of Swat, Tehsil Kabal and Tehsil Khwazakela which are mostly rural areas of Swat.

The focus of this study was four major themes

- ❑ Perceptions of the displaced people- (esp. women) regarding the militant leader Fazlullah's FM Radio in particular and Taliban in general
- ❑ Socio-cultural conditions of Swat in particular and Malakand Division in general before Talibanization
- ❑ Sufferings of women and children due to Talibanization
- ❑ Perceptions of the affected people regarding military operation and their expectations from State.

I. Results and Findings

Following are the results of interviews, participant observation and narratives in the shape of generalized statements followed by conclusion and analysis of narratives and interviews:

Perceptions of women about Fazlullah and Taliban groups

Ms. Gul shared the findings of the study that the urban centres of Swat were not initially affected by the ideological persuasion Mullah Fazlullah. The people of rural areas like Bara Bandai, Koza Bandai and Matta were instantly attracted to Fazlullah's FM radio at the onset. However, later on, the majority of the people started listening to the FM radio (after the Taliban established their control on the most of the areas of Swat) out of fear because Fazlullah would announce his threats to different people for different reasons on his FM radio. Everybody wanted to know if he/she was under threat, which would mean a sure denial to one's right to live.

The findings established that though the FM radio started functioning in 2004, the Taliban leadership started threatening the people in 2007 when they established their writ properly. Most of those who were threatened were the common people like vendors,



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those who used to sell clothes, barbers and CD shop owners. On FM Radio, Polio vaccination was dubbed as urine of George Bush. Every facility that is bestowed upon humanity by the modern sciences was condemned by the Taliban, every discipline, every modern system, to them was anti to the soul of Islam, and hence was deemed to be rooted out, annihilated.

The interviewees told that apart from the ideological persuasion, the Taliban succeeded in maintaining their control through perpetuation of fear- fear was perpetuated through different means. First of all, the Taliban used to wear masks; their hiding their faces doubled the terror in the minds of people. Secondly, they would keep their control by marching in the streets and on roads brandishing their light and heavy weapons. Thirdly, the traditional religious leadership was killed to do away with the alternative interpretation of Jihad. They would also perpetuate fear through exemplary punishments to ‘the wrong doers’ and to ‘the spies of the government and the military’. They would kill the policemen ruthlessly wherever they found them. They used to kill the ‘spies’ publicly. ‘Espionage’ for the government and the military was the crime for which the only punishment they decided was beheading. Fear was perpetuated to the extent that when the Taliban would take a son to kill, the father would watch quietly.

The human capital the Taliban had was mostly the young men and teen-aged boys. The continuous feature of Taliban group formation was recruitment. The young boys who were jobless were incited first. The Taliban started offering good salary and that also in the name God, so people started handing over their sons to them mostly from Nepkikhel (Bara Bandai, Koza Bandai, Ningolai, Mamdherai, etc). The Taliban used to brain wash the youth and children of the region so much so that they used to dream to do suicide attacks.

Donations were the most handy local resource base for the Taliban militia- women were one of the major donors of the Taliban. Initially people were inspired but later they would give donations out of fear. The other local resource base was kidnapping and extortion the local people by the Taliban. Some of the young boys who were kidnapped are still missing.

Females were in double jeopardy. In the first phase, veil for even small girls became compulsory after the Taliban established their rule in Swat. Mostly women workers like nurses and women workers of UNHCR and other local, national and international NGOs were threatened. The Taliban passed verdicts¹⁶ that girls would study till 5th class only.

Perceptions of women on the conditions of Swat before Talibanization- (How women lived there?) Ms. Sahar shared that women told that the Taliban ruined the peaceful fabric of the land Swat where people from all over world would come for the

¹⁶ (Their verdicts usually were regarding verdicts related to land disputes, related to common land, how to redistribute common land; about marital conflicts, about forests related to the claims of forestry, social conflicts. Their verdicts mostly related to these four areas. It can be discussed in some other paper)



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purpose of tourism. Swat was a heaven; the people would go out and work without any fear. The people of Swat now dream to get that fearless life back! No doubt, once it was the place where women were free to move around for picnics and excursions outside Mingowra. They would visit Kalama, Mallam Jabba and other picnic spots almost every Friday.

Women also used to go for shopping in Mingowra, where they were free to shop in the well-known cloth and cosmetics market, called Cheena market. Even the male members used to accompany women to markets but they could also go freely to the markets without their male members of the family. Girls used to go to schools, and there were a number of women working in as teachers, doctors, nurses and development practitioners; culturally there were no such barriers that could have barred women from being part of day to day life.

Sufferings of women and children due to Talibanization

The heavy fighting between Taliban and the military would affect children and women the most. Most of the children and women probably need counseling for psychological rehabilitation after repatriation. Due to Taliban's ruthless writ, several hundreds of people were forced to leave their homes and walk dozens of miles to reach safe havens. Even women who had to bear children were forced to leave their homes in this manner.

Initially the people of Swat never used to feel whether there was going to be an insurgency by Taliban against the government, but when they banned women's movement and interfered with their normal life normal life, women felt like going out and leave home.

Only a particular type of veil was acceptable to Taliban. The traditional chadar that the women of Swat wore was not acceptable to Taliban code of life imposed on the people of Swat. The Taliban imposed their brand of Purda through the use of ruthless punishments. There are reports that several women were beaten, disgraced and humiliated in public when found that they violated the Taliban code of veil.

The Taliban used to ask the people not to use toys for children probably for the reason that there might have been music tones in the toys. They would force men not to shave. The Taliban used to threaten barbers of dire consequences. The Taliban never cared for the poor, the helpless and the distressed until they would join the Taliban ranks. Several examples were narrated to this effect by the respondents (Kindly see Appendix for the statements of the respondents).

Perceptions of women about the military operation

The people in the war zones seem to be hopeful that Taliban would be rooted out due to military operation. There are a lot of expectations from the military operation against Taliban among the affected people of Swat. They think they would be able to get rid of the menace this time.



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The military has to have ground assault, according to the people of the war zone. Heavy weapons may and aerial strikes only destroy the Taliban bunkers and installations. The ground assault by the military would break their backbone. In this way the civilians and the innocents might also be saved in large number.

The people of the conflict zones think that the people have to be united against the Taliban. The war should not be left only to the military to root out the Taliban. The people of the conflict zones perceive the war against the Taliban may take longer than what the government claims.¹⁷

The people are seriously curious to know whether they would be able to see the top leadership of Taliban arrested or killed.¹⁸ The people specifically talk about Fazlullah, Muslim Khan and Sah Dauran who need to be brought to book. The people think that the Taliban may still find an opportunity to regroup and rearm if their leadership is alive.

Conclusion

The major finding of the research is that the social contagion of the Taliban began in the name of religion; people's sensitivity for religion was used to win their support. Later on the contagion was carried on through perpetuation of fear through Fatwas, Shariah verdicts and beheading, flogging and shooting people publicly. When the people (especially women who used to donate their jewelry and money) witnessed ruthless scenes in the name of religion realized.

As a matter of fact, the process of Talibanization, the group formation of Taliban and the tremendous socio-cultural implications of Talibanization on the people and society of the conflict zones need to be scientifically understood on the basis of cautiously collected data. The group formation of the Taliban usually starts from ideological persuasion through mostly using a simplified and inexpensive medium like FM radio. The Taliban then start developing their own resource base through collecting charities and donations locally. They also start recruiting the local youth. The ideological agenda and its convincing dissemination, monetary benefits and fear of the Taliban ruthlessness are usually instrumental in widespread recruitment of the youth by the Taliban. The Taliban then start isolating the community through banning the movement of the people, especially of women, banning TV and Internet. They also create a socio-cultural vacuum by eliminating the socially, politically and culturally influential of a community.

Mostly the people of the rural areas were attracted to the ideological persuasion of Taliban in Swat. Fear perpetuation, recruitment and isolation of the community are the strategies adopted by the Taliban militia to control a particular community and to establish their writ in a large swathe of geography in Pakistan and especially in the North

¹⁷ [Till the time of writing this report, when the repatriation of people has already begun, whole the FATA is under the writ of Taliban, where they have institutionalized Shariah and is a small State within the State]

¹⁸ [The top leadership is still not captured/killed, who still commute between South Punjab and FATA where the crack down is much needed, without which the reemergence of the Taliban is inevitable].



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Western Pakistan. Most of those who suffered because of the Taliban control are common people like vendors, barbers, artists and small businessmen. The Taliban usually develop their resource base with the help of donations by local people and through extortion money.

The Taliban develop their networking through strategically eliminating those who might be a threat for their control in future. They also eliminate the traditional religious hierarchy to do away with the alternative interpretation of Islam. This leaves them to be the only authority to interpret and hence render them unchallengeable.

People are hopeful, two third of the displaced population has returned to their homes and are holding their places passionately; the women who donated to Fazlullah are regretting and have become vocal against the Taliban. These are the hopes which could be translated by the civil society, academia, media, provincial government, federal government. People are ready for joining the community policing over the Taliban reemergence in any village. It's a kind of local resistance that has to be streamlined through Deputy Police Officer. Their urge to rehabilitate themselves, it s very important to count on this passion right now, it can only be done jointly, simultaneously and multi-sectorally.

II. Recommendations

The previous discourse of State has to be replaced by new discourse against the Talibanization. This can be done by civil society organizations; National Commission on the Status of Women can develop various discourses and disseminate those through means of brochures and pamphlets.

In order to counter various external and internal pro-Taliban lobbies multi-sectoral re-institutionalization is required at the indigenous level; otherwise, it is like keeping on fighting the war whole of the life if one sector is functioning well and the other is not.

Losing this war would bring forth immense suffering, which will trigger the dismemberment of so many region states. There will cause again very strong kind of conflict dynamics and divisions. On the other hand, if the Taliban and Talibanzaiton are thrown out from the Malakand division, it would be a model, it can be replicated to rest of the Pakistan (in South Punjab and FATA especially) and throughout the region even. Following are the main recommendations, which should be focused:

1. Re-institutionalization of the affected region is required and it should be multi-sectoral, simultaneous and inter-disciplinary- without multi-sectoral and simultaneous development process the existing gaps would be widened and deepened. A multi-sectoral questionnaire must be developed to identify the gaps.
2. The process of social institutionalization should be expedited through bringing the Taliban's verdicts to the proper trials, and proper tribunals should be made by the administration.



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3. All the components and stakeholders of society, including political parties, civil society organizations along with the local administration and provincial and federal government should be involved into infrastructural development, school, hospital, roads.
4. It can be multi-sectoral in this way that the local political parties' activists, hotel associations, private schools associations, labor unions, teachers' associations, health departments, non-governmental organizations, all should be engaged in the process of reconstruction and rebuilding of the institutions in the interdisciplinary manner. If the development and reconstruction process is not coordinated, it would not only increase the disconnection and disengagement, but the lobbies¹⁹ who are pro-Taliban would also regain the space. This is the rational and scientific way to reconstruction of any conflict-ridden society. The disconnection within the sectors of society can be done away with revitalizing the cultural rituals, music concerts, Mushaira etc.
5. The industry, private schools, craft business where women worked before emergence of the Taliban should be revitalized so that the economic activity of women starts. Women used to go for excursions, schools and colleges, worked as teachers, doctors and nurses, this all should be resumed as soon as possible. The multi-sectoral and simultaneous rehabilitation and reconstruction process would automatically benefit women.
6. The service delivery institutions should be active in providing the basic amenities to people, like water and electricity, roads and proper transportation; absence of the basic facilities would hinder those who are engaged in the process of reconstruction and rehabilitation.
7. Community Police should be organized at proper level and streamlined with the police. Local police and local administration should be made properly functional for social regularization. The regrouping of the Taliban can be controlled in this way.
8. The Frontier Constabulary should come under provincial government so the implementation of the orders should be quite convenient
9. Political parties' chapters should organize conferences of their local leadership, to regain the political space in proper security.
10. There is a need of very strong civil society and political parties' pressure on the state institutions for the discourse. One the one level, the civil society must ask secularization of the constitution; on the other hand, the political parties must be

¹⁹ *(The pro-Taliban lobbies include the retired military Generals, religio-political parties; some people in the media, some in government institutions, some moderate political parties- on macro level parties like PML-N are supporting the discourse of Talibanization. So this is what is actually discomfoting, rather challenging in the process of de-Talibanization; in this case the civil society must be active. Think tanks, NGOs, academia and political parties should get engaged into the discourse of de-Talibanization. There is disruption in the social structure and state institutions which could give strong stimulus to civil society to bring coherence social and economic relationships, and on the other hand, they can influence state institution to be more pro people and empower them, to minimize the marginalization it must be done indigenously- within Pakistan, Pakhtun belt or within Pakhtunkhwa.)*



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restructured and be more active. Collectively, academia & media must understand the issue and get proper guideline on the basis of hard core research.

11. FATA crackdown has not begun with the same gusto so far- the operation has just begun, I think they (military) are properly thinking to clear Malakand division first then start in FATA- so far they have besieged different organizations; however, there seems to be no likelihood of the whole scale crackdown on FATA. There is a writ of the Taliban in FATA, hence, first their bunkers should be attacked through aerial strikes and drones; only then it would be possible for the Army to enter their land-strongholds.
12. Finally, the military should cut Taliban's narcotics business's roots from IRAN or Karachi- their supply lines should be cut. Also they should cut their recruitment by attacking their bunkers. Also, military should hit their backbone by breaking their command and control structure through killing their top leadership.

public opinion. This is the time we have to put pressure on the politicians to bring change'.

22. Justice Majida Razvi: Concluding Remarks



Justice Razvi said that primarily, we all t make Jinnah's speech as a part of our daily life. 'Secondly extremism and terrorism can be annihilated through the law... many changes are required immediately, for example, concurrent list should be abolished. The State has to give their rights to citizens'...

Justice Razvi said, 'Wonder 62 years have not changed the mind-set of people, we are like one step forward two steps backward always. What we need is unity, equality among the provinces by giving the provinces the rights who have grievances as presented by Rubina Saigol. There has to be a new discourse... a dialogue based on the resolution of 1940, this is how we can save the country and save the people and bring peace and progress... Law is ignored generally, for example, people drive on the road as if road belongs to them... as if nobody else is one the road... where has the care and tolerance gone? Tolerance and peace is what every religion preaches. We even do not know how to treat our women... our children... I am ashamed to be a Muslim... we have to have peace, tolerance, equality, and justice... this is the only way we can survive'.

IV. Resolutions presented by Chair NCSW Ms. Anis Haroon:

There can be no development without peace and justice for all. There can be no justice unless all women, men and other genders are recognized as equal citizens, irrespective of their religion, sect, profession, age, gender and any other social or cultural differences. The participants of the NCSW conference held in Islamabad on 18 and 19th August



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2009-08-19. In keeping with the 1940 Pakistan Resolution and the Quaid's speech of August 11, 1947 to the constituent assembly, hereby resolve:

To eliminate root causes of extremism and violence in the name of religion, culture, or other basis and to build a democratic, pluralistic and peaceful Pakistan, where all citizens are equal and girls and boys enabled to think, question and build their future according to their dreams.

Resolution-1- Violence against women

1. Murder of women is a crime against the State for which there is no excuse
2. whenever such crimes occur the DPO of the concerned district should be required to give b-weekly progress report to NCSW
3. All cases of murder and kidnapping to be immediately reported to NCSW for tracking the legal progress of the cases (until NCSW is equipped with the required infrastructure and autonomy the NCSW will only take up test cases of such nature.
4. Especial attention to be given to the cases where family is too traumatized and/or under threat by the killers
5. Security to be ensured for families under threat
6. NCSW to recognize WAF rapporteurs for violence against women (Sindh).

Resolution 2- Relationship between Federation and Province

1. Provincial autonomy as laid out in the 1940 Resolution to be systematically achieved by the year 2010
2. Religion to be separated from the State and declared a private matter, all women and men are equal citizens (in keeping with Jinnah's speech)
3. Jinnah's speech at the first Constituent Assembly 11th August 1947
4. FATA and PATA and Northern Areas to be brought under the laws of the land including family laws and fundamental rights extended without delay

Resolution 3- Zero tolerance for Extremism

1. Blasphemy law to be repealed immediately
2. Anybody inciting mob violence against anybody, especially women and minority groups to be declared a crime and such criminals tried in court without delay.
3. Recognizing the historical deprivation of different nations of Pakistan, and the role of the armed forces and agencies in creating alienation among different national groups, the elected representatives and all political parties must forge unity for dealing with violence faced by different national/ethnic groups

Resolution 4: Nizam-e Adl

1. It is anti women and excludes women from the administration of judicial system
2. It is a parallel system and parallel systems are unacceptable. There should be one legal system based on the Constitution of Pakistan.

Resolution 5: Policies and Program for IDPs



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1. Women among the IDPs should be recognized as equal partners in the making, implementation and monitoring or rehabilitation plans for the IDPs.
2. Civil Society groups working with women IDPs should be included in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the policies and plans for the IDPs.

Resolution6: Role of Army

1. Parliament, Judiciary and Executive are the three pillars of the State, with an independent media and active civil society playing its due role for the making of a democratic society.
2. Parliament as the elected voice of the people must be paramount
3. The judiciary and the Executive separated in all aspects
4. The army should not be a parallel and privileged system in the State. Its control over the economic resources of Pakistan must be curtailed.

Resolution 7: Role of Media

Given the critical role of media to keep all stakeholders of Pakistan well informed of ground realities, especially those impacting women and minorities and the poor. Media is urged to:

1. Be unbiased
2. Expand the voices of women, especially those oppressed.
3. Unveil the policies governing gender-blindness that often prevails.